Lord Rivers and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms Bodley 264: A *Speculum* for the Prince of Wales?

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The purpose of this essay is to shed light on the possible use of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 264 in a rather obscure period of its life. A new hypothesis is here proposed: it involves Anthony Woodville, second Earl Rivers (*c.* 1440 to 1483) and the role of the codex in the education of his nephew, Edward IV's son and the future Edward V. MS Bodley 264 is famous among scholars of medieval French literature and philology as it contains one of the most valuable recensions of the *Roman d'Alexandre*; yet it is also notable for the presence of the only extant copy of the Middle English alliterative poem known as *Alexander and Dindimus*. The manuscript results from the bringing together of three distinct units: the first is a collection of French poems on the gests of Alexander the Great, among which the *Roman* is the most famous; the second is represented by *Alexander and Dindimus*,[1] while the last contains a French re-elaboration of Marco Polo's *Milione*, known as *Livre du Grant Caam*.[2] A note on fol. 208r reveals that the core of the manuscript, represented by the *Roman* group, is dated to 1338. *Alexander and Dindimus* and *Caam* are later interpolations. Originally, the English poem was conceived as an independent unit: transmitted in a single *quaternio* (fols. 209r-216v), it is datable on linguistic grounds to the fifteenth century.

Alexander and Dindimus deals with the epistolary exchange between

Alexander the Great and Dindimus, king of the Indian people called Bragmans. The two sovereigns allegorically embody the conflict between two cultural models: Alexander's, materialistic and aimed at earthly power, and Dindimus's, ascetic and spiritual. The story is the following: in his campaign to the East, Alexander enters the easternmost regions of India. His first encounter is with the Gymnosophists (here incorrectly called Bragmans), who live in poverty and meditation. Alexander decides to spare them and claims that he would fulfill anything they desire: they demand eternal life, the only thing Alexander cannot grant even for himself; they ask him why he desires to submit the whole peoples of the world, since life is so short. Alexander answers that he must accomplish the fate gods have planned for him and continues his journey. At the bank of the river Phison, impossible to wade except on certain months of the year, Alexander sees some men on the opposite side and sends a message to their king Dindimus. Here, a long epistle exchange between the two takes place. In the first letter, Alexander asks Dindimus to tell him about his customs, as his people are known all over the world for their wisdom. Dindimus answers that they do not farm, hunt or fish; they do not use fire, they live in caves and they die at an indefinite age. They do not wear any clothes and their women do not use make-up to appear fairer. They always tell the truth, and have never threatened anybody or fought with any people. By contrast, he accuses Alexander of being wicked and a liar and strongly condemns his cruel exercise of power, his love for war and his faith in false gods. Finally, he gives the major classic divinities typically earthly faults, like greed, lust and falsehood. Alexander claims that Dindimus has no right to criticize his behavior and way of life since his is so miserable. According to the Macedonian, his people live like animals and ignore earthly joys. Dindimus answers that human life is nothing but a passage and that Alexander's deeds do not increase God's glory, but his own pride. He cannot drink the gold he continually longs for, and the Bragmans behave more wisely than he because they trample on it as on any other kind of stone. Dindimus goes on reproaching Alexander, telling him that he does not realize he lives in error, and that he is doing a favor to him in showing his mistakes. Alexander closes the exchange answering that they live in an island in the middle of a river like prisoners: in this way, God decreed for them a miserable life.

After this, he erects a white marble pillar as the extreme boundary of his empire, and comes back with his troops. The debate between Alexander and Dindimus has no winners. The latter does not manage to change the former's mind and convince him to modify his way of life; on the other hand, Alexander abandons the idea of invading the land of the Gymnosophists. The suspension of either implicit or explicit moral judgment urges the reader to make a synthesis between the two models proposed in the poem, drawing the best from each of them.

As Skeat[3] and Magoun[4] demonstrated, no redaction of the *Roman* reports the exchange between Alexander and Dindimus. Consequently, the inclusion of the English poem has been interpreted as a result of what can be considered a scribal error, on the basis of the assumption that the *Roman* contained a lacuna.[5] From a codicological point of view, *Alexander and Dindimus* and *Caam* seem to constitute a unitary entity: the copyist's hand is the same and so is the illustrator's. The copyist, taking advantage of a blank column left in the *Roman* section (fol. 67r), wrote a colophon which refers the reader to the Middle English poem.[6] This proves that the collection of texts in the codex results from conscious choices, aimed at satisfying a precise need that has been a matter of debate among scholars. Grady[7] states that the structure of the codex is to be intended as a vernacular imitation of an anthology of Latin texts, whose presence in England is witnessed by a number of manuscripts containing Julius Valerius's *Epitome,* the *Collatio Alexandri cum Dindimo* and the *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem*. Apart from some doubts that a potential interchangeability between *Caam* and the *Epistola* can arise,[8] if the interpolator had planned to imitate the order of the Latin texts—each independent of the others—the colophon that invites the reader to stop to read the pseudo-*Epitome,* to switch to the pseudo-*Collatio,* and then to come back to that point would not be comprehensible. Another interpretation of the anthology has been given by Evans, who describes Bodley 264 as one of the clearest examples of *compilatio,* i.e., the process of arranging different literary materials in a manuscript.[9] In this case, it has cohesive purposes and determines a final effect of unity among the parts, but it cannot account for the reasons that urged the compiler to modify the structure of the manuscript.

The history of the codex, as reconstructed from the signatures and the notes of possession found within it, reveals that it formed part of the librar-

ies of important personages of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England.[10] Peculiarly significant is the period when it was in the hands of the Woodville family,[11] after its purchase by Richard, the first Lord Rivers, and particular attention will be paid to the function this manuscript might have had during that particular moment of its life.[12]

It is not easy to determine whether the codex came into Richard's possession in its ultimate form or without *Alexander and Dindimus* and *Caam*. Nevertheless, the evidence at this point suggests that the interpolation can hardly be subsequent to the Woodvilles' ownership.[13] According to the two editors of *Alexander and Dindimus*,[14] the poem was originally composed in the fourteenth century, even though several specific phonological and morphological tracts reveal a fifteenth-century superstrate, due to the copyist's activity. Moreover, the possession note on the flyleaf placed at the end of the codex suggests that the Woodvilles owned it complete, with *Alexander and Dindimus* and *Caam* inserted into the present binding. The actual use of the manuscript by any other specific member of the family has never been considered or verified; yet the first line of a hardly readable inscription on fol. 274r seems to provide the proof that it passed into the hands of another notable member of the Woodvilles: Anthony, Richard's first-born and second Lord Rivers. It reports the name "ARiverys," written in a chancery hand typical of the second half of the fifteenth century. The initial represents a rather peculiar capital "R" which seems to be merged with a capital "A," forming a sort of monogram indicating Rivers' name. This can be related to the one found in a signature in London, British Library, MS Harley 80, fol. 59r (see Appendix, plate 3) and in the possession note on fol. 1r of London, British Library, MS Harley 4431, a manuscript containing several works by Christine de Pisan and supposed to be written by Christine herself.[15] The prestige of Bodley 264 is intimately related to the power reached by the Woodvilles: its possession symbolized the acquisition of a new social and political role, which began with Richard's marriage with Jacquetta of Luxemburg, and reached its apex in the following generation, with Anthony and his sister Elizabeth. Moreover, the literary inclinations developed by Anthony during his lifetime and his role in the Prince of Wales's education corroborate the hypothesis that the codex was actually part of his library. Anthony succeeded his father and also succeeded in keeping all the titles and privileges granted

to the family, despite the temporary breakdown of the Yorkist party which Richard supported. He married Elizabeth, heir of the Baron of Scales, and in 1473 he was appointed Governor to the Prince of Wales's household. After his wife's death, he also became a member of Parliament as Baron of Scales. When Edward IV died in 1483, he was charged with taking his nephew, the future Edward V, to London. Along the way, he fell victim to a plot organized by the Duke of Gloucester—the future Richard III—who imprisoned him and had him executed in Pomfret (or Pontefract) Castle in June of that year.

Renowned as a model of moral and chivalric virtues, Rivers held many eminent offices: he was ambassador to France and Rome, and Governor of the Isle of Wight. He followed Edward IV into exile to the Low Countries and eventually participated in his successful attempt to regain power. He reached the height of his prestige when appointed Lord Protector to the Prince of Wales.[16] Ethics was a central aspect of his literary work:[17] the translations Rivers made in those years and which were printed by Caxton—the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophres*, the *Cordyale*, and Christine de Pisan's *Moral Proverbs*[18] and *Livre du Corps de Policie*[19]—aimed at satisfying the need to offer the young prince a range of texts written in his native language and dealing with edifying and moral concepts on which Anthony could base his educational program.[20]

In addition to this, it is probable that Rivers used some material already present in his family library: this may have been the case of Bodley 264, whose characteristics could fit his needs very well. The aesthetic value of the manuscript could justify its introduction into the court and the themes contained in the texts—especially in the Middle English poem—match some of the key concepts on which Rivers founded his educational program. The search for the right balance between morality and glory which characterizes *Alexander and Dindimus* would undoubtedly be an interesting argument for anybody in charge of educating a future king to govern wisely and right-fully. If seen in this light, the ultimate structure of the manuscript can be matched—at least as far as the *Roman* and *Alexander and Dindimus* are concerned—to a mirror for princes.[21] A thematic parallelism can be established between Rivers' translation of Christine de Pisan's *Livre de Corps de Policie* and *Alexander and Dindimus*. In fact, the two kings' debate matches most of the topics discussed in first part of the *Livre*, such as the ruler's virtue[22] (and, mostly, the balance between it and the search for glory)[23] and good

governance.[24] Moreover, the second part of the *Livre* gives instructions for the good exercise of knighthood, which can be seen valuably applied in Alexander's chivalric adventures narrated in the *Roman* group of Bodley 264. In the light of this evidence, it is possible to suppose that Anthony, aware of Alexander's role in the tradition of the *exempla*, probably wanted to improve the prince's consciousness on the exercise of power by adding to a text that can be considered "technical" as the *Livre* is, a literary product which is more engaging from the point of view of narrative structure, but likewise pregnant with didacticism like the Bodley anthology. The use of poetry for the transmission of certain messages should not be considered strange or irrelevant to the literature of the *speculum principum*, which escapes any attempt of definition or classification: as Genet states, "political theory [...] is found in nearly all forms of literary work."[25] In the Bodley anthology, Rivers found merged all the most important characteristics of a ruler: his courage on battlefields (like Alexander in the *Roman*), but also his moral rectitude and piety (like Alexander in the English poem). The figure of Anthony himself matched this ideal: he was brave in battle—many sources remember the joust won against the Bastard of Burgundy and the extravagance of his garb—but at the same time pious and devout: he goes on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in 1473; he is titled by the Pope "defenseur du siège apostolique," and on the day of his execution, he is told to wear a hair shirt under his luxurious clothes.[26]

In light of these considerations, then, it is possible to consider Bodley 264 a compilation of texts that could be used for the education of the future sovereign. They concentrate on one exemplary king of the past, and mixing up adventures and moral reflection, use the formula of entertainment to convey edifying messages. In fact, the content of the manuscript answers coherently to what Edward IV requested for the education of his son. The texts contained in the Bodley anthology can be considered "suche noble stories as behoveth a prince to understand and knowe," and particularly in the case of the Middle English poem, they are able to lead to right and virtuous conversations, for which Anthony Rivers can be considered undoubtedly one of the fittest men of his times.

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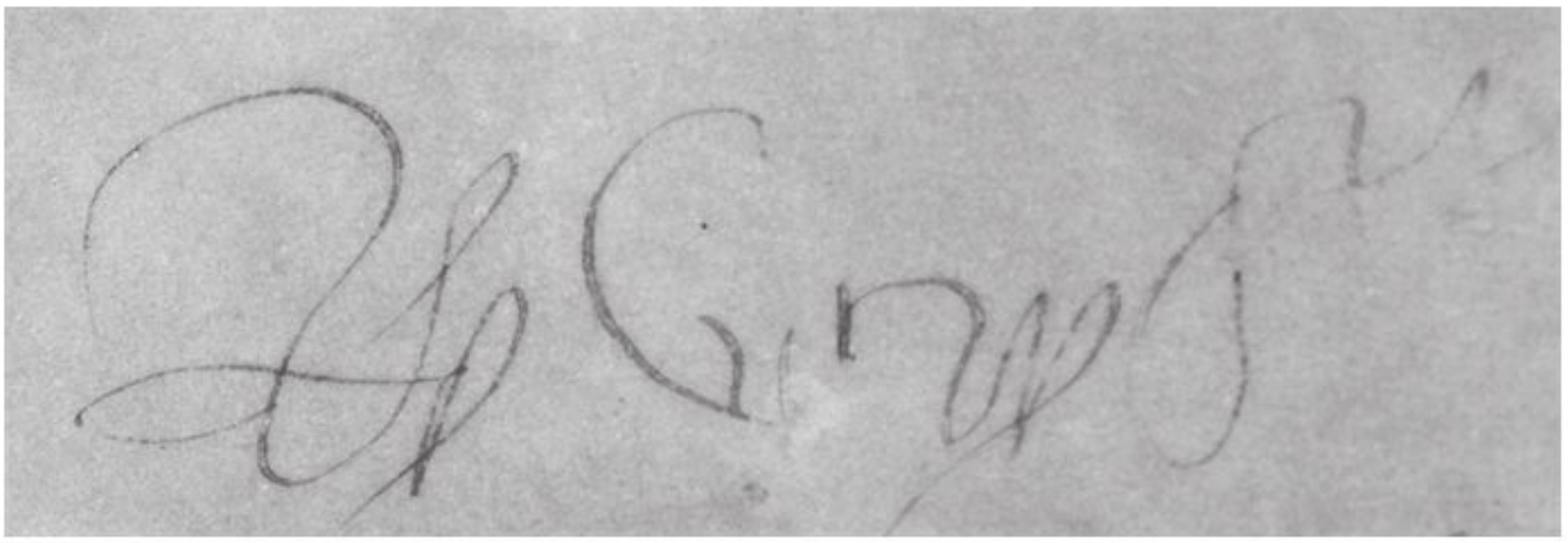
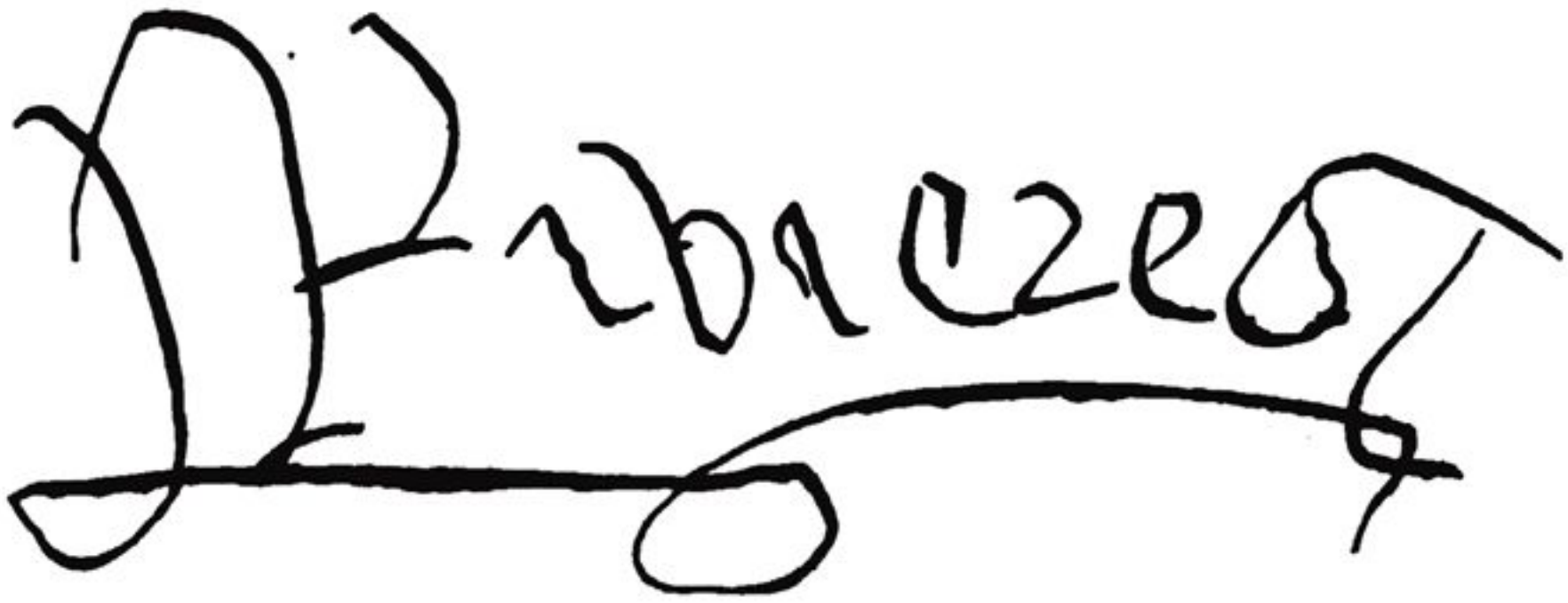
APPENDIX

Here, the inscriptions of Anthony Rivers found in his manuscripts are shown. They show the initial monogram "AR" in different styles.



Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 264, fol. 274r: the first graphic element of the inscription is a typical chancery capital "A" bound with the "R" of "Ryverys." By kind permission of the Bodleian Library.

© The British Library Board. London, British Library, MS Harley 4431, fol. 1r: the capital inscription clearly shows the "AR" monogram used by Anthony Rivers.



Reproduction of the signature in a charter found in London, British Library, MS Harley 80: similarly to the Bodley inscription, this signature shows the "AR" monogram, with the "A" used as ornamental element.[27]

NOTES

1. The traditional title given by the first editors of the poem, *Alexander B*, is due to the hypothesis that this text was part, together with the so-called *Alexander A* (or *The Romance of Alisauder*), of a longer alliterative poem on the gests of Alexander of Macedon. Cf. M. Trautmann, *Über Verfasser und Entstehungszeit einiger alliterirender Gedichte des Altenglischen* (Halle, 1876), 18-19; W. W. Skeat, *Alexander and Dindimus, or the Letters of Alexander to Dindimus* (Early English Text Society Extra Series 31, Milford: Oxford University Press, 1863), xi-xii; F. P. Magoun, *The Gests of King Alexander of Macedon: with introduction, notes, appendices and index* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), 113; T. Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge:, Boydell & Brewer, 1978), 31. This paper does not intend to give a definitive answer to this question; however, since the topic of the discussion will be the relationship of this text with its codicological environment, I think it is preferable to consider it a single poem and to refer to it as *Alexander and Dindimus*.
2. An investigation of the codex, with special reference to illuminations, is found in K. Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390 – 1490. II, Catalogue and Indexes*, (Turnhout: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1996).
3. Skeat, ix.
4. Magoun, 13.

5. However, the choice to insert the English poem in that specific point of the *Roman* might find a simple explanation: that section of the French poem deals with Alexander's adventures in India and his encounter with marvellous things. The chapter ends with the story of four old Indian men who tell Alexander of three miraculous springs with the power to rejuvenate, make men live forever and make them come back from the dead. Probably, the episode's setting and the figures of the four old wise men inspired the interpolator to insert Alexander and Dindimus just at this point.

6. "Here fayleth a prossesse of þis romance of Alixandre, þe which prossesse þat fayleth e schulle fynde at þe ende of þis bok ywrete in Engelyche ryme; and whanne ȝe han radde it to þe ende, turneþ hedur aȝen and turneþ ovyr þis lef and bygynneþ at þis reson, 'Che fu el mois de May que li tans renovele'; and rede forþ þe romance to þe ende whylis þe Frenche lasteþ." Cf. Scott, 69.

7. F. Grady, "Contextualizing Alexander and Dindimus," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 18 (2004), 81-106.

8. Moreover, the Middle English recension of the *Epistola* contained in Worcester, Cathedral Library MS F.175, edited by V. DiMarco & L. Perelman, *The Middle English Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1978), witnesses that the Latin text still circulated in medieval England. In my opinion, this fact makes the hypothesis of substitution advanced by Grady unlikely.

9. M. J. Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance: Manuscript Layout, Decoration, and the Rhetoric of Composite Structure* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), 5-7.

10. Cf. P. Meyer, "Étude sur les manuscrits du Roman d'Alexandre," *Romania* 11 (1882), 290-301.

11. The events related to the origin, the social rise and the sudden decline, as well as the dubious morality of the Woodvilles have been object of contrasting judgments both in the past as well as recently. In particular, Anthony has always been the object of particular attention; starting with Thomas More, *The History of King Richard the Third* (Bloomington:, Indiana University Press, 2005) and Shakespeare in the tragedy *Richard III*, which characterize him as a positive figure, up to P. M. Kendall, *Richard III: The Great Debate* (New York: Norton, 1965), who distinguishes Anthony's piety and moral value against the excessive ambition of the rest of the Woodvilles. On the

other hand, G. Richardson, *The Popinjays* (Ripponden: Pennine, 2000), 92, in his invective against this family, defines Anthony as "a mass of contradiction," who could hardly balance his ascetism and courtly life. The climax of the family's road to power was reached with the wedding between Richard and Jacquetta of Luxemburgh, in 1462, when King Edward IV married Elizabeth, Richard's daughter. Anthony was the one who most enjoyed the results, but only for a short time. In fact, he became the Governor of the household of the Prince of Wales, the future Edward V, until the coup of the dead king's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, who would execute Anthony, imprison the nephews and rise to the throne with the name of Richard III.

12. The Woodvilles' ownership is recorded in a note on fol. 274r: "Cest livre est a monseignour Richart de Widevielle, seignour de Rivieres, ung des compaignons de le tres noble ordre de la jartiere, et ledist seigneur acetast ledist livre l'an de grace mille .cccclxvi., le premier jour de l'an a Londres, et le v an de la coronation de tres victorieux roy Eduard quart de che non, et le second de la coronation de tres vertueuse royne Elyzabeth, l'endemain du jour de sainct More."

13. K. Harris, "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: the Evidence for Ownership and the Rôle of Book Owners in Book Production and the Book Trade," in J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall eds., *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 163-199), 175, suggests that the addition was made before Richard's purchase in 1466, on the basis of Scott's analysis of the illustrations of the poem, made by a hand "more typical of the late 14th than of the early 15th century" (Scott, 70).

14. Skeat, 26; Magoun, 94.

15. For a comparison of the three inscriptions, see Appendix, plate 1.

16. The instructions Edward IV gave him regarding the education of the prince were recorded in the seventeenth century in British Library, MS Sloane 3479, on fol. 53v: "no man sitt at his bord, but suche as shalbee thought by the discrecion of the saide Erle Riviers. And that then bee read before him suche noble stories, as behoveth a Prince to understand, and knowe, and that the communycacions, at all tymes in his presens, bee of vertue, honour, connynge, wisdome, and dedys of worship, and of no thinge that should move or stere him to vices." M. Kekewich, "Edward IV, William Caxton, and Literary Patronage in Yorkist England," *The Modern Language*

Review 3, 1971, 481-487, 486.

17. Caxton himself, in his epilogue to the *Cordyale*, writes about him: "he semeth that he conceiveth wel the mutabilite and the unstablenes of this present lyf, and that he desireth with a greet zele and spirituell love, our goostlye help and perpetuel salvacion, and that we shal abhorre and utterly forsake thabominable and dampnable synnes, which comunely be used now a dayes; as pride, perjurye, terrible swering, thefte, murdre, and many other." W. J. B. Crotch, *The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton* (Early English Text Society Series 176, London:, Oxford University Press, 1928), 39.

18. Cf. Crotch.

19. Cf. D. Bornstein, *The Middle English Translation of Christine de Pisan's Livre du Corps de Policie* (Heidelberg:, Winter, 1977), 31-36.

20. In fact, in the dedicatory preface to the only extant witness of the *Dictes*—London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 265, dated back to 29th December 1477—Rivers states that the aim of his translation was the education of his pupil (Kekewich, 486). Moreover, in the epilogue to the *Cordyale*, Caxton lists these three texts as part of the didactic material used by Anthony for his nephew's education. See S. Bentley, *Excerpta Historica: or, Illustrations of the English History* (London:, Bentley, 1831), 245. Such attention to the ethics of power is characteristic of medieval political thought: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, for instance, gives ample space to this matter. However, the concern with morality as related to the exercise of power saw a great development in the fifteenth century thanks to Italian humanism, whose attention to moral philosophy and ethics surely influenced the concept of kingship from the beginning of the century. See J. Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300-1450* (London and New York:, Routledge, 2005), 114; 185.

21. Many moralizing texts written in other cultural areas such as Germany, France and Italy testify to a broad use of Alexander as exemplary figure related to the concept of liberality which lasts until Renaissance. See G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956) 260; 272; 358-368. In relation specifically to literary tradition in medieval England, starting from Latin texts like John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159 ca.) and Gerald of Wales' *De Instructione Principis* (1220 ca.), Alexander is presented as a model of royal virtue worthy to be imitated (Cary, 108; 158-160). Chronologically nearer to Anthony and Edward V, also Thomas Hoc-

cleve's *Regement of Princes* (1410 ca.) resorts to episodes related to Alexander for didactic purposes (vv. 2300-2338). Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, Kalamazoo, Medieval Institute Publications, 1999, http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/hoccfrm.htm (21 December 2010).

22. Chapters II, "Here after it [the chapter] speketh of vertuous felicite"; XV, "Of the humayne pite of a prynce"; XVI, "Of the mekenesse and debonerte in a prynce"; XVIII, "Houghe a prynce shulde not be proude thoughe fortune favoureth him neuer so moche"; XIX, "Houghe the good prynce ought to loue iustyce"; XXVI, "Howe it longeth to a prince to be wise and prudente in eloquence"; XXVIII, "Houghe it is a conuenabill thyng to a prynce to behaue himselfe goodly"; XXX, "How the good prynce ought to fle lecherye"; XXXI, "Howe the good prince shulde kepe himself frome angre."

23. Chapter XXXIII, "Howe the good prince whiche undirstondith hymself that he dothe his devoire in all vertues ought resonablye desire the lawde and glorie."

24. Chapters VIII, "Of the observaunces and the lawe that a good prynce ought to holde"; IX, "Houghe a good prynce ought to be resembled to a good shepherde"; X "Yet of the same"; XI "The loue that the good prince ought to haue to his subiectys"; XXI, "Houghe a good prynce notwithstondyng that he be debenoir and meke ought to be dradde and doubted"; XXVIII, "Houghe euery good prynce ought to be diligent to occupie himself in the necessiteis of his londe or realme."

25. J.-P. Genet, *Four English Political Tracts of the Later Middle Ages* (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, University College London, 1977), vii.

26. Cf. *inter alios* Bentley, 244-5 and Richardson, 9.

27. Bentley, 242.