“Of ful gret sadnes”: The Presentation of Feminine Grief, Sorrow, and Mourning in John Lydgate’s *Troy Book*

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DEDICATION

For Grammy.

But what is grief, if not love persevering?

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ABSTRACT

Looking to the work of the medieval poet and monk John Lydgate (1370-1451), this thesis seeks to identify the way in which various female *Troy Book* characters express and represent the multifaceted experience of grief. Spanning across three chapters, this thesis identifies Medea's anticipatory grief regarding her union with Jason, Cassandra's national and anticipatory grief in prophesying the fall of Troy, and Penthesilea's revenge-focused, chivalric grief following the murder of Hector as critical points in analyzing medieval womanhood alongside a sorrowful war narrative. Acknowledging the overlap between *Troy Book'*s predecessors (the *Iliad*, Geoffrey Chaucer, Guido delle Colonne, etc.) and the text itself, this study shows that Lydgate's presentation of female grief is not only indicative of the women's roles in the text but also reflects his familiarity with discourses of femininity in the Middle Ages. Through textual analysis of select Middle English passages from Lydgate's *Troy Book*, this thesis explores the foundations of these women's grief and offers ample insight into the text itself, as well as perceptions of medieval grief as a whole.

Keywords: medieval literature, grief, women, Trojan War, loss, mourning, Middle English

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER I: MEDEA 8

Abstract 9

CHAPTER II: CASSANDRA 44

Abstract 45

Appendix 73

CHAPTER III: PENTHESILEA 74

Abstract 75

CONCLUSION 95

REFERENCES 98

VITA 103

INTRODUCTION

John Lydgate's fifteenth-century narrative recounting the ancient Greek mythological Trojan War, collectively titled his *Troy Book*, was begun in 1412 and finalized in 1420 for its commissioner Henry, Prince of Wales (later Henry V). The pseudo-epic poem of the fictional war amasses beyond 30,000 lines and compiles multiple unique perspectives, discussing both the Greek and the Trojan. Lydgate spins multiple storylines into his work, embracing the towering narrative influence the Trojan War had over the narratives that predated *Troy Book*. Lydgate, like any author, takes liberties in his writing, with one of the most crucial being the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer's preceding *Troilus and Criseyde*, which is consistently referenced by Lydgate throughout his narrative. Acknowledging the narrative's basis in antiquity, Lydgate also acknowledges the writings of Homer and Ovid, indicating a union between the classical and the medieval. Lydgate's approach to Troy, in tandem with his reference to outside narratives, presents the Trojan War tale within *Troy Book* not as a mere recapitulation of ancient Greek myth, but instead as a signifier of a historical, and cultural, unity.

It should be noted that this idea of cultural conscience, in regard to the writing of Lydgate, is not intended to insinuate a lack of culture preceding this narrative but instead the opposite. In identifying *Troy Book* as a work of cultural relevance, beyond that of entertainment or scholarship, the modern-day reader can gain insight into the development of cultural narratives predating Lydgate, which culminated in *Troy Book* itself. Seeing the development of *Troy Book* in a medieval space, it is critically relevant that one identifies the importance of a coupling of ideals that are both ancient Greek and

medieval European in nature. As is notable in *Troy Book*, Lydgate makes unique choices to integrate into his work medieval references and stylistic choices (most notably seen through Lydgate's application of medieval chivalry to characters of antiquity). Within this cultural schema is where it becomes most apparent that Lydgate's effort in producing this commissioned work encapsulates not only a recognizable narrative, but a developing identity that continued to be kindled long after Lydgate's completion of the text. With this in mind, it becomes clear that the amalgamated unity offers insight into both the medieval British people and their perceptions of classical narratives. Looking at *Troy Book* specifically, readers are given a glance into a late medieval cultural space.

Depending on the time, culture most typically encapsulates artworks, language, customs, and writings. I, likewise, identify later (relative) cultures as a culmination of what has come before, and what is expected to come after. It is within this understanding of culture that I identify John Lydgate as a culturally relevant writer for the medieval British. It is through the unification of the British and the Greek that one can see the effect of the development of culture in *Troy Book*. Though readers are primarily concerned with the tales of the Greeks, Lydgate's authorial choices bring forth a discussion of the relevance of the culture of production in relation to the culture of product. When discussing Lydgate in this sense, it is crucial to note that much of the intangible culture is typically attributed subconsciously. For example, when authoring a text from a predating culture, it may just "feel right" for an author to replace an original name with one more recognizable for their intended audience. Herein one can see that Lydgate's subtle (conscious and unconscious) choices when adapting this tale for a

medieval audience create an amalgamated culture: one that incorporates the medieval, and its relevant predecessors, into its presentation of the ancient Greeks.

The idea of "informing" has been relevant up until this point, wherein I have identified culture as an intangible reality that is "informed" by all the intangible realities that have come before it. With this understanding of informing, I invite the idea of development as a succinct replacement. Just as prehistory develops into history, so the medieval will go on to develop into the Renaissance. Looking backward, the culture I most identify as most foundational for medieval Britain is that of the Anglo-Saxons. Similar to the integration of personal culture in outside texts, much of the cultural development is subconscious or otherwise only documented for historical purposes. It is in this context that the medieval, in my work, should be recognized as a historical amalgam rather than a structured and established expectation in literature. Anglo-Saxon influence on the late medieval period allows for *Troy Book* to incorporate social perspectives that would be otherwise dismissed.

Supporting my reading of the unification of the historical and the medieval contemporary, Venetia Bridges explains that "the medieval period authors sought to locate themselves in relation to existing texts, especially those viewed as particularly important […]."[1] It is with this understanding that modern audiences may see medieval

[1] Venetia Bridges, "*Translatio*: Transformation, Alteration, Change," in *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, ed. Siân Echard et al. (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), p. 1811.

translated works as "(often very freely) inspired adaptations."[2] My approach to Lydgate's work recognizes the influence of *translatio studii et imperii*, highlighting the idea of the literary pilgrimage that classical Greek and Roman texts took throughout Europe, expanding its myths and legends amongst medieval audiences.[3] Considering their pagan basis, "attitudes towards these non-Christian works were not uniform" and thus, the integration of medieval thoughts and expectations into a work, such as *Troy Book*, served a crucial role in the transfer of the Trojan War legend to medieval British audiences.[4]

Translatio studii is of critical importance in my reading of *Troy* Book, since it serves to inform where medieval values (especially regarding women) may stem from in a particularly Greek text. Classical thought was taught at-length in the medieval period, and even after—in fact, it is still taught and culturally relevant today, and thus it continues to inform our current social schema. Historically, Greek tales were typically a signifier of apt education and studies. Many scholars and nobles were likely to have been familiar with the Trojan War narrative, having studied or heard the myth at some point in their education or leisure. Accessibility, in this context, refers not only to an ability to understand, but also an intrinsic ability to *want* to understand. In his discussion of the medieval reception of Troy, Walter Schirmer explains that the connected legends

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[2] Bridges, "*Translatio:* Transformation, Alteration, Change," *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, p. 1811.
[3] Bridges, *"Translatio*: Transformation, Alteration, Change," *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britian*, p. 1811.
[4] Bridges, "*Translatio*: Transformation, Alteration, Change," *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain*, p. 1812.

"contain[ed] all the moral and political lessons which history was expected to teach."[5] Not only does this claim further the cultural relevance of the ancient Greeks to medieval peoples, but it also reinforces the idea that Lydgate's organization of approach to the material encompasses all that should be relevant and important. Accessibility for *Troy Book* extends beyond a reader's ability to read and acknowledges the inherent cultural relevance and power that is crucial to establishing a text as something that is accessible. More specifically, *Troy Book*'s cultural relevance and accessibility can be gauged through an investigation of specific instances of grieving in *Troy Book*.

Grief is the inherent process of coping with a loss—often this is culturally informed, though it consistently produces itself differently for every person. In literature, grief is one of the most consistent and influential narrative schemas, typically utilized to further the motivation of a hero or cause them to consider faltering. I challenge the idea of grief as solely a narrative marker of death and instead believe that the nuances of grief should be investigated and valued in literature with the same level of attention given to its more popular manifestation. Grief presents itself in countless situations: the grief of a lost battle, the proleptic grief associated with a sorrowful oracle,[6] and the grief of love. These examples of grief are not only relevant in medieval spaces, but in Greek ones as well,

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[5] Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 44.

[6] The idea of proleptic grief is crucial in the analysis of later medieval literature, especially within the critical relevancy of Christianity in a multitude of texts. During the late Middle Ages, proleptic grief was oftentimes associated with the Virgin Mary in devotional texts and images, whereby Mary, Mother of God, would pre-emptively dread and grieve the Passion when Jesus was still a child. For more information regarding the role proleptic grief played in late medieval works, see Mary Dzon, *The Quest for the Christ Child in the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017): pp. 215-17.

which underscores the importance of considering *Troy Book* as a unified text. By acknowledging the relevant inclusions of grief, their influence in medieval culture, where these practices come from, and how they inform Lydgate's presentation of characters in *Troy Book*, I can take a holistic and analytical approach towards understanding how grief would have been received during the time of *Troy Book*'s publishing. Likewise, Lydgate's presentation and penning of specific instances of female-inflected grief offers a unique opportunity to perceive cultural expectations and standards at the time.

Approaching *Troy Book* with the understanding of its role in "medievalizing" the Trojan War narrative offers the most efficient basis in which to investigate the text itself.[7] Considering *Troy Book* as a whole, one must first and foremost recognize the text's role as a war narrative. Under this consideration, it becomes clear that the reoccurring instances of loss in the many books allow for nuanced insight as to how Lydgate uses grief to characterize the figures in his work. The overwhelming grip of death over the narrative is critical for a thorough reading of *Troy Book*, as it highlights the impacts of war beyond battle, as it recognizes the fallout and impact that warfare and loss may have on characters that exist outside of that sphere. Looking to Lydgate's women, I choose to explore his writing of feminine grief in *Troy Book*; seeing grief and mourning in a distinctly feminine lens allows for better individualization of each character, rather than regarding them as roughly equivalent mourners in the text.

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[7] For more on the relationship between medievalizing, poetry, and Lydgate, see Derek Pearsall, "The Apotheosis of John Lydgate," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.1 (2005): pp. 25-38.

Grief is one of the most expansive, and universal, facets of life as well as culture. In picking three *Troy Book* women (Medea, Cassandra, Penthesilea), I am able to investigate not only the connection between womanhood and grief, but the connection between personal background and environment and the processing of loss. Each woman takes a nuanced approach to her grief, informing her approach through personal histories, as told by Lydgate. Through this approach, one can see how grief is performed differently by different women. A medieval noble woman may have different causes for grief than a chivalric warrior woman, for example. While the *Troy Book* women may diverge in their actual stories, the juxtaposition of their grief expressions allows for a thorough and insightful mapping of medieval, feminine grief as told through a Greek lens.

Along similar lines as focusing on underrepresented grief, I wish to explore underrepresented groups in medieval literature. When considering a wartime tale, women are typically disregarded and used as narrative points, or tangible measurements for loss. Throughout Lydgate's text, though, there are numerous examples of grief as felt by these disregarded women. Analysis into feminine grief can allow for a more nuanced perspective of war. Beyond depicting characters mourning the loss of sons and fathers, Lydgate includes details that reflect female-specific cultural expectations, both medieval and Greek. Utilizing historical context, narrative choices, and a multifaceted approach to scholarship, I follow specific instances of feminine grief in *Troy Book*, exploring how the cultural environment surrounding the production of *Troy Book* may have influenced Lydgate in presenting these moments of mourning, which are not strictly concerned with the finality of death.

CHAPTER I:

MEDEA

Abstract

Concentrating on the sorceress Medea, this chapter seeks to explore the connections among love, mourning, and social mobility. By viewing Medea through a uniquely feminine lens, one may more easily understand and track the length at which societal standards, both of antiquity and medieval, impact readers' perception of Medea as well as her role in the story. Integrating an analysis of her background as well as her betrayal at the hands of Jason, my study of Medea offers critical insight towards perceptions of grief that is not solely defined by loss of life. Embracing the multifaceted nature of grieving allows for a more nuanced investigation of Lydgate's writing. Expressing anticipatory grief, Medea reflects upon her social grief, her loss of kinship and wealth, opting in favor of love. In pursuing this multifaceted presentation of grief, Medea serves to display the ways in which quasi-medieval women grappled with social limitations and expectations. Medea's role in *Troy Book* is critical for the establishment of a more nuanced understanding of feminine grief.

Keywords: Medea, Jason, betrayal, anticipatory grief, medieval society, kinship, loss

It is important to note that as a creative retelling, *Troy Book* was definitely produced with the guidance of pre-existing antiquity narratives.[8] *Troy Book*'s roots in Hellenistic paganism allowed for Lydgate to find ample opportunities to insert not only his way of thinking in his work, but the views of his society and religion as well;[9] it is the small, finer details in the narrative that truly allow readers an intimate understanding of medieval culture at the time. Though focusing on grief in my overarching analysis, I have found that Lydgate's women tend to carry the brunt of the weight in contextualizing and codifying *Troy Book* as a socially relevant text more broadly. Save for figures such as Helen of Troy,[10] many Greek women have been rewritten by Lydgate to conform substantially to what would be expected of women of the time in late medieval Britain. One should keep in mind, though, that Lydgate's newfound presentation of these

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[8] For discussion of classical Medea, I refer to Seneca the Younger's titular play, "Medea." Seneca was known well to medieval audiences. Grace G. Wilson states that Chaucer mentions Seneca "thirty-three times in the *Canterbury Tales*;" Wilson, as well, finds that "the total number of references to Seneca in the *Tales* is greater than the number to any other philosopher except Solomon." The connection between Chaucer and Seneca is relevant through Lydgate's referencing of Chaucer's works while writing *Troy Book.* For more contextualization of Seneca's role in medieval literature and thought, see Grace G. Wilson, "'Amonges Othere Wordes Wyse': The Medieval Seneca and the *Canterbury Tales,*" *The Chaucer Review,* 28.2 (1993): pp. 135-48.

[9] D.M. Smith explains that the works of Homer were not well known in the Middle Ages, describing the *Iliad* as "the half-remembered story of the Trojan War." Smith states that prior to the rediscovery of Homer, his narratives were "transmitted through a variety of medieval poems and prose works, drawn from the Late Latin 'histories' of Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius." The highly contested and critical consideration for Homer in medieval societies establishes a basis for Lydgate's associations of medieval ideals with the Trojans, rather than the Greeks. Further contextualization of how various primary sources may (or may not) have informed Lydgate can be found in the Foreword and Introduction of his *John Lydgate's Troy Book: A Middle English Iliad* translation.

[10] In reference to her role in mythology, Boccaccio writes that "the view is widely held that Helen was notorious throughout the entire world as much for her lustfulness as for the long war which resulted from it." Helen's beauty has been a focal point of her inclusion in literature and has remained mostly unchanged due to its critical influence on the Trojan War narrative. For more insight to Helen's story beyond her connection to Medea, Cassandra, and Penthesilea, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 142-151.

feminine characters should not be attributed to progressive representations of womanhood, as it is instead a reflection of what Lydgate had seen in his lifetime and chosen to reinforce, consistent with his beliefs.

Within the drama of war, I believe that *Troy Book* serves as subtle domestic and social propaganda, wherein most women who typically boast power in their original narratives are now placed alongside a masculine foil (or are completely removed in some versions).[11] One such woman who most effectively represents Lydgate's authorial choice with femininity is Medea.[12] This woman, infamous for infanticide and revenge in her namesake legend and Euripides's famous play, is introduced early on in Lydgate's text.[13] Despite being sourced from ancient culture, Lydgate's Medea and that of the past do not exist as mirrors, but instead as distant similitudes of one another. In *Troy Book*, I find that Lydgate's portrayal of Medea does not reinforce her as a woman with her own unique character but instead presents her as an extension and foil to her male counterpart, Jason, highlighting the facets of grief, loss, and sacrifice Medea experienced to solidify their union.

Despite my claim that Medea is reduced in her *Troy Book* persona, she is still a significant figure within the text. Prior to diving into the meat of the Trojan War, Lydgate

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[11] Regarding clarity in analysis, I use "foil" to serve both a narrative purpose and an authorial one. Some characters I identify as foils may only act as such outside the context of *Troy Book*'s narrative itself.
[12] Joyce E. Salisbury notes that the "witch-princess" Medea is a "remarkably independent and destructive woman" in Greek myth. Alongside this, she explains that Medea "is also remembered as the greatest example of feminine anger at being abandoned by her loved [Jason]" (p. 222). For more information on the myth of Medea, as well as her role with the Argonauts and beyond, see Joyce E. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* (Santa Barbara: ABC CLIO, 2001), pp. 221-23.
[13] Medea's first appearance is in bk. 1, l. 131.

recounts the golden fleece myth—otherwise known as Jason and the Argonauts. Here, readers become privy to the background of Medea and Jason, their courtship, and their experiences leading up to the Trojan War.[14] This recounting of their background is crucial as not only does it lay a narrative foundation for the text, but it also recontextualizes Medea for readers who may already be familiar with her later legend. Giovanni Boccaccio had earlier cited Medea as being "the cruelest example of ancient treachery,"[15] highlighting the legacy of her fable as one associated with evil. Lydgate's Medea, a woman commonly associated with violence and villainy, is no longer portrayed as a sour woman, but instead as a youthful lover to a budding hero.[16] It is in this perception of Medea that my analysis of Lydgate's authorial intent becomes so crucial. Medea's recontextualization early on in this text allows for her to become palatable as a societal representation of women. Had Lydgate not made this choice, Medea would have been likely backed into the same corner as many antagonists are—limited by readers' predispositions and assumptions of her. Removing Medea from these narrative assumptions allows for Lydgate to effectively employ her as a broader reflection of womanhood. This reflection allows malleability for Lydgate's engagement with Medea,

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[14] Deep into Book 1 of *Troy Book*, Lydgate declares "Of Medea 3e gete of me no more" (Of Medea ye get of me no more) in bk. 1, l. 3714. This marks the ending of Medea's inclusion in *Troy Book*.
[15] Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Brown (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001): p. 75.
[16] Boccaccio sees Medea as "quite beautiful and by far the cleverest of witches." In reference to the love between Jason and Medea, Boccaccio notes that Medea was "passionately in love with him." It is in Boccaccio's engagement with Medea that the disconnect between common perceptions and Lydgate's engagement and interpretation of her becomes clearer. See further Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, p. 75.

as well as opening an opportunity for the potential of later interaction with her villainous side—thus affording more occasions to utilize her for further commentary on femininity.[17]

Looking to Lydgate for insight, much analysis of Medea (and subsequent gendered readings) must first stem from an acknowledgement of Lydgate's influences in writing. In the discussion of his poetry, Scott Lightsey argues that Lydgate associates himself with "the craftsmen who made up the commons of the early fifteenth century."[18] Lightsey goes on further, identifying that analysis of Lydgate texts presents readers with "new valences, [...] additional narrative emphasis" alongside the "shaping [of an] understanding of Lydgate's views."[19] The nuanced connection between Lydgate and craftsmanship opens up an endless doorway of analysis, wherein one is offered careful insight into Lydgate's opinions and personal considerations.[20] Coupling Lightsey's understanding of Lydgate alongside the author's proposition of Medea offers the ability to distinguish Lydgate's personal influence on the work. By identifying Lydgate's personal understanding of himself as a craftsman, I am better able to establish my understanding of Medea as a pliable figure in the text. Considering *Troy Book*, once again, as a modernized text corresponds efficiently to the proper context that surrounds

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[17] For more analysis into the specialization of Lydgate's retellings, see Scott Lightsey, "'Of Crafty Bildyng & Werkyng Most Roial': Lydgate's Allusions to the Crafts and the Role of Making in Medieval Civic Poetry," in *Later Medieval Literature, Materiality, and Culture*, edited by Brian Gastle and Erick Kelemen (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2018).
[18] Lightsey, "Lydgate's Allusions to the Crafts," p. 128.
[19] Lightsey, "Lydgate's Allusions to the Crafts," p. 128.
[20] Lightsey, "Lydgate's Allusions to the Crafts."

Troy Book, seeing that not only was the piece a commissioned, cultural work, but also—as acknowledged by Lydgate himself—a text that massively revised and altered the original source material.[21] Though the alterations and interactions introduced by Lydgate are most consistently seen throughout his presentation of Troy reconstructed,[22] the freedom offered to Lydgate does not limit itself there. Just as he is able to influence and alter the masculine heroes of the story, Lydgate inserts his attitude towards his women as well. Medea is no exception to this rule.

Readers are first introduced to Lydgate's Medea after King Cethes calls for her at his feast. What follows her introduction is a close description of Medea's womanhood and magical ability. Immediately, Medea's personhood is affixed to her beauty and promise for marriage. In the presentation of her womanhood, Lydgate says of Medea:

> Sche was also, þe bok maketh mencioun,
> Wexe vn-to 3eris of discrecioun,
> Able for age maried for to be;
> And not-with-standyng also ek þat sche
> Was of bewte and of womanhede,
> On þe faireste þat I can of rede, (bk. 1, ll. 1599-1604)[23]
>
> (She was also, the book makes mention, / Waxing unto years of discretìon, / Able of age married for to be; / And not withstanding also was that she / Was of beauty and of womanhood, / One of the fairest that I can of read)[24]

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[21] Lightsey, "Lydgate's Allusions to the Crafts," p. 129.
[22] For more information on the relationship between Lydgate and construction, rebuilding, and creation, see Lightsey.
[23] John Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen, EETS, e.s. 97 (New York City: C. Scribner & Co.; Leypoldt & Holt, 1906), p. 59, bk. 1, ll. 1599-1604.
[24] This translation of Lydgate comes from D.M. Smith's *Troy Book* modern translation. Henceforth, included translations of block quotations will come from Smith's work, with notation where slight alterations may take place with corrective reasoning; John Lydgate, *John Lydgate's Troy Book: A Middle English Iliad*, trans. by D.M. Smith (no publisher, 2018): p. 50 (bk. 1, ll. 1599-1604). Smith's translation

In this brief, yet direct, description of Medea the narrative contextualizes the measurability of her beauty. Seeing as Lydgate described the woman as the "faireste" that he may speak of, his Medea is inextricably bound by the merit of her femininity as it becomes a defining trait in her persona. Medea is not only valued for her beauty, though, as Lydgate addresses her womanhood directly. The presentation of womanhood as a measure of influence and value makes clear the key importance it has in defining the merit of her sex. By defining Medea as both the most fair and womanly of women, Lydgate makes clear that Medea does, in fact, exemplify the medieval standard of femininity that he is familiar with; likewise, Lydgate's vision of medievalized womanhood communicates, beyond contextualization, an understanding of her worthiness. Medea is wholly seen as worthy in her description, as she embodies the beauty, poise, and respectability that is standard for such a lady. The swift connection between Lydgate's Medea inextricably bound to medieval ideals of womanhood does additional work beyond presenting the woman and contextualizing femininity as a whole. Since readers become acquainted with Lydgate's Medea as something of a beauty standard for Lydgate's time, it becomes clear that future discussions of beauty or femininity of other women will be implicitly juxtaposed with their exemplification in Medea.

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uses the word "womanhead" as a translation of "womanhede." I choose to alter this translation to "womanhood," since it better highlights the crucial importance of femininity in relation to Medea.

Medea's status as a central female character is not only relevant due to her malleable and altered nature, but also due to the facets that are intertwined within her personal narrative. Even in her original Greek myths, Medea's story has always grappled with ideas of womanhood, power, and personal agency. These aspects of femininity in her story translate well into medieval spaces and position Medea as a relevant character through whom Lydgate can explore such issues. It is within this context that I find Medea to be the character most indicative of Lydgate's perception of femininity and womanhood at large.[25] Rather than looking into femininity in relation to war or land, Medea (most notably in her early appearances) serves to represent womanhood in relation to love, society, and familial birthright. It is within her early story that young, marriage-aged women are likely to see themselves. Indeed, her characterization is so broad that she is likely one of the most accessible characters for Lydgate to project his societal understandings onto.[26] Likewise, readers' projection onto Medea would have likely been simple, as Medea's grief is one that is intentionally commonplace in medieval culture.

Within her earliest introduction, readers are presented with a Medea that is torn between what is expected of and promised to her, against her love and desires.[27] This division is something that was extremely relevant in medieval writings, particularly in romance and Arthurian legend. Medea's presentation here opens the door for Lydgate to

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[25] I view Medea as the most palatable and relatable woman for the broadest number of medieval women, not that she is the most indicative of medieval womanhood as a whole.
[26] The actuality of young women reading *Troy Book* is not relevant to this point.
[27] This reading is partially informed by *Troy Book: Selections,* ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998), p. 64.

pen his expectations and understanding regarding the courtship process for women. It is within this context, as well, that one is presented with the first major instance of inclusive feminine grief. The juxtaposition of Medea's desires to expectations and familial contexts highlights the medieval assumption that much of a woman's identity is stripped away following marriage, wherein she becomes a member of her husband's family first, and her own person second. Medea grapples with this idea (bk. 1, ll. 2708-56) and presents readers with an opportunity to witness her social, anticipatory, and familial grief united. Medea is shown by Lydgate not solely as a woman in love, but as a woman who has to cope with the reality of losing all that was known to her in order to be with Jason.

To understand the characterization and narrative of Medea in *Troy Book* beyond the fundamentals, it is crucial to look back to her predecessor to better understand how *Troy Book* was informed and to note narrative changes and choices on the part of Lydgate. In her Hellenistic origins, Medea can be seen featured in Apollonius Rhodus's *Argonautica* and as the titular character in Euripides's and Seneca's tragedies. These narrative source materials not only established the foundation for Lydgate's *Troy Book*, but also serve as crucial contextualization for Medea. A noteworthy detail, present in these texts, is Medea's status as a sorceress; this classification for Medea is crucial not only because of her legend, but also in the identification of her inherent power as a character. Sorceresses in Greek legend tend to be defined not so much by their magical skills, but primarily by how they enact that magic upon men. Women who use their supernatural abilities to help out the masculine heroes are revered, while those who enact misfortune are considered heinous and villainous, regardless of the context. Besides

Medea, another feminine sorceress that is bound to villainy by her magic upon men is Circe.[28] Regardless of how "warranted" their actions are, the context and purpose behind their choices are consistently disregarded, and they are simply squared away as villainous, vile, and treacherous women.

It is this connection to magic and villainy that makes Medea such an interesting character to explore. Medea's historical background brings forth a question worth considering for her analysis: how would a Christian man, for a Christian audience, seek to portray a sorceress woman who would go on to kill her two children within his text? Uniting the development of Medea as a character alongside the context in which she was produced garners unique and insightful understandings into how Medea was likely changed in her characterization—and similarly suggests how she was likely interpreted. Being connected to magic, Medea has an inherent power within herself; Medea's sorcery separates her from the other characters in *Troy Book*, as the only other characters shown with major magical inclinations are Achilles,[29] the Amazons (see *Chapter 3: Penthesilea*),[30] and the gods themselves. Looking at the presentation of magic in the text,

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[28] Boccaccio describes Circe as "Daughter of the Sun," going on to explain that any men on Circe's land "were changed into various kinds of animals through [...] enchantments or poisonous potions." Both Medea and Circe were presented in a way in which their magic was qualified based on its impact and harm to men. For more information on Circe and how she is like Medea, see Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and trans. by Virginia Brown, pp. 150-51.
[29] Achilles, son of Peleus and Thetis, is noted to have "possessed wonderful strength and beauty" by Caroline and Samuel Harding, *Stories of Greek Gods, Heroes, and Men* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1897), p. 37. My connection of Achilles to magical inclination is in reference to his infancy myth, in which his mother dipped him in the River Styx which resulted in Achilles "becom[ing] proof against any weapon except at one little place in the heel." For more information on Achilles story, and role in the *Iliad*, see Caroline and Samuel Harding, *Stories of Greek Gods, Heroes, and Men*, pp. 36-38.
[30] Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, pp. 50, 82, and 128.

we realize the uniqueness of Medea's situation. In contrast, Achilles's power was granted to him by his mother, and is never questioned due to his prophecy,[31] stature, and prowess. Furthermore, the Amazons, despite being women, are granted power culturally in a matriarchal society and utilize their skills in assisting in warfare. Medea, on the other hand, is granted magic by birth but must lose the benefits stemming from her lineage for love—Medea is Cethes's heir, promised nobility and wealth.[32] Likewise, Medea does not have the Amazon title to prove her worthiness and right to wield her power within the war.[33]

Lydgate directly references the villainous Medea that predated his own, looking to the work of Ovid.[34] The stance Lydgate makes regarding Ovid is very clear, as he directly declares:

> But of Medee, þou3 þis clerke Ouide,
> Tencrese hir name vp-on euery syde,
> List in his fables swyche þinges telle,
> Þou3 he of poetis was þe spring & welle:
> Yit God forbede we schulde 3if credence
> To swyche feynyng, or do so hi3e offence;
> Syth of nature muste be denyed
> Al swyche affermyng, and also ben diffied
> Of euery cristen stedefast in bileue. (bk. 1, ll. 1707-15)
>
> (But of Medea, through this clerk Ovid, / T'increase her name upon every side, / List in his fables such things for to tell, / Though he of poets was

[31] In Book IX of the *Iliad* Achilles mentions a prophecy regarding him that was given to his mother, Thetis. The prophecy claimed that if Achilles fought at Troy he would die young with glory and fame, but if he abstained, he would live a lengthy, yet unremarkable life.
[32] Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, p. 59, bk. 2, l. 1593.
[33] Medea's magic is oftentimes solely bound to assisting Jason in retrieving the fleece, rather than helping in battle, as is the case with her Amazonian counterparts.
[34] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin Classics, 1955).

> the spring and the well: / Yet God forbade we should give credence / To such feigning, or do so high offense; / Since of nature it must be denied / All such affirming, and also be defied / Of every Christian steadfast in belief.)

Presented here is not only Lydgate's case for Medea, but also an interpretation of the character at large. Paying attention to Ovid, Lydgate acknowledges the precedent that the writer had laid out for him: one of an infanticidal Medea; notable, then, is Lydgate's call for the withholding of pre-judgement. Calling on God, Lydgate wishes that He would forbid readers from taking Ovid's telling into account. It is in his acknowledgement, and disagreement, with Ovid that the values of Lydgate's medieval society become a bit clearer in the narrative. Lydgate's plea to readers comes right after a lengthy description of the woman's magical powers and subsequently leads into a digression about Christ before returning to the feast of King Cethes. Considering this excerpt on the larger scale, it occupies an interesting place in the narrative, appearing as something of an aside or author's note. The tone Lydgate utilizes in this discussion similarly reinforces this reading, as his rejection of Ovid is presented as something that should be commonplace. This excerpt, then, presents the conclusion that Medea was looked down upon in medieval society; Ovid's Medea embraces the sin of murder, enacts infanticide, and rejects Jason—all of which would have been looked down upon by the biblically-informed culture of Lydgate's society. Lydgate reinforces this assumption with his following discussion of the power of Christ and God,[35] the presentation of which

[35] Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, pp. 63-64, bk. 1, ll. 1720-72.

effectively associates Lydgate's Medea with Christianity. By introducing a Christian perspective into the text, Lydgate seemingly recontextualizes Medea with a presentation that will lend itself more palatably to Lydgate's audience.

Lydgate's rejection of Ovid should not be seen as a move that would have been standard for the time period, as his aside implies that the general populace must be convinced to look favorably upon Medea. Lydgate's perception of Medea is not equitable with the perception and understanding of Medea at large. Lydgate's language attempts to alleviate the dissonance present between the two. Most notably, the word "nature" in line 1713 carries with it many connotations. On the one hand, it of course references Medea's nature as a character (in this case, within the context of Ovid) and asks readers to reject the presumptions regarding her "nature" they may have. On the other hand, the location of the excerpt is notable. Prior to this moment, Lydgate recounts the powers of Medea over nature;[36] the connection of nature here is tangible and presents hefty weight to the desired rejection of expectations for Medea. Not only is Lydgate asking readers to disregard their preexisting knowledge of her infanticide, but seemingly Medea's magical inclination as well—communicating that audiences of the time would have presumably been critical of Medea's powers. These moments in which Lydgate speaks directly to his audience, rather than in the form of narrative, grant valuable insight into the context in which *Troy Book* was produced. Lydgate here simultaneously attempts to cast aside

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[36] Editor Henry Bergen heads these description pages with "Medea's wondrous powers over Nature"; Lydgate. *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, vol. 97, pp. 60-62, bk. 1, ll. 1620-1701.

preconceived notions and lay the groundwork for Medea to regain favor from readers; such favor is needed because Medea otherwise faces an ample uphill battle to fit into medieval society in any respectable way.

The social spot occupied by Medea illustrates how power wielded by women in medieval society was typically considered.[37] If one could not prove that they deserved their power, whether that be by birthright, usefulness, or worthiness on the battlefield, it was not thought to be useful for them. This consideration for Medea's magic coincides with my earlier introduction to the division between Hellenism and Christianity. In adapting Medea, Lydgate tasked himself with grappling with Medea's inherent power and how to represent it in a way that coincides with the previous assumption of her serving to represent young, medieval women. Looking into this adaptation, I find that Lydgate seems to steer away from it as much as possible, reinforcing the idea that "useless" women with supernatural abilities do not inherently deserve their power. Not only does this presentation of Medea strip her of one of her defining characteristics, it reinforces the idea that a woman's power should be used to complement the wants of their most closely associated man—in this case, Jason.[38] In understanding the introduction of magic in this sense, it would not be unfounded to assume that Medea, in

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[37] For a similar treatment of this issue, see Mary C. Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, *Women and Power in the Middle* Ages (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988) and Overing and Bennett, "Feminism in Old English Studies," *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 10.1 (1990), p. 16.

[38] This is primarily a result of later medieval societal expectations, not Anglo-Saxon. See Overing and Bennett, "Anglo-Saxon Studies: Gender and Power: Feminism in Old English Studies" for more information on how the two cultural eras engaged with women differently.

her later narrative, would likely be fully presented as the sorceress she is to better reinforce the idea that a woman with excessive power, who rejects her defining man, is nothing more than a budding villainess with no concerns beyond her own personal vindication. It is in this sense that Lydgate establishes a medieval foundation for the social silencing of women and leads by example in showing the reduction of a powerful woman within her "palatable" prime.

Lydgate seems to define Medea by her proximity to Jason, wherein most of her decisions are informed by his wants, while her own desires stay on a backburner. This is most clearly shown through Medea's rejection of her birthright in favor of loving, and being with, Jason (bk. 1, ll. 2884-93). It is here, where Medea rejects what was once promised to her, that Lydgate most succinctly displays feminine, anticipatory grief.[39] Grief, especially anticipatory, is so crucial in this context as it sheds light, for readers, on Medea's lived experience as a woman.[40] The palpable grief shown by Lydgate's character is uniquely feminine in nature, as in a patrilineal society men are not forced to remove a facet of their identity for marriage; meanwhile, their female counterparts are prepared for such an inevitability for the vast majority of their young lives. Medea's choice to love Jason not only paints an image of grief, but also aptly displays the speed and effectiveness with which a young woman must get over her familial mourning; Lydgate dissipates Medea's grief swiftly by acknowledging that she was "recounforted"

[39] My usage of "proleptic grief" is wholly defined by femininity, wherein I find that this perspective, and experience, of grief within this context may only be truly felt by a female character.
[40] This lived experience would likely coincide with what Lydgate identified in his day-to-day life.

(comforted) by hope (bk. 1, ll. 2761-2), driving home the speedy expectation of recovery. Due to the commonplace nature of this social dislocation, Medea would have likely been expected to remove herself from her sorrow swiftly; it is here that my term "anticipatory grief" comes into play: I believe that Medea enacted, processed, and coped with her, personal stages of grief long before her union with Jason.

In the most general of definitions, grief is most frequently associated with death or the loss of life. Despite my reading of Medea's grief not coinciding with the preconceived definition, I still find value in the general discussion and understanding of grieving in the Middle Ages. Ample understanding of grief in the context of death extends effectively into the understanding of grief as a whole and presents a nuanced view into how Lydgate may have intended for Medea to be understood, within the existing social context of the time. In medieval thought, grief was seen as something that was active, or able to be explicitly triggered by an event—in all cases, loss.[41] This proposed definition is critical as it does not limit itself to grief being only considered in circumstances of death, but rather in the inclusive definition of loss as a whole. Christopher Ocker explains that grief's sorrow "designated a soul moved by separation," while mourning "was the activity that performed, replicated, exercised, and compensated for grief."[42] Ocker's division between sorrow and mourning is useful, as it divides two

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[41] Christoper Ocker, "The Motion of Another's Death: Grief and Mourning," *A Companion to Death, Burial, and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, C.1300-1700,* edited by Philip Booth and Elizabeth Tingle (Leiden: Brill, 2021), p. 369.
[42] Ocker, "The Motion of Another's Death," p. 369.

typically associated facets of grief, effectively acknowledging the different perspectives in which a medieval subject may experience and perform their grief. Most notable is Ocker's discussion of mourning, which diverges from his description of sorrow in the fact that the former does not center on the emotional impact on a soul. Here the medieval understanding of grief, and Medea's experience, is expanded as Medea is now able to occupy and fill a grieving space without the necessity of losing someone. By identifying grief as something that is not set in stone and not entirely controlled by the proximity of death, we can envision grief as taking on a far more nuanced role in *Troy Book*. While grief is certainly felt through death, given *Troy Book*'s status as a war narrative, it is just as critically defined by inclusive, intangible forms of grief. The melancholic stasis of grief is certainly felt by Medea as she mourns the potential of her future, and the loss of her past.[43]

Anticipatory grief unites with medieval considerations for loss efficiently, as it coincides well with Ocker's aforementioned action of compensation in mourning. Keying in on the term of compensation, it is of extreme importance that anticipatory grief is identified first and foremost as fitting into this definition; as the grief and mourning are in anticipation of a loss, rather than in response to an already occurring event, this format of grieving deviates from Ocker's defined characterization of medieval grief. Despite this, though, by attending to Ocker's term of compensation, one can see how smoothly anticipatory grief fits in with its commonplace counterparts. To be anticipatory is to

[43] Ocker, "The Motion of Another's Death," p. 369.

respond to something that has not yet taken place. In line with this definition, it would seem that anticipatory, proleptic grief may perhaps not align with the commonplace, responsive nature of grief. On the contrary, anticipatory grief is exactly the kind of grief that is established within this historical context, as the experienced grief is no less tangible than it would be in the future. Instead of identifying this style of mourning as a deviation, I see it more as an advance on the inevitable; considering my identification of anticipatory grief as a specifically feminine experience (in the medieval context),[44] I find that this style of mourning operates in the same way as its sorrowful neighbor.

In my view, the most truthful indication of anticipation in grief, mourning, and sorrow is the lack of its depiction; this is due to the forward-thinking nature of the grief itself.[45] Allowed to anticipate and grieve a loss, the mourner may enact their beneficial catharsis and will, more than likely, have no reason to enact the full throes of mourning when the anticipated event finally does happen. The desensitization of this kind of mourning is another reason I attribute medieval anticipatory grief to femininity, as a majority of young women were primed, prepped, and polished for their future loss. It is due to this inherent expectation that I argue that, though it certainly does live within someone, anticipatory grief is something that is felt behind closed doors and not shown,

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[44] This is not to say that men of the time could not experience anticipatory grief in some capacity, but they are far less likely to have experienced the socially defined, intangible one that I discuss here.
[45] Challenging the idea of grief as an act of introspection and retrospection is of critical importance to my investigation into the overlap between grieving and anticipation. For more insight into the relationship between anticipation as a methodology of preemptively grieving or suffering in medieval society and literature, see R.D. Perry, "Anticipatory Trauma and Medieval Horror in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Exemplaria*, forthcoming.

nor depicted, to the public at large. The limitation of anticipatory grief is reinforced by Lydgate, as Medea's debate on loving Jason and having to turn away from her family lineage happens in her bedchambers prior to the couple's midnight meeting. In discussion of Medea's feelings, the term "drede" (dread) is reoccurring. Lydgate describes Medea as simultaneously hoping and fearing her future, establishing a unity between her love and her anticipation of loss (bk. 1, l. 2751). Similarly, Medea dreads to "meten with Iason" (meet with Jason) (bk. 1, l. 2755), as it means that the culmination of her worries will finally come to ahead. Within this moment of waiting, Medea's anticipatory grief becomes the clearest; as she waits, anticipating the arrival of Jason, Medea can do little more than recount her worries regarding her royal status, her desire to marry Jason, and her concern for the future. Multifaceted, anticipatory grief takes advantage of many instances of mourning rather than just a single loss. Lydgate's Medea must toe the line between dread and love.

Investigating Geoffrey Chaucer, an inspiration for Lydgate,[46] M. C. Bodden considers similar questions of medieval grief and its attribution to gender. In an article on the women featured in *The Canterbury* Tales, Bodden reinforces my analysis of womanhood and its relationship to grief, writing that "The women [...] on the other hand,

[46] Lydgate directly references and quotes Chaucer multiple times in *Troy Book*. D.M. Smith's *Troy Book* index lists Chaucer as being mentioned on pages 214-5, 317, 299, 400, and 676 in the translated text (p. 718). Chaucer's work *Troilus and Criseyde* was also referenced by Lydgate while he wrote *Troy Book*.

grieve over the loss of power over the self."[47] Here, one can see a reinforcement not only of the division between masculinity and femininity in grief, but in the considerations of what each sex can grieve as well. Aligning with my identification of Medea's grief as one that is notably based in her loss of lineage and autonomy, Bodden argues that the women of Chaucer grieve the same fate. Through aligning Lydgate with Chaucer, and acknowledging the influence Chaucer had on him, it is not unfounded to suggest that the pair's penning of feminine grief corresponds with one another. In his *Legend of Good* Women, Chaucer supports the importance of Medea's grief of lineage when he writes that Medea "[...] loved him beter than her-self, I gesse, / And lafte her fader and her heritage."[48] This goes further than contextualization, as it displays that Medea must value Jason above all and reject anything else. As Lydgate's Medea is a woman who grieves prior to the loss of her power, and is subsequently proven right later in the text, her depiction meshes nicely with Bodden's analysis. Likewise, Bodden's phrase "on the other hand" is of note as well, as it signifies, similarly, that masculinity inherently differs in the perception and understanding of grief. Coupling this excerpt with the rest of the quote, it can be concluded that medieval men of the time were unlikely, if at all, to have to mourn the loss of their own personal power. In fact, it would seem that the only time a masculine subject would have to mourn such a thing would be as a result of war

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[47] M. C. Bodden, "Disordered Grief and Fashionable Afflictions in Chaucer's 'Franklin's Tale' and 'The Clerk's Tale,'" *Grief and Gender: 700-1700,* edited by Jennifer Vaught and Lynne Bruckner (New York City: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 62.
[48] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, edited by Rev. Walter W. Skeat (London: Oxford University Press, 1889), p. 82, ll. 1665-66.

conquest. While Lydgate does depict masculine grief at length, it is typically reserved for the loss of a companion or loved one, such as in the grief of Achilles for Patroclus.[49] Not commonplace, though, is masculine grief in response to loss of control, be that through power, love, or other conquests. Men's grief seemingly exists as a foil that subsequently reinforces the division of the sexes; while men are busy fighting war and maintaining control, they do not have ample time to grieve everything they lose. Women, on the other hand, have plenty of time to express and engage with their grief due to the limitations placed on their roles within society.

Establishing Medea as the prominent character for expressing anticipatory grief aligns effectively with historical, literary, and social precedent. Unifying my analysis alongside scholarship reinforces the classification of Medea as both an othered character and female griever in the text, wherein she aligns with feminine images of grieving even outside of the text. Medea's sorrowful approach to grief allows for her to go through the motions of loss, without having to explicitly find herself mourning the death of another. Through this reading, Medea becomes better suited to exist as a reflection of Lydgate's perceptions of womanly grieving, especially when considering his relationship to Chaucer. Similarly, investigating historical scholarship opens up ample opportunities for

[49] Though there is scholarly debate on the relationship between Achilles and Patroclus, it is made explicitly clear that they have a close relationship. Caroline and Samuel Harding refer to Patroclus as "the dearest friend of Achilles." Patroclus is killed by Hector while wearing Achilles's armor in battle, resulting in extreme grief where Achilles endlessly mourned and wept Patroclus. Later, Achilles desecrates the body of Hector as revenge for the murder. This is seen in Books 23 and 24 of the *Iliad*, Lydgate criticizes Homer for the behavior of Achilles in bk. 4, ll. 2780-2802. See further Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by Emily Wilson (New York City: W. W. Norton & Company, 2023).

discussion not only of Medea as an indication of gender differences, but also how she presents herself as a griever, alongside what that means for the entirety of *Troy Book*.

Medea's swift processing of anticipatory grief in the text reinforces my earlier claim about Medea's representation as a sort of medieval everywoman in the earlier stages of *Troy Book*. Standing between "loue and schame" (love and shame) (bk. 1, ll. 2232-31), Medea struggles to choose whether to grieve her future loss of status and love Jason or to forget him in favor of family expectations. The swiftness of Medea's sorrow can be attributed to Fortune, whom Lydgate criticizes for her trickery.[50] Fortune's encouragement of Medea's love quells the woman's building dread, allowing for her to quickly overcome her grief and anticipation in this moment of reflection. It is through her expression and process of grief—mostly prior to the crux of the narrative itself—that I find the truest representation of medieval womanhood through Medea. Under the assumption that Lydgate utilized Medea as a narrative technique to mirror his understanding of the women of society at the time we can say that here, medieval women are shown in a new light. The grief of marriage and her ultimate choice to affix herself to a new masculine figure paint Medea as a character of prominence, and one that represents a broad swath of female experiences. Coinciding with the historical trend of the medieval period, most women (save for nuns, other wives of Christ, spinsters, etc.) were likely victims of this unique form of gendered grief.[51] It is because of this sweeping ability to

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[50] *Troy* Book, bk. 1, ll. 2258-70.
[51] The "historical trend" in discussion here refers to the trend of patrilineality, which highly valued male heirs and kept lines of succession and wealth male-dominated.

represent a broad group of women that I find Medea to be a leading female figure in *Troy Book*, despite being featured in the text semi-sporadically. Though she is not solely defined by her instances of grief, they do help to conceptualize and modernize feminine figures for readers of the time. Likewise, Medea's choice to be with, and assist, Jason brings forth further nuance into the understanding of what Medea's character seems to represent: agency and autonomy.

While medieval women certainly were allowed some autonomy in their day-to-day life, it was extremely rare that a young woman could choose her own suitor, regardless of familial intervention.[52] The aforementioned cultural context is where Medea diverges from the women she tends to represent, as, beyond loss of lineage, Medea does not experience many adverse consequences for her deviation from the norm. Despite this, I still see Medea as a character indicative of medieval womanhood's lack of agency. Though she is granted an unusual amount of autonomy for the historical context in which she was produced, her other inclusions and interactions within the text reinforce her narrative purpose. Diverging from late medieval expectations in *Troy Book* does not doom Medea to literary obscurity in the narrative, but instead draws attention back to her original, classical myth. Due to the vast prominence of classical studies within medieval education and their literary retellings, many likely knew of the story of Medea. Lydgate's

[52] It should be noted that post-conquest considerations for women are oftentimes seen as more regressive than that of the Anglo-Saxons. For better understanding of womanhood in the time of the Anglo-Saxons, see Paula J. Bailey, "Daughters, Wives, and Widows: A Study of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Noble Women," M.S.E thesis, Henderson State University, 2001.

inclusion of autonomy for Medea allows for the foundation of her tale to become established. As Medea diverges from what is expected of medieval women, she reinforces the analysis that others her.[53] This othering of Medea presents a degree of separation between her and medieval women, allowing them the opportunity to pull away from her representation. Lydgate's presentation of Medea exists in tandem with herself—wherein a part of her represents and reflects the perceived experiences of women at the time, while the other paints her in a light that allows readers the opportunity to potentially validate, or sympathize, with her looming villainy.

When analyzing Lydgate's character of Medea, it is disingenuous to define her influence solely by what moments in the text impact her character most prominently. As Medea was most involved in the search for the fleece, she very rarely comes into the Trojan War narrative at all. Coupling Medea's character, and inclusion, alongside the narrative intent offers ample insight into understanding what purpose she serves in a wartime narrative—that is to say, what Medea represents in the text as a whole, rather than just her personal narrative. As an assistant to Jason, Medea serves the role as an agreeable, helpful woman. Early in *Troy Book*, Medea is a woman that readers are swiftly able to identify as helpful and acceptable in terms of her womanhood. This validation reinforces the idea that her sense of self, as well as her magical powers, may only be

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[53] My inclusion of the term "others" or "othering" stems from queer theory. In defining someone, or something, as "othered" I am acknowledging it as something considered strange, off-beat, different, or "queer." All of these definitions point out the separation between Medea and the "normal" society in which she occupies.

considered worthy in their efforts in assisting masculine heroes. Acceptance of Medea is effectively intertwined with her usefulness as a tool, and almost entirely banks on the woman's capability to ensure someone else's dreams come true. Medea's presentation with regards to her union with Jason, her assistance, and mourning is relevant in acknowledging the woman's tainted future. Though her character is palatable early on, readers must keep in mind what she will become. Juxtaposing Medea's sweet actions early on highlights the later putative and untrustworthy aspects of her character. Perceiving Medea's character in such a way is once again reliant on how she coincides with the men that surround her. In this discussion one sees that Medea's anticipatory grief comes to the forefront once more: as she loses a facet of herself, all of her choices and considerations would henceforth be interpreted in a male lens, alongside gauging her "worthiness" and "usefulness" as a person within a patriarchal perspective. Once more Medea exists as a representative of grief, displaying the intangible sorrow that exists alongside the loss of oneself in favor of pleasing another.[54]

Medea's loss and grief in favor of others is shown best in her agreement to help Jason in his quest for the golden fleece. Medea explains that she will help Jason, for she knows he will die without her, which is then followed by a recounting of everything she will lose in her dedication to him. The losses anticipated by Medea are largely social,

[54] Unlike other entries (see *Chapter 2: Cassandra* and *Chapter 3: Penthesilea*), much of Medea's grief is intangibly defined. All of the identified grieving for Medea are affixed to social, cultural losses rather than loss of life or corporeal items.

touching once again on the societal influence that directs the conduct of women. In the beginning, Medea cites the loss of her father:

> For my fader, whom I loue moste,
> Rather þan 3e schulde þus be loste,
> I schal offende, and outerly displease
> My frendes alle, so it may do 3ow ese. (bk. 1, ll. 2523-6)
>
> (For my father, whom I love the most, / Rather than that ye should be lost, / I shall offend, and utterly displease / My friends and all, so it may do you ease.)

Socially, Medea is to become an outcast to all that she has known. When discussing King Cethes, Medea notes that she loves him "moste" (bk. 1, l. 2523); here, Lydgate's Medea highlights the importance of her life as it is. Acknowledging the value that Medea holds for her father drives forward the intensity of her grief and the warranting of her anticipation. Effectively she is trading one love for another, and Medea is forced to hope that the trade will be equal for her. Medea's reflection in this moment makes clear the dedication that she has for her father; it also helps readers conceptualize the weight of her decision to love Jason. Equating her love to a tangible list of losses, Medea's grief becomes something that readers can effectively measure. Similarly, Medea's sorrow becomes inherently associated with her ability to please the man with whom she is most closely associated. Beyond loving her father, Medea acknowledges the offense her choice will bring to her court (headed by her father) and friends. Should Medea's choices not benefit King Cethes, then it is only logical that they should be beneficial for Jason instead.

Connection to Jason is critical in Lydgate's portrayal of Medea; beyond being his lover, his companion, and later his enemy, Medea is presented in *Troy Book* as an

extension of Jason. After her initial appearance in the text, most of Medea's experiences and influence throughout the text are solely defined by Jason or, otherwise, men as a whole, whilst Medea exists merely in the earlier lines of *Troy Book*. Since Lydgate affixes Medea so heavily to Jason, nearly all of her characterization (femininity included) is centered on the latter. When I identify this distribution of character, I do not mean that Jason suddenly occupies the space set aside for Medea—that will continue to be hers—but instead her narrative prowess, motivations, and representations become primarily defined by what Jason accomplishes with her by his side, rather than by her own actions. Though Medea lends most of herself to her lover, Jason does in fact offer his own femininity back to her—the small facets of womanhood left within him by a mother, sister, or other female figure.[55] Femininity, here, expands beyond womanhood and instead encapsulates all that was to be expected of a woman in the medieval era.

A key idea within this definition is the medieval feminine ideal of sacrifice. Medea has already shown sacrificial femininity by turning away from her family, though the definition does not end here. Sacrifice is intrinsically bound to femininity and womanhood—a mother sacrifices her body for her husband, and the resulting child, or a woman sacrifices her sexuality to make ends meet. I see this sacrifice in the union of Medea and Jason even prior to their coupling, as Medea consistently has to give up and

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[55] For more information on the relationship of femininity with medieval men, see Bonnie Millar-Heggie, "The Performance of Masculinity and Femininity: Gender Transgression in 'The Sowdone of Babylone,'" *MIRATOR* (2004), pp. 1-14.

sacrifice pieces of herself, and her life, for her love while Jason gives up nothing. Lydgate's Jason, on the other hand, changes nothing about himself to get what he desires, a big difference from Medea. In fact, Jason appears as a beacon and pinnacle of masculinity, whereby he dedicates himself to a perilous quest and presents an image of the ideal medieval knight. Lydgate also juxtaposes Jason with Medea by having him reject traits that were previously associated with womanhood. Medea's love for Jason is excessively defined by her own personal chagrin, which stems from her anticipatory guilt and mourning. Meanwhile, when Medea attempts to dissuade Jason from pursuing the golden fleece, he claims that he would be a shameful coward to give up his quest (bk. 1, ll. 2450-4). Beyond his masculine persona, it is in this moment that readers become most aware of Jason's rejection of feminine features within himself. As a result of Medea metaphorically distributing herself to Jason, and likewise accepting his rejected femininity, all of Jason's victories carry away a part of Medea. This not only solidifies Jason as a masculine representation of her but likewise furthers the logical progression for the woman's classical bitterness.

I find that the grief experienced by Medea directly correlates to how her power is processed and presented within the text. Her power, though partly reduced in this text, is explored early on in Book One. When discussing Medea during the feast of Cethes, Lydgate notes that Medea is educated in "astronoyme" (astronomy), "nygromauncye" (necromancy), "illusions" (the ability to cause optical illusions) as well as "heuenly influences" (heavenly influences); when discussing her powers, Lydgate notes she could make "þe wyndes [...] blowe" (the winds [...] blow), cause "thondre" (thunder), "li3te"

(lightning), "hail" (hail), and "snowe" (snow), as well as turn the day to night (bk. 1, ll. 1620-49).[56] Introducing the nature of her magic, Lydgate does not strip away Medea's inherent power, nor does he attempt to reduce her character in her initial introduction. It is during this feast scene that the bulk of Medea's representation is established. Following his description, Lydgate offers commentary on womanhood and how Medea aligns with it. In the discussion of maidens, Lydgate writes:

> For maidenes han ofte sythes spared
> To schewen oute that thei desyre in dede;
> As it falleeth, whoso can take hede,
> That whil thei flouren in virginité
> And for youthe have no liberté
> To specifie that her herte wolde,
> Thei kepe hem cloos, for thei be nat bolde
> To schewen out the somme of her sentence. (bk. 1, ll. 2022-29)
>
> (For maidens have oftentimes since spared / To showen out that they desire indeed, / As it falleth, who so can take heed; / That while they flower in virginity, / And for their youth have no liberty / To specify all that their hearts would, / They keep them close, they be not bold / To showen out the end of their sentence.)

Recounting the restraint of medieval maidens, this except from Lydgate establishes the societal expectations for women: the standard of demure maidenhood. Crucially, lines 2022-23 explain that women of true maidenhood oftentimes resist the desire to speak, or act upon, their wants. Following these lines of limitation is the harrowing term of "liberté," meaning freedom, or liberty. Here, Lydgate speaks to the reality of freedom for young women: there is none.

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[56] Though it can differ from translation to translation, Medea is typically associated with wild magic, potions, and poisons, as well as the goddess Hecate.

In the Book One feast scene, Lydgate employs Medea as a catalyst for his description of young maidenhood. Due to her education, power, and stature one would likely believe that Medea was the exception to the rule of young ladies, though this is swiftly denied. Instead of being presented as a woman who goes against this social grain, Medea reinforces the limitations of womanhood, wherein she is "kepyng ay silence, / Ne lete no worde by hir lippis passe," (keeping e'er silence, / Ne'er let no work by her lips pass) (bk. 1, ll. 2030-1). In this moment, Medea follows the expectation of silence placed on women. Even though she is educated,[57] and the narrative is following her line of thought, she chooses not to speak her mind and instead exists passively alongside the masculine forces at the feast. Here, Medea showcases a unique, gendered grief in which women who could vastly contribute to discussion instead choose to reside in the background and not take attend to any of their social inclinations. It is this inherent limitation of female personhood that reinforces the idea of Medea existing without power. Effectively, Medea is drastically stripped of her power in this moment, as she instead subtly grieves how the social expectations thrust upon her are oppressive. Though the woman holds a complex mind and a strong force of nature,[58] she is first and foremost bound by her sex rather than her potential.

One of the only times readers see the established social precedent reverse is following the feast, when Medea and Jason rendezvous to confess their love to one

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[57] See pp. 60-61 in Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen ("Medea's wondrous powers over Nature") for more information on Medea's education, skills, and inclinations.
[58] Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, pp. 59-60, bk. 1, ll. 1584-1680.

another. Prior to their talk, Medea is seen grieving over her situation within her chamber—regardless of her love for Jason, her "Loue and Schame" continues to direct her mind (bk. 1, l. 2164). It is this grief of love and loss of potential that highlights the limitations placed upon women in antiquity and in Lydgate's day. Medea and Jason's following discussion continues to develop the importance of female limitations,[59] alongside attention to the headstrong nature of men (a theme that will become recurring within the war narrative proper). Despite Medea warning him about possible dangers entailed in seeking out the fleece, Jason disregards Medea's concern and continues to press forward with his intent (bk. 1, ll. 2451-88). In this moment Medea takes on a nearly motherly role while Jason assumes the position of a stubborn child; though she wants what is best for him, Medea's societal limitations keep her word from carrying a weight heavy enough to challenge the desires of a man. This exchange assists in establishing Medea both as a woman who is strong—and has the potential to be stronger—and as a woman bound by her society, who will never have the intrinsic influence her male counterparts do. In response to Jason's stubbornness, Medea concedes and offers her beloved help on his quest, explaining that her assistance is the only thing that will allow Jason to complete the feat and live (bk. 1, l. 2520-40). Jason's refusal to reconsider his plan, however, results in a direct contradiction to Medea's wants and ideas. Though the two love each other, Lydgate's presentation of the two in this moment reinforces the

[59] Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Henry Bergen: pp. 80-90.

power dynamics present in the relationship; though Medea holds all the magical power, and is the deciding factor between life and death, Jason's wants and needs will always triumph, and Medea must sacrifice something she believes and values in order to make this happen. It is in my reading of this scene that I once again point to Medea's existence as a representative of passive medieval womanhood as seen by Lydgate.

Surprisingly, following Medea's agreement with him, Jason lets his lover know he will serve as her knight,[60] saying:[61]

> Wherefor as now hooly I resigne
> Herte, body, my life, and eke my deth
> In-to 3our hond, while me lasteth brethe,
> With alle þe othes þat I afferme may,
> For to perseuere to myn endyng day
> 3our trew[e] spouse, as I haue said and sworne,
> And 3ou behested pleynly her-to-forne;
> And her-vppon, euery þing obeie
> Þat may 3ou plese, til tyme þat I deye. (bk. 1, ll. 2640-5)
>
> (Wherefore as now I wholly doth resign / Heart and body, my life and my death / Into your hand, while me lasteth breath, / With all the oaths affirmed that I may, / To preserve unto mine ending day / Your true spouse, as I have said and sworn, / And you behested plainly there before; / And hereupon, everything obey / That you may please, 'til such time that I die.)

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[60] Jason specifically refers to himself as a "kny3t" in bk. 1, l. 2392.

[61] It should be noted that the inclusion of knighthood was most likely a result of Lydgate's modernization of the piece. Derek Pearsall claims that Lydgate's critical relevancy in scholarship is primarily due to his "humanism," or else his example of "new and important directions in English literary tradition, towards a more distinct political consciousness." Acknowledging Lydgate beyond his influence as a prolific poet and highlighting his structured roots in the development and input of medieval consciousness helps recognize the critical role "medievalization" plays in Lydgate's narratives. It is in this vein that I identify the establishment of knighthood in *Troy Book* to be especially relevant, as it is a consistent and clear example of chivalric culture's interpolation in the text as a method of appealing to medieval values and audiences. For a more in-depth discussion of the influence of humanism and Lydgate, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge, 1970), ch. 1.

Not only does this declaration further contextualize *Troy Book* within a medieval environment, but it thrusts upon Medea a hefty amount of power; in fact, Bergen likens this dedication from Jason to plighting one's "troth" (in marriage), furthering Jason's connection to chivalric knighthood.[62] To have control over a man on a mission is to have true power itself. For a moment it seems as if all of Medea's talents will finally be put to use; perhaps she will not have to continue to give up parts of herself in order to see Jason succeed after all. This power and equality are qualified by Lydgate, though, as he reinforces Medea's sorrowful reality: to love and help Jason she must "sette a-syde" (set aside) her royal birth and heritage (bk. 1, ll. 2530-32). After coming to this realization, Medea and Jason are able to marry. The focus on marriage and union within the text sets a jovial tone.[63] But when this is coupled with the established realities and interpretations of Medea's womanhood it becomes clear that much of herself, and her lineage, cannot exist in the same reality wherein she is loved by Jason, and has a choice over that love. Medea makes this rationalization clear by her rejection of her kingdom and wealth, which was an impasse for her marriage to Jason. Despite Jason's promise to serve her, Medea is forever inextricably bound and disempowered by him as she may never truly exist with the power she deserves without his proximity. Similarly, the little power she does have when she is with Jason is afforded to her by him, as Jason's betrayal displays that his power still dominates hers, despite his claiming to be a servant of Medea.

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[62] Lydgate, *Lydgate's Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, p. 90, bk. 1, ll. 2626-44.
[63] This tone is furthered on page 90 in *Lydgate's Troy Book*, wherein Medea is described with "so hi3e gladnes;" bk. 1, l. 2652.

Power in *Troy Book* exists not only as a way to get ahead, or a means of limitation, but also as a marker. Though Medea and Jason both hold power—with the former arguably having tangibly more than the latter—it is distributed in separate ways on the basis of sex. Lydgate ensures that Medea will always be seen as a woman first, and an educated sorceress second; this choice by Lydgate reinforces the modernization of the *Iliad* tale, as Lydgate's Medea is defined more by her gender than by her assumed birthright, unlike her classical predecessor. While Medea's status as King Cethes's heir is briefly touched upon in *Troy Book*, it is not excessively explored. What Lydgate does key in on instead is his understanding and perception of women. Condemning what he views as the nature of women, Lydgate criticizes feminine penchants for insatiability, instability, and lustfulness (bk. 1, ll. 1823-80). The critical lens that Lydgate places on womanhood, and the subsequent deemphasis on Medea's birthright, highlights the division of influence between the two that is intrinsic to *Troy Book*. With this understanding, it is not unfounded to equate much of Medea's power in Lydgate's context to her magic,[64] as it is the facet that offers the woman most of her limited agency, as seen in her discussion with Jason. Medea's magic wielding substantially others her even more than her gender in a male-dominated world. Recalling Lydgate's discussion regarding the silence of maidens, it becomes clear that medieval culture prioritizes masculine influence over feminine. Within this contextualization, it would be uncommon

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[64] Though she is a royal heir by blood, Lydgate's discussion on the nature of women makes clear that her value power does not stem from her birthright. Something that is furthered by her rejection of such and contextualized by the limited power she holds over Jason's quest.

for a young woman to be effectively educated outside the basic minimum; with the highlighting of Medea's education and power, the woman effectively becomes a threat to medievalized Greek society—a ticking time bomb that threatens masculine control, with her grief serving as the ultimate countdown.

CHAPTER II:

CASSANDRA

Abstract

Arguably one of the most notable Trojan women, Cassandra occupies a unique role in her *Troy Book* representation. Cassandra's desire to save the city of Troy serves as not only the most memorable feature of her characterization, but as her biggest limitation as well. Social disregard for Cassandra leaves her expression of grieving as something that is distressed and disruptive. In analyzing both Cassandra's role in the text as well as outside perceptions and reactions to her, this chapter seeks to map out how feminine grief was perceived by those uninvolved. Looking to Cassandra's engagement with desperation and prophecy, one can better understand the connection between femininity and anticipated, insurmountable loss. Exploring Cassandra in such a way sheds light on familial rejection, helpless desperation, isolation, and destruction of hope. Cassandra's role in *Troy Book* unforgettably highlights the overlap between medieval, feminine grieving and the desire to save. Approaching her role in the narrative with consideration of her internal motivators allows for one to explore a grief that is not yet meant to be felt.

Keywords: Cassandra, Trojan War, prophecy, proleptic grief, isolation, invasion, mythological curse

In her original tale Cassandra was given the gift of foresight by the god Apollo, who was hoping to curry romantic favors from her.[65] When she refused, Apollo did not strip away his gift, but instead qualified it, whereby Cassandra would always see the future as it is, though no one would ever believe her.[66] Being a Trojan, Cassandra's foresight is consistently and inextricably bound up with Troy itself, burdening her with the knowledge of the land's future. It is in this vein that Cassandra's role in *Troy Book* becomes clear: serving as a pseudo-oracle, Cassandra may deliver prophecy, yet she will always be plagued to watch the tragedy befall those she seeks to warn. Within this guise of prophecy, Cassandra's grief occupies a unique space. Rather than grieving a tangible death that has befallen her people, Cassandra must instead embrace a sense of proleptic, anticipatory grief, mourning those that are not yet lost. Her grief and distress at the knowledge of the fate of Troy typically is misconstrued as hysteria or insanity, assisted in part by Apollo's altering of her gift. It is in this perceived insanity that Cassandra is indicative of the less palatable aspects of womanhood during Lydgate's time, embodying the wild and unpredictable nature of a seemingly silenced woman. Investigating Cassandra's premonition following the marriage of Paris and Helen, as well as the subsequent rejection of her claim, presents the opportunity to consider a more nuanced

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[65] Joyce E. Salisbury refers to Cassandra as a "Mythological Greek Prophet." For more information on Cassandra's gift of prophecy, as well as other retellings of her story, see Salisbury's *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World*, pp. 41-42.

[66] This depends on the version, Salisbury's encyclopedia states that her oracle abilities were bestowed onto her when snakes "lick[ed at her] sensory organs in order to purify them" which resulted in Cassandra receiving the gift of foresight through "the purification of the serpents," p. 42.

perspective of grief: the future. Along with her grief, Cassandra's sex likewise plays a crucial role in the understanding of how her grieving would have likely been digested not only by her own audience, but Lydgate's as well. Serving in a way reminiscent of the Greek Chorus, Cassandra speaks nothing but truth and warning yet is sent away to prison to wallow in her own helplessness and sorrow.

Helen, for Cassandra, is the culmination of her sorrow and fears. Equating the downfall of Troy to the woman, Cassandra stresses that her arrival unto their land will surely result in its demise. This claim results in the establishment of her insanity in the text. Considering Cassandra in a medieval environment encourages one to draw connections between her and contemporary humoral theory with the perception of female hysteria at the time. This rejection of her claims and assurance in her own certainty establishes within her a unique sense of grief, wherein she must—similarly to Medea—grieve her status and prestige since, despite her Trojan pedigree, no one in the court respects her prophecy enough to listen to her. Lydgate's stylization of Cassandra's jarring speech patterns during moments of prophecy is unique as well, and places readers in a strange position. Cassandra's accusatory tone towards Helen makes for a prophecy that is not only a warning, but an insult directed at the root of her sorrow: Helen. Cassandra's two driving motivators in her speech unite, becoming a dreadful warning. Considering her caution, though readers know what she claims is to become true, the frazzled and hysteric nature of Cassandra's speaking allows for some semblance of doubt to come creeping in, resulting in something of misplaced faith that the war itself may not play out as she describes it. In her denunciation of Helen, Cassandra exclaims:

> Allas, allas! I seie to þe, Eleyne,
> Vnhappy woman, causere of oure peyne,
> Hard & vn3ely, and also graceles,
> Vnwelful woman, disturber of *oure* pes,
> Þou haste vs brou3t i*n* meschef & in were,
> Kyndled a brond to sette vs alle a-fere!
> Allas, þou art [þe] rote & grou*n*de of al,
> Of many drery fest[e] funeral
> Þat schal be holde amonge vs i*n* þis tou*n*! (bk. 2, ll. 4231-9)
>
> (Alas, alas! I say to thee, Helen, / Unhappy woman, causer of our pain, / Hard and unseemly, and also graceless, / Unhappy woman, disturber of our peace, / Thou hast us brought in mischief and in war, / Kindled a brand to set us all afire! / Alas, thou art the root and ground of all, / Of many dreary feast and funeral / That shall be held among us in this town!)

Beyond slinging barbs at Helen, Cassandra brings forth a very tangible depiction of death in her claim, directing attention to the countless funerals that would befall Troy should she remain. Lydgate engages with both Cassandra's disdain and her distress; coupling this narrative with the commonplace knowledge regarding the Trojan War, the reader is distinctly able to see how her message may soon come to fruition.

Immediately after her prophecy, Lydgate remarks that Cassandra ran "in subbarbe and in streete" (in suburb and in street) (bk. 2, l. 4241). This organization of events characterizes Cassandra as desperate, seeking to regain what little control she may have over the situation at hand. Despite being cruel in her analysis of Helen, the heart of Cassandra is seemingly in the right place, seeking to protect her people with all the might she can muster. By including her running, and subsequent declaration to those in the streets, Lydgate paints Cassandra far more sympathetically, as her distress can be seen as a palpable desire to protect. It is here in this dramatic claim against Helen that readers can see the anticipatory grief of Cassandra more clearly and thus begin to conceptualize the

inherent weight it places upon her. Seeking to warn all that will listen, yet cursed to be valued by none, Cassandra is seen as little more than a hysteric woman who can do nothing to protect the lives of those who doubt her.

The vision culminates with a noise leaving Cassandra, one that is so shrill and terrible that Priam immediately detains and imprisons her (bk. 2, ll. 4245-51). Lydgate rationalizes Priam's reaction to Cassandra, stating that "be-cause of hir affray" (because of her attack) he is validated in his choice to isolate her (bk. 2, l. 4244). Lydgate's choice to validate Priam's rejection of his kin due to an "affray" offers readers insight into the perception of Cassandra by those who witness her outcry of accusation. "Affray," meaning assault or attack,[67] also evokes associations with fear and disturbance. Characterizing Cassandra's prophecy as an assault is an extremely personal line of thinking, as it can reference numerous "victims" to her assault. Most notably, and perhaps most obvious, is that Cassandra attacked Helen with her claim—an action that is certainly shameful from a woman of Cassandra's status. Another potential victim of Cassandra is Priam himself, whereby he sees the disgrace of his daughter as a personal affront to him and his public image. This reading, then, does shine a light on the swiftness of Cassandra's imprisonment. When considering the prophecy as a sign of the weakness and instability of Troy, Priam's choice to remove the whistleblower—his daughter—spares the narrative a potentially vulnerable Troy entirely. "Affray" carries even more weight,

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[67] "Affrai." *Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED727/track?counter=1&search_id=22405.

when considering how it would impact Trojan citizens en masse. Embracing the definition of fear, Cassandra's prophecy essentially assaults the general populace with fear, an uneasiness that explains Priam's disdain for his child. Though the woman only wishes to save Troy and her people, her warning is seen not as a guiding light but instead as an incessant abuse that needs to be silenced and quelled.

Cassandra's duality is underscored by Lynn Shutters, who described her as "a devotee of truth in both her fidelity to her city and in the veracity of her predictions."[68] Shutters introduces a poignant classification for Cassandra: that of a political devotee to Troy itself. While it is clear that Cassandra sees herself as responsible for the safety and future of her land, Troy, she is typically not connected to religious devotion in the text. The present separation between Cassandra and religiosity is seemingly due to the tension between Cassandra and Apollo; this strain is not wholly resolved by Lydgate, and Cassandra's perceived "religious" obligation and devotion must then be projected onto someone, or something, else. Cassandra's gifts assure a connection within her between her people and her lands, intertwining the three without much room for separation. It is within this connection between the oracle and Troy itself that one may see Cassandra as something of an extension of the land, a daunting symbol of misfortune.

The shift from palatable womanhood to distressed hysteria is something that Shutters identifies as commonplace in Lydgate's work, explaining that women in *Troy*

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[68] Lynn Shutters, "Truth, Translation, and the *Troy Book* Women," *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 32.1 (2001), p. 93.

Book "[adhere to] gender stereotypes [...] where women depicted as false beguilers of true men are effectively reversed."[69] Shutters's claim of "reversing women" evokes connections to silencing, wherein it seems that women perceived negatively, or as a threat to men, were to be removed from personhood entirely. The reading by Shutters is reinforced through Cassandra, as she is "effectively reversed" when sent to prison by Priam. The language of beguiling and reversal present in Shutters's analysis is critical in a gendered reading of Cassandra as her limitations are thrust onto her solely because of her sex. The medieval idea of the beguiling, tempting, and misleading woman is one that weaved its way into countless narratives, effectively ensuring that womanhood and feminine guidance should have little place in social spaces beyond child-rearing. Once again, the *Iliad* lends itself nicely to Lydgate. Building upon the classical depiction of Cassandra as a wild and magical woman, Lydgate can efficiently elide his narrative with the societal standards he was surrounded by. Similarly to Medea, Cassandra is bound, in medieval contexts, by the inexorable weight of her prophecy, which creates a hostile environment that punishes her womanhood.

In response to her outburst, Cassandra is placed in a prison, seemingly until the war proper is completed. Though the actual sentencing is a mere few lines, the language Lydgate utilizes is heavy and dreadful. Upon being placed in her solitude, the narrator notes: "And þus in prisun a while I leue her mourne, / And to [þe] Grekes I wil ageyn returne" (And thus in prison a while I let her mourn, / And to the Greeks I will again

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[69] Shutters, "Truth, Translation, and the *Troy Book* Women," p. 86.

return) (bk. 2, ll. 4253-4). Not only does this moment display the minimal care and regard that is granted to Cassandra, but it includes language of grief as well. Explicitly, Lydgate equates Cassandra's premonitions to loss and mourning and she is left to conduct her grieving in solitude.[70] This instance not only solidifies a loss-based reading of Cassandra but also measures the insurmountable weight of her responsibility. Tangibly, this gives a measurement to the immeasurable: her grief. Cassandra's grief is not solely her own, it is instead an amalgam of that of all Trojans; similarly, Cassandra within herself carries the burden of grief of those who will not get to feel it due to their untimely death. In this context, it is no wonder that Cassandra spits vitriol at Helen, as the latter is the single most defined reason for her to undertake the grieving process for thousands of lives—a fate that was completely avoidable.

The finality of the Trojan War is notable in relation to Cassandra in the same way that her prophecies are. As shown by Cassandra's claims, had Helen not arrived at Troy all bloodshed would have been avoided. Visions, in this context, should not be misconstrued. It is important to acknowledge that while Cassandra has the ability to see this future, it is not her responsibility (nor within her capabilities) to alleviate the threat—this was certainly confirmed by Apollo prior to the *Troy Book* narrative. Up until her imprisonment, the Trojan War had the potential to be a completely avoidable event,

[70] "Mŏrnen." *Middle English Dictionary*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED28664/track?counter=1&search_id=22405.

otherwise Cassandra would not have shouted her visions within the street. Following her solitude, the war itself becomes solidified, finalized and something that cannot be avoided—a fixed point in history. Cassandra's status as a woman should not be cast aside when reading her prophecies in this way. While she has no control over her audience's belief in her, Cassandra's womanhood certainly does her claims little favor, especially in a medieval context. The depiction of a harrowed woman ranting, raving, insulting, and running and then being locked away to avoid the spreading of her message is certainly something that rings true to the social standards within the time of Lydgate. The original *Iliad* offers Lydgate many opportunities to purvey this feminine narrative, allowing for the *Troy Book* retelling of Cassandra's hysteria to coincide effectively with its predecessor. The casting of doubt, alongside her inherent inferiority as a woman, presents Cassandra with an additional facet to her grief based solely by her womanhood. Mirroring Medea, Cassandra reinforces the evaluation of grief as something that is inherently affixed to gender in *Troy Book*. Seeing that all of Cassandra's misfortunes stem from her rejection of Apollo, as well as her ease of imprisonment by Priam, Cassandra's influence and resolve is weakened in the text, rooting itself in the negative association placed onto her by her womanhood. Pre-established societal expectations for feminine passivity similarly impact Cassandra, which concur potently with the social climate in which Lydgate penned his retelling.

With both femininity and prophecy as driving factors for Cassandra's grief, it becomes clear that she serves as a cathartic conduit for the Trojans. The citizens that do not heed her warning and perish in the fall of Troy are given to her to mourn like a

mother would with her child. Engaging in anticipatory grief to this extent is draining for Cassandra, leaving her harrowed.[71] Prior to begging Priam to stop his scheme and save Troy, Cassandra is forced to cope with her vision alone, a moment that offers readers insight into her into sorrowful nature. Described as "wepe[ing]" (weeping), "compleyne[ing]" (complaining), and with "here to-torn" (hair thoroughly torn) (bk. 2, ll. 3231-37), the grief-stricken and fear-laden Cassandra has become inconsolable, sobbing and tearing at herself. Her harrowing fear is what most efficiently connects Cassandra with a more broadened reading of womanhood, as she appears to represent a long-held stance toward women: empathy. An empathetic framework establishes the foundation to read Cassandra as not only her own representative character but also as a pseudo-everywoman figure in *Troy Book*. Encapsulating the call for feminine passivity, empathy, and nurturing, Cassandra takes it upon herself to challenge a defined threat and protect those that are innocent, regardless of whether they will heed her message or not. Despite, at first, not seeming wholly respectable, Cassandra certainly does embody this expectation of her; in fact, I would define her hysteria as a subsequent effect of Apollo's curse on her, rather than her actual nature. Throughout her whole life Cassandra has been bound by doubt, and when she needs faith the most it never comes. This would be enough to drive any woman to near insanity.

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[71] It should be noted that though this is likely the largest-scale tragic prophecy she's received, this would not be the first time Cassandra has had to engage with an exhaustive expectation for anticipatory grief.

Exploring the idea of femininity and its association with language, M.W. Hennequinn recorded and analyzed descriptions of the men and women of *Troy Book*. Cassandra's descriptions—referencing Hennequinn's data—orient her presentation, through Lydgate, as well as her personhood. According to Hennequinn,[72] Cassandra is defined by her chastity,[73] honesty, and womanliness. It should be noted, as well, that though Cassandra is defined by Lydgate by her honesty, she is not bound in the *Troy Book* text to troth. Cassandra's distance from chivalric "troth" does not detract from the inherent truth of her character, but instead serves to separate her from the masculine subjects that surround her.[74] Beyond the analysis of gender theory, the juxtaposition between Cassandra's character traits and those of her masculine counterparts assures that her imprisonment, socially, makes sense. With such womanly facets defining her it is certainly not surprising that, regardless of her royal stature, her grief would be cast aside. Priam locks up Cassandra "with-oute pite" (without pity) (bk. 2, l. 4252), a detail that brings forth a recognition of the lack of value accorded to womanhood and an absence of empathy for suffering women. This, of course, is intrinsic to a wartime narrative that values testosterone-fueled rage, masculinity, and the distinct rejection of sympathy.

[72] M.W. Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys: Pantysylla as Virgin Warrior in Lydgate's *Troy Book*," *Medieval Feminist Forum*, 34.1 (2002), p. 22, Table 1.
[73] Hennequinn counts the number of times a given word is used in relation to Cassandra.
[74] "Masculine" should not be taken to mean only men, as Penthesilea is certainly a masculine character when juxtaposed beside other *Troy Book* women. For more information on the masculinity and gender fluid nature of Penthesilea see *Chapter 3: Penthesilea.*

It is within this idea of the wartime narrative that I define *Troy Book* as something of a masculine narrative. Notably, most of the good that comes of the Trojan War is distinctly associated with those that are seen in the text as inherently masculine or deserving of masculine acceptance. While, in the context of the time, it is not surprising that masculinity takes precedence in the narrative, the culture of war certainly drives this point to a head. In his presentation of men—notably primarily war heroes, demigods, and kings—Lydgate orients them alongside their prowess, fury, hardiness, and chivalry.[75] This language of battle coincides effectively with the medieval standard for chivalric romance and honor upon the battlefield; thus, it is no mystery as to why Lydgate chose to prefer these values when introducing his men. Beyond the realm of masculinity, these terms and phrases define femininity as well. While men are valued by their military influence and skill, women are instead defined by how well they encapsulate the image of a quiet, respectable, and godly woman. Cassandra's prophecy, then, completely wrecks the few demure, womanly associations Lydgate had attributed to her thus far.

When beginning her prophecy Cassandra is not depicted as speaking or shouting. Instead, "sche gan to crye / Of piteous wo" (she began to cry / Of pitiful woe) (bk. 2, ll. 4192-3). This description of her noisemaking presents Cassandra as a disruptor of sorts, once again separating her from the standard of women laid out before her. It is her cries that paint the image of desperation that is attributed to her and bring to the foreground the

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[75] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 22 (Table 1).

anticipatory grief in her mind that is now a driving factor in her choices. Similarly, Cassandra's "piteous wo" offers two unique functions in her narrative characterization: it presents Cassandra as a pitiful, desperate woman, and juxtaposes her emotions alongside Priam's earlier lack of pity (bk. 2, l. 4252). Once again one can see different expectations for manhood and womanhood, rooted effectively in one's ability to experience pity. Cassandra's grief here, then, must be uniquely female. Associating mourning with woe (and pity) and allowing Cassandra to distinctly engage with such feelings, Lydgate presents her grief as something unique to her. Priam's lack of pity once again reinforces this idea, ensuring that Cassandra's proleptic, anticipatory grief is defined not only by her uncanny foresight, but her personhood and status as well.

Returning to the juxtaposition between Cassandra and Priam, the defining factor of empathy and shame is reinforced heavily by Lydgate. Lydgate's perception of gender is very rigid, seeing as he "consistently attributes bravery, strength, chivalry, prowess, manhood, and anger only to male characters."[76] These descriptors place in the forefront a focus on control, power, and strength and show disregard for charity, kindness, and honesty. The focus on control for masculinity subsequently rejects opposing feminine traits. While one can certainly see aspects of kindness in a trait such as chivalry, it should be remembered that chivalry is bestowed through a social contract—not a promise of kindness for all. Here is where femininity and masculinity diverge: medieval men are

[76] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 8.

allowed the privilege of controlling and allocating their "softer" traits, while women do not receive such a luxury. The rift that exists between the two sexes in *Troy Book* is not anything new—far from it—but it does suggest a sense of bubbling disdain for women. I see this disdain as being most present in the building development of women as a secondary gender; similarly, Lydgate attributes to this second gender second-rate features as well. One is unlikely to find a domineering, powerful, and chivalric woman; in the same vein, one likely does not expect to find a charitable and nurturing man. It is in this division that not only is the Greco-medieval society defined, but the expectation for interaction with grief as well. Notably Cassandra is a unique case in *Troy Book*, yet her limitations are not bound by the merits of her past with Apollo nor her future as a daughter to Priam but instead are rooted and instilled deeply within her sex. It is in this reading that I find Cassandra's grief and subsequent imprisonment as a cautionary tale to women, warning against hysterical grief and pushing womanhood further towards the definition that Lydgate has made clear through other, more palatable, women.

The idea of "palatable women" is one that is enveloped by nuance. By defining Cassandra as a non-palatable woman, this then implies that in *Troy Book* one can find something of a wholly righteous woman. This, though, is not the case; most of Lydgate's women have within them a fatal flaw (or many) that negates the acceptability of their character. Even one as beautiful and sought after as Helen is the ultimate cause for the destruction of Troy. Medea, though praised by Lydgate, is still a sorceress at the end of the day. Chivalric Penthesilea is virginal and virtuous, but Lydgate endows her with masculine traits and thus removes her from other women. Here, it becomes clear that the

qualification of Lydgate's women as palatable is something that is indicative of various facets and readings of her character. Likewise, this idea involves gradients, meaning that while a woman can never be wholly embraced, even the ones that are rejected, such as Cassandra, still have redeeming qualities and virtues. While Cassandra lays the foundation for Lydgate's literary development of womanhood in his text, she still is restricted by her erratic behavior and unseemly face with "many wertys growyng here & þere" (with many warts growing here and there) (bk. 2, l. 5002). With this rationalization, then, other women in the narrative must carry on Cassandra's metaphorical torch for her. While all of *Troy Book*'s women are limited by the merit of their sex, when they are read as a unified development of femininity, the stereotyping of women becomes clear.

Following this reading of feminine character development, I return to my discussion of the everyman image. To fully render the image of Cassandra as a representative woman despite her gifts, it is crucial to look further into the culture sphere in which Lydgate was writing. Valued above all else for women was submission, child-rearing abilities, and gentleness.[77] Though her method of prophecy may remain uncouth, the driving force for Cassandra certainly does coincide effectively with expectations for women in Lydgate's society. Her warning seeks to not only defend her home of Troy but also to preserve the lives of those who live within its walls. Upon receiving her visions,

[77] For more information on the practice of medieval housekeeping, child-rearing, and wifely expectations, see *The Goodman of Paris (Le Ménagier de Paris): A Treatise on Moral and Domestic Economy by a Citizen of Paris, c. 1393*, edited and translated by Eileen Power (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006). (Section I, Articles V and VI; Section II, Articles I-V).

Cassandra becomes wholly responsible for everyone who will be impacted and thus seeks to warn them. Regardless of whether they believe her or not, Cassandra chooses the selfless route of warning others, attempting to preserve and comfort those that she has already seen perish in her mind's eye.

Earlier in my discussion of Cassandra, I noted that the woman was inherently intertwined with Troy itself. For better or for worse, Cassandra has received the blessings of foresight for her homeland. Not only is the oracle rich in the gifts of foresight, but she is also endowed with the knowledge of history. Acknowledging her higher pedigree as the daughter of Troy's King Priam, it is not unfounded to assume that Cassandra would have likely been educated in, at minimum, the history of her family within Troy. It is in this unification of past, present, and future that I identify Cassandra as a living embodiment of Troy itself, harnessing the knowledge of Troy's birthright and future demise. Considering the woman as a heritage figure opens the door for more nuanced readings of her grief; beyond her gendered and anticipatory grief, Cassandra must grapple with the grief of a nation that she is intimately acquainted with. During a war narrative, one may arguably claim that the grief of a nation is the most painful of battle losses. While lives may be lost, hostages taken, it is the final blow—the destruction and loss—that truly sounds the alarm for grieving; it is the loss that no participant expects to happen, save for Cassandra.

Cassandra's preliminary grief for a nation can be better understood by considering it alongside the various miniatures present in an illuminated manuscript of *Troy Book* owned by the University of Manchester (Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English

1).[78] Art in this copy of *Troy Book* prioritizes the most influential episodes in the Trojan War narrative, such as the deaths of Hector,[79] Patroclus, and Achilles. While Lydgate's narrative is helpfully accompanied by images of crucial events and characters' deaths, it does present one depiction of the siege and sack of Troy (Appendix, **Figure 1**).[80] Displaying the siege, the miniature highlights the destruction of the Trojan walls alongside the subsequent massacre to follow. Not only does this imagery reinforce the prediction of Cassandra, it also underscores the insurmountable amount of decimation that was brought forth by the Greeks. Within this moment of Trojan helplessness is where I find the connection between nationality and grief so poignant.[81] The harrowing visuality of the slaughtered Trojans reinforces the pre-established expectation of loss; likewise, the losing Trojans are presented without armor, while their Greek opponents have full protection, thus painting Troy in a submissive and weak light. This image of helplessness and destruction included in this *Troy Book* manuscript is certainly what Lydgate's Cassandra would have seen in her mind's eye during her earlier speech against

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[78] The University of Manchester has scanned and documented *Troy Book*'s metadata and made it accessible to the public. Miniature scans have been accessed through their website and found through their itemized list of artistic inclusions. For more on this manuscript as well as other illustrated copies of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, see Sonja Drimmer, *The Art of Allusion: Illuminators and the Making of English Literature, 1403-1476* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), chapter five, "History in the Making: Lydgate's *Troy Book*."
[79] Refers to Hector, eldest son of King Priam and Queen Hecuba. Descriptions of Hector typically highlight his good nature and chivalry.
[80] Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 1, folio 145v (https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-ENGLISH-00001/296).
[81] As the miniatures were intended to be supporting images of Lydgate's original text, I choose to utilize them for their subsequent literary merit; a medieval reader's understanding would have likely been informed by the miniatures present before them. Similarly, many of the miniatures assist in presenting cultural transfer between the Greeks and the medieval Britons, making them effective in supporting literary analysis and arguments.

Helen—once again conflating the woman and Troy itself. Troy's walls crack and weaken as the land itself becomes nothing more than a playground for the bloodthirsty Greeks. Cassandra's vision of loss, when equated to the *Troy Book* miniature, goes far beyond loss of life, then. As the Trojans are slaughtered, the structure and history of Troy is destroyed around them, leaving Cassandra to grapple with the total destruction of something that was so critical and consistent for her throughout her life.

In her lamentation over the fate of Troy, Cassandra speaks directly to Fortune and begs her to help her understand why Troy deserves its fate. During her wailing, Cassandra comments on Troy specifically, choosing to personify it in her language. Considering Troy as if it were a human being in the narrative uplifts the cruciality of the siege miniature in supporting *Troy Book*. Regarding Troy, Cassandra asks:

> O Troye, Troye, what is þi gilt, allas!
> What hastow don, what is þi trespas,
> To ben euersed & turned in-to nou3t
> With wilde fyre? Þi synne is dere [a]bou3t! (bk. 2, l. 3245-8)
>
> (Oh Troy, Troy, what is thy guilt, alas! / What hast thou done, what is thy trespass, / To be destroyed and turned into naught / With wild fire?[82] Thy sin is dear abought!)[83]

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[82] Smith translates "euersed" as "eversed" in his translation. I choose, instead to use "destroyed" as the replacement does not impede the poetic flow. Similarly, the connection between "destroyed" and "naught" evokes an association with mass destruction, which is complimented by the 145v miniature depicting the siege of Troy (Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS English 1); thus, I find that "destroyed" supports the reading I am performing while not changing the robust translation provided by Smith.

[83] MED, *dere*. My translation reads "dere [a]bou3t" as describing Troy's sin to be costly and all-encompassing for the Trojans en masse.

Cassandra's questioning of Troy is followed up immediately by interrogations of Priam and Hecuba (bk. 2, ll. 3248 & 3254); these lines, in succession of one another, reinforce the perception of Troy as a person in this moment. Seeing Troy personified greatly assists in understanding Cassandra's nationalistic grief since readers are shown an unclouded interaction between Cassandra and Troy, wherein one can witness how Cassandra processes her nation's coming fate. Rather than ask why the Greeks want to besiege Troy, Cassandra pushes the blame onto the personified Troy itself. Using the language of sin, Cassandra presents the incoming massacre as a retribution, as if the Greeks are validated in their incoming destruction of the city as it will purge its "sins." Presenting Troy in this way does ample work for the characterization of Troy as a personified city, likened to someone who surely must atone for some kind of sin. Cassandra's engagement with Troy here does not solidify a reading of a "deserving" Troy in her mind but instead confirms her disdain for Helen, establishing (the abduction of) her as Troy's fatal sin.

Beyond the rational perspective, Cassandra's language in this moment of desperation and confusion performs a relevant role in displaying the inflections of grief. Up to this point I have classified Cassandra's language as a lament. The anticipatory mourning of Troy during her monologue solidifies Cassandra as a lamenter in her grief. Beginning with "O Troye, Troye" (bk. 2, l. 3245), Cassandra's language immediately mimics that of a mourner, wailing for lost loved one. The inherent connection that is present between this opening and the language of mourners highlights the implication of diction. Though *Troy Book* is a written text, Cassandra's dialogue here is nearly audible in her distress; readers can almost hear the wail behind the name "Troy." Her questioning

ties in efficiently with this reading, as Cassandra embodies the grieving stage of denial. Though she asks about Troy's sin, Cassandra's language and intrinsic auditory association changes a dialogue of questioning into a search for validation. Cassandra's "what is þi trespas" (what is thy trespass) reads not so much as a question searching for an answer, as a display of one searching for reasoning (bk. 2, l. 3246). Cassandra does not see Troy as deserving of its fate and seeks to find an equal cause for the incoming suffering, living in a mournful denial of her city's incoming fate.

Mourning overwhelmingly defines Cassandra, its various facets becoming something of a hydra. Though her grief is wildly expansive, all aspects of it appear to run together creating a unique amalgam for Cassandra. Respect, future, nationality, and control are all stripped from Cassandra, reducing her to little more than a distressed hysteric. Unsurprisingly, Cassandra likely would have been met with both disdain and sympathy from readers, as her wild language and behavior would be unbecoming of a woman in Lydgate's time,[84] while her empathy and fear would likely have been respected and seen as something noble. Toeing a thin line, Cassandra thus exists perpetually between palatable and shameful womanhood, occupying a nuanced space in *Troy Book*. Seeing *Troy Book* women as indicative of medieval individuals in some capacity, it is difficult to pinpoint what kind of woman Cassandra represents. While her more wily side

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[84] Cassandra has a similar outburst in Book 5 of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde*, to which the response was "anger of hire speche" (bk. 5, ll. 1535), displaying that the disdain for Cassandra's behavior remains consistent in multiple Greco-medieval retellings. See Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde*, edited by Robert K. Root (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1926), bk. 5.

may bring to mind Bedlam[85] patients or disruptive female mystics,[86] Cassandra's pure desire to save her people certainly places her on a course to represent women considered godly and honorable. Here is where a dichotomy arises, as it is hard to say with certainty what role Cassandra serves within the established context. I find that Cassandra takes on something reminiscent of a mystic's role, as this characterization allows for her to encapsulate all facets of her perception while simultaneously acting in a way that is both consistent with Lydgate's classical predecessors and the medieval context that surrounds her fifteenth-century portrayal.

Wendy Pfeffer, in her study of medieval trouvères, writes that the "medieval stereotype of women is that they are, by definition, emotional, in the most negative sense of the term."[87] Pfeffer contextualizes her claim, explaining that "[medieval women's display of emotions] was always subject to scrutiny and criticism," as well as noting that these same women "did not have the same liberty as men to express their feelings."[88] Painting an image of medieval society as gender-biased in regards to emotions, Pfeffer's explanation assists in understanding the presentation and expected perception of

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[85] Bethlem Royal Hospital, *Bedlam*, founded in 1247. Bedlam was a relevant hospital in Lydgate's time and reference to it typically bound a character to insanity (or the playing of insanity). One example of this narrative in relevant history is William Shakespeare's *King Lear*, where the character Edgar utilizes a mad beggar disguise: Tom o' Bedlam. See further, William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, n.e. (New York City: University Society, 1901), 2.3.6-16.
[86] Most notable example being Margery Kempe, whose mysticism garnered criticism from men and women alike and whose life is still debated in academia today. See: Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, translated by Anthony Bale (London: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[87] Wendy Pfeffer, "Constant Sorrow: Emotions and the Women Trouvères," in *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Perfetti (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2005), p. 119.
[88] Pfeffer, "Constant Sorrow," p. 129.

Cassandra in Lydgate's time, particularly the hypercritical lens that would have been placed upon Cassandra's outburst. Cassandra is one of the most boisterous women in *Troy Book*, meaning that she is oftentimes seen wailing, howling, exclaiming, or otherwise yelling in some capacity. As already mentioned, this behavior results in the isolation of Cassandra from her city and her kin and subsequently removes her from the company of other Trojans. This presentation of Cassandra is somewhat at odds with her "chaste [...] virginite," a description that is oftentimes reserved for more palatable,[89] and less volatile, women (bk. 2, l. 365). Cassandra's chastity and virginity portray her, initially, as a respectable woman by medieval standards. Alongside her virginal nature, Lydgate also makes sure his readers are aware of the accuracy of Cassandra's premonitions, implying an inherent truth of her premonitions.

A question is then raised regarding the disconnect between Cassandra's characterization and her actions. Looking back to Pfeffer, it is not unfounded to assume that Cassandra, without Lydgate's careful disclaimers, would have not been very popular amongst *Troy Book* readers; her aggression towards Helen, shrill and unpredictable screams, and unbecoming self-harm[90] make it so that Cassandra never fully coincided with the acceptable expectation of a woman and thus, neither does her grief. Regardless of Lydgate's reassurance to readers that Cassandra does, in fact, see a true future, this piece of data is not shown by Lydgate to be defining of her character. Instead, through his

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[89] See *Chapter 3: Penthesilea* for more information on the role virginity plays in Lydgate's characterization of women.

[90] In reference to tearing out her own hair; *Troy Book,* bk. 2, l. 3238.

focus on language and emotion, Lydgate establishes Cassandra's characterization through the presentation of her grief (which dominates her dialogue), establishing her as an emotional woman first, and a quasi-mystic second. I find that this structure communicates the virginal, empathetic Cassandra as unruly, annoying, and embarrassing, a reading that is reinforced by her own father King Priam.

Looking back to her imprisonment, it is worth noting that here Priam is described as acting in response to Cassandra "with-oute more, anon he doth hir take" (without more, at once he did take her) (bk. 2, l. 4246). The language in this moment communicates a sense of urgency in the removal of Cassandra; considering this confinement is in response to shrill noise, it becomes clear that Priam has short patience with his daughter. This reading reinforces the idea that, despite her empathy and good intentions, Cassandra is seen as a disruptive force in the narrative. Though readers know her intentions are good, and that her claims are validated, Cassandra must be seen through a critical lens to serve her purpose in the narrative. Had Cassandra not been made an uncomfortable, socially inappropriate character, Priam's response of imprisonment would not have been validated (impacting Lydgate's retellings). It is with this understanding that Cassandra and her emotions must be considered partially through the masculine lens of those who had to cope with her. Understanding Cassandra beyond her quasi-mystic role and incorporating more critical analyses of her actions allows for a better understanding of her wild and intense grief as well as her "womanly" emotions.

Medieval women's religious inclination certainly does offer itself nicely to this analogous mystical reading of Cassandra and thus corresponds well with an analysis of

her grief. Juxtaposing Cassandra with the flamboyant female mystics of the time allows for a better perception of a medieval reading of her character. Similarly, Cassandra's grief becomes far more perceivable beneath a medieval lens when considering her as one that occupies a quasi-religious (yet still pagan) space. It should not be disregarded that Cassandra is likewise associated with altruism, or an attempt at such. Importantly, the perceived altruist nature of Cassandra concerns major loss and death, something that not only makes a grief-led reading fundamental but also closely associates her with considerations of mortality, memory, and afterlife—furthering her association with the religious and mystical. From here, one can better compartmentalize Cassandra's grief and personhood. Cassandra most effectively represents the helplessness and disrespected nature of womanhood; when considering the masculine lens of the *Troy Book* narrative, this reading is pushed even further. Cassandra's perceived insanity coincides well with the critical perception of medieval women; medieval males in positions of authority usually saw women's outspokenness and intense religiosity as excessive, negative faults—regardless of validity. Like Medea, Cassandra must give up her inclinations to gain social acceptance from those who surround her. Unlike Medea, though, Cassandra does not place her gifts on a backburner, instead choosing to heed the warning of the gods and spread the word across Troy. Juxtaposing these two women best reinforces the limitation of womanhood in my reading; while Medea is potentially given grace due to her rejection of her abilities, Cassandra is subsequently isolated and removed without care due to her actualizations of them.

The isolation of Cassandra creates a physical rift between the woman and the world that surrounds her, mirroring the earlier, metaphorical, separation between Cassandra and other *Troy Book* women. Her imprisonment effectively punishes Cassandra, leaving her alone to feel her grief. It is interesting, though, that a text full of death, murder, and torture would choose to associate grief, mourning, and loss with offenses requiring incarceration. Especially in the context of war, loss is something that is inherent to every person's lived experience; for this reason, choosing to punish Cassandra because of her grieving is unfounded. Lydgate is no stranger to war. R.D. Perry specifically attributes Lydgate's interaction with war and trauma to the Hundred Years War, which existed as a "historical trauma specific to England and France."[91] It is through the acknowledgment of Lydgate's personal experience with war that one can better see his interaction with Cassandra, as well as the all-encompassing nature of wartime trauma.

While it may be tempting to regard Cassandra's punishment as an imprisonment promoting her own safety, Priam's lack of pity does not reinforce this reading. Had Cassandra's isolation sought out to alleviate her hysteria, it would be unlikely that Lydgate would bring distinct focus to the lack of care being offered to Cassandra from

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[91] Perry also explains that Lydgate's "distinctive literary features" serve as "narrative characteristics for trauma," see R.D. Perry, "Lydgate's *Danse Macabre* and the Trauma of the Hundred Years War," *Literature and Medicine* 33.2 (2015): pp. 326-347, here p. 326. Recognizing *Troy Book* as both a fictional war narrative and a narrative culturally controlled by war experiences presents a deeper investigation to Cassandra, whereby Lydgate's engagement with war and suffering serves to support his own experiences and the collective trauma of a nation.

her father. With this in mind, it is far more likely that Cassandra was isolated due to paternal embarrassment. Priam does not dissuade readers from believing in Cassandra's prophecy; in fact, Priam's choice to "leue hir mourne" (let her mourn) (bk. 2, l. 4253) confirms that Cassandra's grief and distress is, in fact, something tangible and real that is acknowledged by characters that witness it. If the grief of Cassandra is real, it then becomes clear that Cassandra is certainly defined by hysteria in a familial environment. Not only does this isolation reinforce the gender biases, but it also confirms that the full depth of Cassandra's grief is something that is wholly experienced by her alone.

Prior to her imprisonment, Cassandra recollects the soon-to-come event of the Siege of Troy, which she blames entirely on Helen. Building upon previous analysis regarding Cassandra's character, the presentation of her anticipatory grief becomes notable. In her prophecy Cassandra chooses an empathic angle in her description of forthcoming destruction, rooting much of the anticipated loss in personal death and mourning, rather than large-scale military losses. When discussing Troy's fate, Cassandra pleads:

> For many fader schal his sone se
> Hol in þe morwe, þat schal be slawe or eve
> Amyd þe feld, þat wil him sore greue,
> And many wif sore schal be-wepe
> To se hir husbonde with large woundis depe
> Girt þoru3 þe body, pale, cold, & grene!
> Allas, howe schal 3e þe sorwe mow sustene!
> A, wrecchid modris! how schal 3e endure
> To se 3oure childre be cruel auenture
> A-fore 3ou slayn with-oute remedie! (bk. 2, ll. 4204-13)
>
> (For many a father shall his son see / Whole in the morrow, that shall be slew ere eve / Amid the field, that will him sorely grieve, / And many a wife sorely shall her weep / To see her husband with large wounds deep /

> Girt through the body, pale, cold, and green! / Alas, how shall ye the sorrow more sustain! / Ah, wretched mothers! How shall ye endure / To see your children by cruel adventure / Afore you slain without remedy!)

Evoking images of the familial, Cassandra directs her words towards sons, wives, mothers, and children. Coinciding nicely with Lydgate's gender division, Cassandra does not utilize the shame of loss of war in her plea to convince, instead hoping that the mundane will be powerful enough to move her empathetic listeners. Describing the state of the decaying bodies, Cassandra highlights the color of death and rot, encouraging the idea that these sons and brothers will remain deceased and desecrated long enough to begin turning green. Appealing to the domestic and earthy, Cassandra's grief takes visible shape. Though she is mourning the loss of a nation in tandem with all her other grief, what means the most to Cassandra is seemingly the loss of innocent, domestic life. Not only does this reinforce Lydgate's connotations of medieval womanhood, as well as Hennequinn's data, but it also reinstates focus on the prophecy. While Cassandra's pleas are applicable to Paris, Priam, and Helen alike, her focus on matters feminine direct Cassandra's weighing of loss to Helen. Beyond acknowledging that Troy would be lost,[92] Cassandra does not venture far from the matters of the household, embracing the empathy for children, women, and lovers that is seemingly inherent to Lydgate's inscription of womanhood in the text.

Understanding the various facets of Cassandra's grief presents a more nuanced reading of the character, alongside the ideas about women in contemporary culture.

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[92] *Troy Book*, bk. 2, I. 4203.

Lydgate's depiction of Cassandra punished for evoking her power in a way that is seemingly embarrassing, or threatening, to the powers of Troy complements medieval understandings of womanhood and thus lays the foundation for nuanced perceptions of gender and sorrow. Similarly, her unique interactions with grief and the embrace of anticipatory grief assure that feminine mourning itself is quite personal in *Troy Book*. This depiction of grief presents the opportunity to expand our understanding of medieval mourning beyond that having to do with the loss of life and venture into less tangible realms, embracing the insurmountable effect nuanced grief can have. Cassandra's anticipatory, nationalistic, and sympathetic grief assists in orienting readings of grief in relation to context, gender, and societal structure. Further, Cassandra's grief makes clear that mourning may serve as both a relevant narrative device and a facet of characterization. Seeing grief as an extension of personhood assures ample opportunity to investigate *Troy Book* women beyond the very limited space Lydgate allocated them.

Appendix

Figure 1. “Great Horse of Troy” (Manchester, Rylands Library, MS English 1, folio 145v), depicts the Greek siege of Troy from within the Trojan Horse. Of note is the cracks on the walls, as well as the fear, desperation, and sorrow of the Trojan figures. This miniature arguably shows part of the proleptic vision that Cassandra had of the coming fall of Troy. Image provided by The John Rylands Research Institute and Library, The University of Manchester.

CHAPTER III:

PENTHESILEA

Abstract

The Amazonian queen Penthesilea serves as a bridge between the masculine and the feminine, as she embraces multiple roles and expectations during her time in the *Troy Book* narrative. Penthesilea's interaction with grief is the most consistent with typical expectations, thus making her a critical woman to study. Primarily looking towards her chivalric romance with Hector, Penthesilea's grief offers commentary on medieval chivalry, as well as ideas of retribution and revenge. The Amazon's knightly nature is similarly of critical importance, as it presents the opportunity to evaluate Penthesilea's femininity both as a uniquely female figure as well as a quasi-male one. Embracing the gender-fluid nature of Lydgate's presentation of Penthesilea encourages in-depth textual analyses of her attributes, the language used to describe her, and her medieval cultural associations. In investigating Penthesilea in such a way, it becomes clear that her role is not limited by her femininity but instead builds off it. From her dedication to Hector, to her death at the hands of Pyrrhus, Penthesilea offers the most critical opportunity for feminine grief analysis from a battlefield point of view, making her stand apart from the women explored in previous chapters.

Keywords: Penthesilea, Hector, chivalry, romance, knighthood, retribution, Amazons, color analysis

In the original epic cycle, Penthesilea is depicted as the Amazonian daughter of Ares,[93] the god of war.[94] It is her association with warfare and strategy that cemented Penthesilea's representation within the ancient narrative. Lydgate follows in the footsteps of his ancient predecessors, encapsulating and keying in on Penthesilea's most honorable aspects; beyond including her as a necessary plot piece, Lydgate plays with the idea of chivalry in his portrayal of this Amazon. Equating her high sense of honor and justice with medieval chivalry assists in bridging the gap for women in *Troy Book*. Where femininity typically appears as a byproduct of more domineering masculinity, Penthesilea toes the line between masculinity and femininity, creating a more nuanced expression of womanhood than is normally found in medieval texts. Penthesilea's bi-gender nature is most effectively solidified by her status as an Amazon, which separates her from both the Greeks and Trojans alike.

Amazonian culture, as it is nearly wholly matriarchal and female controlled, does not carry with it the same limitations and guidelines that one may come to expect in a reading of *Troy Book* up to this woman's introduction. The difference that exists between Penthesilea and her Trojan sisters highlights her separation from traditional femininity, which thus presents Penthesilea within a different literary light than other women present in the text. By identifying the division between Penthesilea and other *Troy Book* women,

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[93] On Penthesilea, Joyce E. Salisbury writes: "The Amazon queen Penthesilea brought her army to Troy to defend the city against the Greeks after the death of the Trojan hero Hector," p. 9. See Sailsbury's entry on the Amazons in *The Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World* for more information.

[94] Joyce E. Salisbury, in *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World*, writes that Amazons are "a race of women warriors who were descended from Ares, the god of war, and the nymph Harmonia," p. 7.

I seek not to remove her from the common bonds of womanhood, but instead to identify the literary freedom that would have been presented to her through Lydgate's writing. It is through Penthesilea that one may engage with grief and womanhood beyond the typical constraints of femininity at the time. Karma Lochrie, in her investigation of medieval Amazons, explains that they "constituted a mythic form of female masculinity."[95] The uniquely gendered space that Amazons occupied in the Middle Ages encouraged Amazonian characters to "[assume] a queer virginity" that comes with "certain exemptions from femininity."[96] Unifying Penthesilea with Lochrie's scholarship on the unique relationship between medieval femininity and Amazonian nature makes it clear that the queen's role in the text serves a unique, separate purpose that embraces influences beyond femininity, as quasi-masculinity is oftentimes affixed to her as well. Penthesilea's virginity, which Lydgate consistently reinforces, solidifies her connection to Lochrie's analysis and thus promotes the understanding that the Amazonian queen is not to be bound, nor defined, by previously established expectations of womanhood.

Penthesilea's role in *Troy Book* is a unique one. As a warrior queen, Penthesilea has a consistent expectation thrust upon her to prove herself adequate alongside her masculine counterparts. Penthesilea and her team of Amazons help support the Trojan side of the war, distinguishing her from heroes like Achilles and Odysseus, and aligning her with Hector and Paris. What defines Penthesilea most, though, is her interaction with

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[95] Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 104.
[96] Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies*, p. 104.

grief, a relationship that begins before the Trojan War. Prior to her arrival as a military support, Penthesilea was the cause of the death of her sister, Hippolyta.[97] Quintus of Smyrna's third-century epic, *Posthomerica,* tells of the events that took place immediately preceding Penthesilea's entry into the Trojan War.[98] Smyrnaeus explains the death of Hippolyta, noting that "Hippolyte, whom [Penthesilea] had killed with her powerful spear, / Not as she intended – her target was a stag" (*Posthomerica,* bk. 1, ll. 24-5).[99] Though Lydgate's Trojan War narrative picks up immediately, and does not offer much insight as to what role Hippolyta played for his Penthesilea, coupling Smyrnaeus's retelling with Lydgate's epic poem makes clear the importance of grief for Penthesilea's character. Though her grief for Hippolyta is not expressly explored in *Troy Book*, it is certainly not abandoned, rather transferred; the mourning that Smyrnaeus describes is critical in understanding Penthesilea and thus must continue on in *Troy Book*.[100] Penthesilea's grief is all-encompassing and ever-present, serving to inform her decisions on the battlefield, save for a moment of weakness when Pyrrhus overpowers her.

Penthesilea is not wholly bound to grief for her sister, though. While she certainly does feel familial grief for Hippolyta and seeks retribution for what she sees as her

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[97] The death of Hippolyta is largely inconsistent due to the number of versions of the myth. Typically, the killing of Hippolyta is attributed to Heracles in pursuit of her girdle (for more information on this edition of the myth, see Salisbury's *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World*), or Penthesilea while fighting or hunting. For my purposes in discussing Hippolyta, I will be following the latter edition of the myth. For more insight into Penthesilea's grief over her sister, see Smyrnaeus's *Posthomerica*.
[98] For ease of following and consistency, Quintus of Smyrna will henceforth be referred to as Smyrnaeus.
[99] Smyrnaeus, Quintus, *The Trojan Epic: Posthomerica*, ed. and trans. Alan James (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): p. 3.
[100] Smyrnaeus, Quintus. *The Trojan Epic: Posthomerica*, ed. and trans. James: p. 3; bk. 1, l. 23.

wrongdoing, Penthesilea's grief is more consistently affixed to her *Troy Book* lover, Hector. The two share a love throughout the narrative that can best be described as chivalric and chaste, a relationship that resembles what one might find in a medieval romance. Penthesilea's relationship with Hector helps Lydgate characterize her as a pseudo-knight and as a woman, facets of her character that both carry hefty weight. After his initial introduction to the pair's love, Lydgate explains the encompassing adorations Penthesilea feels for Hector. Lydgate writes:

> Þe whiche loued with al hir hool[e] herte
> Worþi Hector, and with al her my3t,
> Only for he was so noble a kny3t,
> Þat hir Ioye & worldly plesaunce,
> Hir hertly ese & souereyne soffisaunce,
> In verray soth, where she wake or winke,
> Was eure in oon vp-on hym to þink,
> Of verray feith, with-outen any slouþe. (*Troy Book,* bk. 4, ll. 3820-7)
>
> (The which loved with all her whole heart / Worthy Hector, and with all her might, / Only for he was so noble a knight, / That her joy and worldly pleasance, / Her heart's ease and sovereign sufficience, / In very truth, where she did wake or wink, / Was ever anon upon him to think, / Of very faith, withouten any sloth.)

Presenting the love as wholesome and dedicated, Lydgate swiftly characterizes Penthesilea as a devout lover, who muses on Hector at all hours of the day and night. Noting that Penthesilea would offer Hector faithful attention "with-outen any slouþe" helps drive home her meritorious dedication and the connection between the two throughout the narrative. The hopeful tone of the lines establishes the couple's relationship as what one would expect from a chivalric, romantic knight, with Lydgate even going so far as to associate Hector with a noble nature, highlighting not only chivalry but also his nobility in Troy. Beyond contextualizing the relationship between

the lovers, this excerpt establishes a foundation for the pair's narrative that will be revisited later on in *Troy Book.* Particularly, the loving hopefulness Lydgate instills within this moment will later be juxtaposed alongside a lover's grief.

Penthesilea engages with chivalry as well, which is best seen in Lydgate's description of her battle armor. The relevance of armor in *Troy Book* cannot be understated. Serving not simply as protection, armor is also oftentimes adorned or removed (sometimes by force) to indicate the stripping of power in the Trojan war. In removing armor from an opponent, the opponent becomes vulnerable and loses their agency, the power they have over themselves. Stripping armor removes a warrior's defenses and leaves them helpless and susceptible to fatal blows; it should be noted, as well, that when a warrior loses their armor in such a way, it is oftentimes a result of overexertion and overpowering—they could not fight back even if they wanted to.[101] Overpowering is most notable before Penthesilea's death, where Lydgate describes the Greeks surrounding Penthesilea as well as removing her armor (bk. 4, ll. 4307-20). This moment is followed up by Pyrrhus cutting off Penthesilea's right arm (bk. 4, l. 4333), an action rendering her useless in battle and that would likely humiliate a warrior queen. The direct connection between the armor and chivalry, and its subsequent removal with weakness, reinforces the understanding that armor is of crucial importance to Lydgate's writing of Penthesilea as a chivalric woman.

[101] *Troy Book*, bk. 4, ll. 4310-20.

Penthesilea's armor, then, must offer readers some sort of insight into her role in the war narrative as a whole. Going into her battle with Pyrrhus, Penthesilea dons "armvre þat day clad in whyt" (snow white armor that day) (bk. 4, l. 4073). This white armor is the best indication of Lydgate's chivalric contextualization of Penthesilea. Pastoureau notes that "in the fifteenth century, color symbolism gave rise to abundant literature," coining this development "the birth of abstract color."[102] By acknowledging the developing literary merit of color in the fifteenth century, the distinct focus on Penthesilea's armor color becomes notable. Pastoureau defines white as a medieval color of virtue, noting that the color itself carries numerous connotations.[103] In Lydgate's time, white could signify "faith, purity, innocence, virginity, chastity, frankness, fidelity, wisdom."[104] Courtly and noble in nature, these virtues have Arthurian connotations,[105] thus solidifying Penthesilea's association with the knightly and just. By using such color symbolism, Lydgate gives much insight into Penthesilea's character, as this color association would have likely been relevant and popular at the time. Lydgate effectively streamlines his characterization of Penthesilea in his discussion of her armor, condensing a long character description and exposition into one literary association. Lydgate's linguistic choices in this singular line carry a similar amount of weight, as he utilizes the term "clad" to describe the way in which Penthesilea interacts with her armor. Rather

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[102] Michel Pastoureau, *White: The History of a Color* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), p. 110.
[103] See Pastoureau, *White: The History of a Color,* "Introduction."
[104] Pastoureau, *White,* p. 114.
[105] Such as Sir Galahad, Sir Bedivere, and Sir Gareth. Though this list is not exhaustive, these Arthurian knights consistently embody the virtues represented by white that I have listed.

than say that she wore, donned, or fit into her armor—terms that would have commanded focus to the warrior, rather than the armor—Lydgate allows the armor to act upon Penthesilea. To be clad is to be enveloped;[106] thus, Penthesilea is effectively enveloped in her chivalry, bound to the snow-white of her armor. By identifying her armor as the functioning subject of this line, it becomes clear that Lydgate intended for chivalry to be an inextricable part of Penthesilea, one that envelops her completely and guides her thinking.

Seeing Penthesilea in such a chivalric light does the heavy lifting of separating the Amazon from the rest of her female cohort, though Lydgate does take care to assure readers of Penthesilea's femininity. Pulling back and forth, Penthesilea seemingly cannot be bound to one classification or another and is consistently manifesting both feminine and masculine virtues and attributes. Besides commonly utilizing her "quene" title when referring to her, Lydgate describes Penthesilea as one "Of wommanhede and of gentilnesse" (Of womanhood and of gentleness) (bk. 4, l. 3818). Here, readers are brought back to the reality of what space Penthesilea occupies. Though she will never be seen as wholly feminine, she will never be a chivalric man either. By identifying her noble womanhood, Lydgate allows for Penthesilea to exist simultaneously as an adoring, romantic lover and an honorable, aggressive warrior. No other woman is permitted such

[106] *MED*, "Clōthen," 4.

duality in *Troy Book,* and it seems as if Penthesilea's inherent virtue and honor appealed to Lydgate, subsequently allowing for more freedom in her presentation of her.

Despite presenting Penthesilea as a courtly-style feminine lover in his early excerpts, Lydgate does not carry on with such a characterization for the woman. In fact, much of Lydgate's discussion and description of Penthesilea is not rooted within her inherent femininity, but instead her pseudo-masculine nature. Penthesilea's gendered identity in *Troy Book* occupies numerous spaces; while, of course, she certainly has ties to femininity, much of Penthesilea's other facets suggest her separation from her female cohort. As seen with Medea and Cassandra, much of medieval femininity is defined by pre-existing notions of correct womanhood, especially chaste, virginal behavior and conduct. Throughout the text, Penthesilea has her virginity highlighted by Lydgate despite the passion for Hector she feels. Hennequinn reasons that Penthesilea's virginal influence can be best appreciated by juxtaposing her relationship with Hector alongside that of Achilles and Patroclus, where love is "characterized by friendly elements attributed to [...] relationships between men."[107] By associating Penthesilea with masculinity in such a way, Lydgate distinguishes Penthesilea from the other women of his text. By effectively separating Penthesilea from other women such as Medea and Cassandra, Lydgate causes Penthesilea to exist within a third space of gender. This third space not only allows Penthesilea's characterization to elude the limitations of

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[107] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 14.

womanhood but also assures that her future expressions of grief will be notable as they will show the influence of both masculinity and femininity.

Penthesilea's virginity is what allows for her masculinized relationship with Hector.[108] Lydgate's presentation of this, though, should not be seen as implying that Penthesilea is to be interpreted as a man in the text. Despite her chivalric nature and description on the battlefield, Lydgate consistently refers to Penthesilea as the "quene"[109] of the Amazons (or simply "quene"), a title that recalls her intrinsic womanhood. Beyond her status as a queen, Penthesilea's Amazonian heritage is of note as well, since it is impossible to masculinize that culture in any capacity due to the Amazons' rejection of any sons that were born to them.[110] These facets bring forth a recognition of Penthesilea's role as a woman in *Troy Book* but push against the established limitations in Lydgate's time. It is with this rationale that I find Penthesilea most clearly begins to occupy a bi-gender space in the narrative, embracing womanhood yet refusing to align with the expectations thrust upon other women. This freedom is more than likely allowed due to her status as an Amazon, rather than a Greek or Trojan, since Lydgate does not expand much of his societal perceptions upon the involved cultures beyond Greek and Trojan.

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[108] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 15.
[109] Specific instances of this can be found on page 674 and 682, as well as lines 3759, 3832, 3840, 3864, 3872, 3883, 3889, 3908, 3927, 3953, 3961, 4070, 4078, 4093, 4102, 4126, 4175, 4194, 4205, 4238, 4244, 4267, 4276, 4286, 4310, 4324, 4336, 4350, 4357, and 4409 in Henry Bergen's edition of *Troy Book*.
[110] Strabo claimed that Amazons were noted to have mated with men in the springtime, keeping any daughters and sending any sons back to the father and lived without men. While Salisbury explains other authors, like Diodorus, "claimed that the Amazons lived with men but simply inverted the normal sex roles of Greek society." Regardless, both perspectives paint an image of a distinctly feminine culture. Salisbury, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Ancient World*, p. 8.

Considering the gender-fluid nature of Penthesilea can be tricky, since it admittedly applies modern theory to the medieval text. Despite this concern, there are descriptions of Penthesilea in the text that reinforce my reading of her unique gender. Most notably, Lydgate describes the battle nature of Penthesilea as "like a tigre in his gredinesse, / Or like, in soth, to a lyounesse" (like a tiger in his greediness, / or like, in truth, to a lioness) (bk. 4, ll. 3901-2). Here Penthesilea is seen as both a tiger and a lioness, a description that juxtaposes masculinity and femininity. By acknowledging Penthesilea as a "lyouness," Lydgate embraces her powerful, masculine nature on the battlefield while remaining rooted in the reality of her sex; regardless of how powerful she is, she is still a woman. This, then, raises a concern for Penthesilea as the "tigre," whose pronoun is "his." Instead of the feminine tigress, Penthesilea is characterized as the masculine tiger. This choice, beyond characterization, is particularly of note as it causes there to be a rift between her animal similes. This rift immediately catches readers' eyes, as it interrupts the expected auditory flow of "tygrees," "gredinesse," and "lyouness."[111] Penthesilea, in this moment, is allowed the freedom by Lydgate to exist perpetually between two worlds, those of women and men, where she remains up until her death later in the text. In this understanding of Penthesilea's place within Greco-medieval society, she should not be read solely through the lens of her femininity. Instead, a nuanced approach validates her womanhood alongside her masculine, virginal chivalry.

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[111] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 12.

Though her feminine nature is oftentimes at the forefront of her characterization, Lydgate takes special care to qualify how this femininity is presented. Typically, Lydgate refers to Penthesilea as a “quene,” though this is not the only qualifier he allows to her. Lydgate also calls her “þe hardy quene of Femynye” (the hardy queen of the Amazons) (bk. 4, l. 3759). This is not the only time Lydgate acknowledges Penthesilea’s hardiness, as it becomes a common modifier for her “quene” title throughout the section of the narrative dedicated to her. Of critical importance, as well, is the word “Femynye,” which Lydgate uses to refer to the Amazons as a whole. In using this word, Lydgate is expressing both Penthesilea’s hardiness and her femininity, as he attributes their culture entirely to their womanhood. Likewise, when they hear Penthesilea referred to as the “quene of Femynye,” readers must acknowledge the feminine influence on Penthesilea as well as her battle-readiness. The juxtaposition of the aggressive with the womanly is one of the clearest depictions of Penthesilea toeing the line between typical medieval femininity and chivalric womanhood.

The rationalization of Penthesilea’s titles offers insight as to how her future engagement with grief and revenge will reflect onto her sex. Of course, Penthesilea is a woman—Lydgate acknowledges this—but she is also “hardy” (bk. 4, l. 3759)[112] and “my3ty” (mighty) (bk. 4, l. 4205). These descriptors serve to describe what kind of woman Penthesilea is; in contrast to his treatment of Helen and Medea, Lydgate does not

[112] This line is non-inclusive; that is to say, this is not the only instance in which Lydgate focuses on the hardy nature of Penthesilea. Line 3759 is the first of 10 moments in which Lydgate refers to Penthesilea as a “hardy quene,” not including moments where “quene” may be absent.

muse on Penthesilea's beauty, nor does he mention something unseemly like warts in the case of Cassandra. Instead of concerning himself with her face, Lydgate busies himself with descriptors of her character and her prowess in battle. Penthesilea's warrior capability, and Lydgate's express care to acknowledge it, furthers my reading of Penthesilea as a quasi-medieval, chivalric woman. Beyond classifying her as a woman, these ample descriptors offer insight as to how Penthesilea interacts with her grief. While she is bound by her love to Hector, unlike other women in the text she does not wallow in pity (excessively) or grow hysterical, instead concerning herself immediately with revenge and providing thousands of Amazons as backup to assure such takes place. Penthesilea's journey to Troy is the early culmination of Lydgate's characterization of her, as her "hardiness" and "my3t" instill within her prowess and determination regarding her mourning. Penthesilea's womanhood, mourning, and warrior nature all unite carefully to paint an image of a masculine, virginal, mighty warrior who, despite her unique gender, still embraces her people: the "Femynye."

Arriving in Troy to assist "hir owne trewe kny3t" (her own true knight) Hector (bk. 4, l. 3842), Penthesilea is informed of his untimely demise. Lydgate establishes the foundation for Penthesilea's grief within this moment of sorrow, putting into motion a chain of events that will result in her demise as well. Lydgate sets the stage for Penthesilea's doomed mission in Troy:

> But whan þat she comen was to Troye,
> And herde telle by relacioun
> Þat he was ded, most worþi of renoun,
> To whom she was so lovinge & so trewe,
> Anoon she gan to chaungen cher and hewe,
> And pitously for to wepe & crye,

> And ferd in soth as she wold[e] deye
> For verray wo and hertly hevynes,
> And þou3t she wold þoru3 hir worþines
> Avenge his deth [...] (bk. 4, ll. 3848-57)
>
> (But when that she comen was to Troy, / And thus heard tell by relatìon / That he was dead, most worth of renown, / To whom she was so loving and so true, / Anon she 'gan to change her cheer and hue, / And piteously for to weep and cry, / And feared in sooth that she would die / For very woe and heartly heaviness, / And though she would through her worthiness / Avenge his death [...])

Lydgate presents Penthesilea as pitiful, weeping and crying for her lost love. Highlighting the deep connection between the pair, the grief of Penthesilea is tangible as her unity with Hector demands attention. Her "lovinge" (loving) and "trewe" (true) nature towards Hector highlights Penthesilea as a figure of dedication, investing him with both her heart and her true nature. Immediately upon receiving this news, Penthesilea changes her hue; while Lydgate does not expressly state what color Penthesilea shifted to, the language throughout this excerpt points to red, in distress, or a pale complexion, in fear. The double verbs "wepe" and "crye" suggest a reading of desperation, stemming from the distress of first coping with a loss. As she cries "pitously," Penthesilea appears nearly inconsolable, a stark contrast to her chivalric and Amazonian characterizations found throughout the text. Here Penthesilea is stripped of her façade of the warrior queen, and becomes little more than a grieving lover, a woman bereft of her mainstay.

Looking back to Penthesilea's love of Hector, her subsequent grief paints a unique picture of both her gender and her mourning. Following Hector's death at the hands of Achilles, Penthesilea emboldens herself to avenge him, telling Pyrrhus:

> O þou Pirre, sone of Achilles,
> Þat slowe Hector, in kny3thod per[e]les,

> Þoru3 his treynes & his trecherie,
> By malys only and by fals envie,
> Vnwar, whan he no þinge dide aduerte!
> Þe whiche neure may oute of myn herte,
> So grene it strikeþ in my remembraunce,
> Vp-on his deth for to do vengaunce! (Book IV, ll. 4133-40)
>
> (Oh thou Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, / That slew Hector, in knighthood peerless, / Through his tricks and his treachery, / By malice only and by false envy, / Unwary, when he nothing did avert! / The which never may out of my heart, / So green it sticketh in my remembrance, / Upon his death for to do vengeance!)

Penthesilea's dedication to Hector is reminiscent of "troth," a chivalric way in which she has dedicated her life to him. The woman's dedication to avenging his murder coincides well with this reading of romantic "troth," as Penthesilea has dedicated herself to revenge—even if it kills her. This once again reinforces Penthesilea's bi-gender nature as chivalric "troth" was not typically associated with women in the context Penthesilea occupies, yet she embraces it naturally. Readers are offered ample insight into Penthesilea's process of grieving as well, through the language she uses to describe the murder of Hector. Penthesilea places much of the blame for Hector's death upon Achilles, claiming that he took advantage of a weakened state in order to kill her lover. She goes further, claiming that Hector did not even fight back; the image that Penthesilea paints here is one that is highly sympathetic towards Hector, pushing away any potential for Hector to be blamed for his end. Penthesilea's line of thinking here is very reminiscent of grief's stages of denial and anger. Here, Penthesilea's warrior nature seeks to avenge and murder, suggesting an eye-for-an-eye mentality. Rather than work through her intense loss, Penthesilea chases this line of thinking and sets her sights on Pyrrhus.

Penthesilea's aggression towards Pyrrhus is another way that Lydgate masculinizes her. Her grief is bound to the idea of getting even; it should be noted that Pyrrhus is only the son of Achilles and is not the true killer of Hector. At this point in *Troy Book* Achilles has died,[113] and thus Penthesilea's retributive grief cannot be directed towards its actual target. Penthesilea's choice to target Pyrrhus due to the sins of his father is notable, as it declares to readers that Penthesilea does, in fact, see revenge killings as encompassing a family line.[114] This expression of grief is one that is far more aggressive than is shown by other women in the text, and aligns more with the *Troy Book* men. Coinciding with Hennequinn's earlier connection between Penthesilea and Hector, on the one hand, and Achilles and Patroclus on the other. Penthesilea seems to be emulating the grief of Achilles in this moment, wherein painful, angry grief becomes a motivating factor, rather than logic or empathy.[115]

Penthesilea does not just speak of revenge, though, but intends to act on it. Pyrrhus and Penthesilea battle many times, unhorsing one another and fighting throughout the night. When describing the frequency of battle, Lydgate says that they fought "al þe monþe, swynge day by day, / With-outen any interupcioun" (all the month,

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[113] *Troy Book*, bk. 4, ll. 3236.
[114] The issue of revenge killings in relation to family lines is one that comes up more than once for Lydgate. Specifically, Lydgate notably deals with this in his *Siege of Thebes*, which followed after his publishing of *Troy Book*. This is primarily seen through the inter-familial conflict of Oedipus's sons, Eteocles and Polynices.
[115] I say "empathy" in reference to Achilles's refusal to return the body of Hector for burial, instead parading it in front of Troy. In Homer's *The Iliad*, trans. by Emily Wilson, this action was seen as sacrilege since it prevented Hector's spirit from carrying on to the afterlife. This action was seen as especially heinous and cruel.

continuing day by day, / Without any interruption) (bk. 4, ll. 4260-1), bringing a focus to the incessant and repetitive nature of war at this point. Eventually, though, Penthesilea and Pyrrhus do have a final meeting in which the two fight lethally. At this final moment of meeting, Penthesilea charges Pyrrhus with her spearhead, which "In Pirrus brest precid hath so depe" (in Pyrrhus's breast hath pierced so deep) (bk. 4, l. 4302). Though this piercing blow does not ultimately kill Pyrrhus, I find explicit value in the language that Lydgate chooses to use here. By piercing Pyrrhus in the breast, one cannot help but think back to the consistent association made by Lydgate between Penthesilea, Hector, and her heart—something that comes up even in her declaration of revenge. While this is certainly intended to be a mortal blow, I see Penthesilea's choice to go for Pyrrhus's heart as a connection to her grief, as well as the unification between her chivalric, romantic love and her "masculine" knighthood. Violent and bloodthirsty as she is, the heart is still at the forefront, and she seeks to inflict onto Pyrrhus what his father inflicted on her. Within this moment of violent vulnerability, Penthesilea once again toes the line between womanhood and masculinity, embracing both in the final expression of her grief against the blood of Achilles.

The connection of the heart with womanhood is supported nicely by Lydgate. Prior to the final battle between the pair, Penthesilea assured Pyrrhus that women shall shed his blood (bk. 4, ll. 4150-7). This connection is later cemented when Lydgate writes that Pyrrhus "so gan blede, / Ni3e to þe deth, of his mortal wounde" (began to bleed, / night to the death, of his mortal wound) (bk. 4, ll. 4342-3). In this moment Pyrrhus's blood is, in fact, shed by a woman—a wound that would have killed him, had he not been

carried away. The progression of these events reinforces Penthesilea's persistent status of womanhood; though it is oftentimes disregarded in favor of her knightlier traits, Penthesilea's femininity is certainly still relevant. Utilizing these connections to reinforce the unity between Penthesilea and womanhood, Lydgate's focus on the heart becomes more relevant. As the heart is the source of love, care, and empathy, it is oftentimes an organ associate with women.[116] It is within this rationalization that Penthesilea's loss becomes representative of feminine grief. Even her revenge, a facet of her character that is so consistently attributed to the masculine (or bi-gendered) parts of Penthesilea, is so deeply rooted in the matters of the heart and the influence of womanhood.

Penthesilea's dedication to revenge can be seen as a demonstration of "the virgin's typical determination."[117] This determination implies that within Penthesilea burns a fire of vengeance that cannot be extinguished. It is interesting, then, that something so crucial within Penthesilea's character as revenge is bound to her virginal nature. This flame of motivation is only extinguished when Pyrrhus finally overpowers and kills Penthesilea. Pyrrhus "smette" (struck) off Penthesilea's arm before he "hath hir hewe al on pecis smale" (hath her hewn all in pieces small) (bk. 4, ll. 4332; 4340).[118] Penthesilea's gory and violent end is not one that reinforces her femininity but instead embraces the masculine associations with the battlefield. Cut apart, Penthesilea is no

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[116] For more information on how these gentle expectations of women impact their perception, reference *Chapter 2: Cassandra*.
[117] Hennequinn, "Not Quite One of the Guys," p. 15.
[118] Despite not being a block quotation, my translation for this line is taken from D.M. Smith's translation, p. 535; l. 4340.

longer whole, a realization that mirrors her earlier grief of Hector. In this moment of defeat, Lydgate does not have Penthesilea speak or react, instead presenting readers with a description of her body's destruction. A stoical silence in her final moments highlights the warrior nature of Penthesilea, bringing a focus back to her Amazonian roots. The acceptance of defeat reflects the weakening of both Penthesilea's mind and body. Her grief for Hector, her failure to kill Pyrrhus and the future grief of her Amazonian warriors have seemingly reached a crux. Here, Penthesilea's grief has finally gone from her earlier stages of anger and denial and directly embraced acceptance. Living, fighting, avenging, and dying like a warrior, Penthesilea has fought most valiantly, yet it is not enough. Remarkably, Penthesilea is guided through her final months almost entirely by her grief alone, inextricably bound to it, much like her virginity.

Viewing feminine grief through the lens of Penthesilea offers much needed nuance to the multifaceted nature of suffering. While other grieving women in *Troy Book* are bound and limited by their womanhood, Penthesilea's Amazonian background allows for her femininity to be seen as strength and to intermingle with her chivalric masculinity. Penthesilea's grief is sudden and intense; here we find a rich medieval depiction of the processing of grief and encounter one of the most well-rounded depictions of female grieving in the text. Going from the hysterical processing of the loss of Hector, to the troth-like oath to kill Pyrrhus, to the heart-led murder attempt on the Greek, to her ultimate death, Penthesilea embraces and acts on grief in many ways, rather than being incapacitated by her mourning. With Penthesilea embracing her hate-fueled desire for justice over a lost love, she offers readers a perspective on feminine, virginal grief that

expands beyond the typical conventions of womanhood. By valuing the insight Penthesilea can offer, one can better understand Lydgate's nuanced descriptions of grief in a text that is already riddled with death. Penthesilea the chivalric white knight, Amazon queen, and devoted woman occupies multiple spaces outside of those Greek and Trojan women are bound to. Offering commentary on the potential role knightly women could embrace, Lydgate's Penthesilea lives and dies by her grief, rage, womanhood, virginity, and masculinity simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

Approaching grief through a distinctly feminine lens can offer nuanced insight beyond sorrow. Personal relationships, characterizations, and personhood can all be better understood through approaching grief and mourning carefully. *Troy Book* is no exception to this, as the narrative's insurmountable amount of loss and death makes it an illuminating text when considering grief from a medieval perspective of antiquity. Medea, Cassandra, and Penthesilea all engage with grief in unique ways that reflect upon their character, while still occasionally overlapping with one another. Medea's anticipatory grief parallels Cassandra's proleptic grief of Troy. In a similar vein, Cassandra's mourning of Troy (as a person) lays down the foundation for Penthesilea's grief, and subsequent revenge plot. Each one of these classical women encourage specialized attention to their experiences of loss which then reflect not only on themselves, but Lydgate's depiction of them as well. Investigating womanhood in *Troy Book* is not limited simply to the text itself, as careful consideration of medieval expectations in Lydgate's time can shed light on the greater purpose that each woman serves.

Lydgate's Medea, which entails a rejection of the narratives of Ovid and Seneca, experiences a uniquely noble sense of grief, as she mourns the loss of her kinship and prowess due to her love for Jason. Serving as the most accessible representation of medieval womanhood, Medea's portrayal in the text reflects upon a fifteenth century society that does not seek to uplift femininity and thus creates a space for her to mourn the shortcomings of expectation as a whole. Jason's betrayal of Medea causes her to

engage with the loss of love, trust, and "troth," as she must grapple with the new future that is set up for her, following the couple's union. Lydgate's Medea presents grief in the more nuanced sense of the word, as she engages with more social, and hierarchical, forms of mourning rather than death.

Cassandra's grief returns to the more typical format of grief, with some qualifications. Though she mourns for countless deaths, they are not yet tangible to her. Here, Lydgate's Cassandra engages with commonplace forms of sorrow through a more nuanced lens. Anticipatory grieving, waiting for the unavoidable, drives Cassandra's character completely; a vast majority of her dialogue is dealing with the future besieging of Troy in some capacity. Alongside this, Cassandra must mourn Troy itself, seeing the city through personification. Through Lydgate's depiction of her, one can see Cassandra engage in typical forms of mourning for an inanimate being, thus altering the approach to sorrow that must be made. Cassandra's gift of prophecy makes it so that her mourning is highly indicative of her character, and ability to cope with loss. Her imprisonment shines light on the merit of female voices in Lydgate's time and opens the door for a critical conversation when it comes to the role that women play in a war narrative, such as *Troy Book*.

Penthesilea takes the most "normal" approach to grief; that is to say, she does grieve a real, dead person. Penthesilea's grief of Hector goes beyond typical sorrow for medieval (and classical) women, as she embraces rage and revenge rather than mourning. Driven by injustice, Penthesilea offers insight into the union between chivalry, womanhood, and sorrow. In her quest for revenge, one must take notice of Lydgate's

careful descriptions of the woman, which situate her outside of the typical female trends. Lydgate's unique approach to Penthesilea's gender and chivalry allows for investigations of her feminine grief to explore the multifaceted and malleable nature of gender in relation to loss. Penthesilea serves as a juxtaposition of other *Troy Book* women, as her engagement and might in the Trojan War is not replicated by any other women (except for her supporting Amazons). Combining analysis of Penthesilea with that of Medea and Cassandra completes a well-rounded approach to womanhood in the text, going from romantic to hysterical to masculinized womanhood.

My analyses concerning these three women encourage us to enrich our understanding not only of the relationship between femininity and grief, but also of the connection between antiquity and the Middle Ages as well. Considering *Troy Book* in the context of its classical predecessors, alongside its role as a "medievalized" version, promotes engagement with all contributing factors of grief, as shown in the text. This approach answers the question of how specific feminine interactions with grief help to express intended, societal, perceptions and characterizations of notable *Troy Book* women.

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