Over the last ten or fifteen years, paratexts of all kinds have attracted increasing amounts of critical attention. With medieval texts, such attention has been linked both to attempts to define and refine the fluid and experimental theories of authorship current in the period and to the fast-developing fields of book history and the material text.¹ But although Hoccleve is among the authors to have benefited from this approach, most notably in John Burrow’s edition of the ‘Complaint’ and ‘Dialogue’ and David Watt’s study of the Series in its entirety through the lens of its holographs, the glosses that appear in a number of manuscripts have been relatively little discussed.² This is despite the fact that, among fifteenth-century authors, Hoccleve is one of those most intimately involved with the publication of his works.³ The two holograph manuscripts now in the Huntington Library, MSS HM 111 and HM 744, gather together all of his shorter poems, while Durham MS Cosin V.III.9 preserves a second holograph copy of the Series.⁴ Of the forty-four surviving manuscripts of the Regiment of Princes, London, British Library, Arundel MS 38, Harley MS 4866, and Royal MS 17.D.vi were produced in Hoccleve’s lifetime, possibly under his supervision, and Linne Mooney has recently argued that BL, Royal MS 17.D.xviii is a holograph witnessing a revised version of the poem.⁵ The fact that these manuscripts, as well as many scribal copies, share a substantial number of glosses suggests that these should be understood as an integral part of his works: an exercise in self-glossing analogous to that performed by Gower in the Confessio Amantis, and one that Chaucer, too, may have engaged in.⁶ Focusing on the Regiment and the Series, this article argues that Hoccleve’s glosses are a material manifestation of his interest in the processes by which texts come into being and that, both by contributing to the dialogic form of his works and by reflecting larger questions of translatio, they provide an opportunity to examine the connections between his poetic theory and his poetic practice.

In both of Hoccleve’s major works, the Regiment of Princes (1410–11) and the Series (c.1420), the majority of glosses are citation glosses, providing quotations from the texts on which Hoccleve has drawn in composing his work, or from those that contain analogous material. There are some exceptions; in the later stages of the Regiment, in particular, a number of glosses provide a rudimentary
index to the subjects of the text. For the most part, however, the glosses do not respond to Hoccleve's writing, but visibly link his work to previous writing, buttressing his poems in such a way as to imply simply by their appearance on the page that their content is known and approved. In many cases this is confirmed by the close relationship between the contents of text and gloss; the Latin prose citations provide in relatively concise form the teaching that Hoccleve's text presents more discursively. The three stanzas on swearing and their accompanying glosses, taken from the *Regiment*, serve as an example:

A greet clerk which clept is Crisostomus,
Where he of matire of swerynge tretith,
This arn the wordes that he writ to us:
‘What man the custume of oothes nat lettith
In sweryng ofte, what he seith forgetith.
Usage of oothes of perjurie is cause.’
And more he seith eek in the same clause.
He seith, ‘Perjurie engendrid is of oothes,
For right as he that custumablely
Clappith and janglith and to stynte looth is,
Moot othirwhyle speke unsittyngly,
Right so usage of sweryng enemy
To trouthe is, and makith men hem forswere.’
Ful necessarie is oothes to forbere.
Sweryng hath thise thre condicions
Folwyng, as trouthe, doom, and rightwisnesse.
Ooth axith trouthe and no decepcions,
But swere in his entente soothfastnesse;
Doom moot discreetly, lest al hastynesse,
Swere, and nat needles; and justice also,
Leeffully swere, and justly everemo. (lines 2339–59)7

These stanzas are flanked by lengthy glosses from two separate sources, complete with attributions: ‘Crisostomus super Matthaeum omelia 12: Nisi consuetudo interdicitur, non possunt amputari perjuria. Ex juramento enim perjurium generatur; sicut enim qui habet in consuetudine multum loqui neceesse est ut aliquando importune loquatatur, sic qui habet consuetudinem jurare in rebus ydoneis, frequenter et in rebus superfluos etiam nolens consuetudine trahente perjurat’ (Crisostomos on Matthew, Homily 12: ‘Unless the usage is forbidden, perjuries cannot be curtailed. For perjury is begotten of an oath; for just as the person who by habit speaks a lot sometimes speaks unsuitably, so he who habitually swears frequently in suitable circumstances, also by following habit when it is unnecessary, commits perjury though he does not wish to’); ‘In Canone xxii, questio ii, Isti tres: Juramentum tres habet conditiones, videlicet,
veritatem, judicium et justiciam. Veritatem, s[c]ilicet ut jurans sciat vel credat verum esse quod jurat. Judicium, id est discretionem, ut discrete juret, non precipitanter, et cetera’ (Canons 22, questio 2, ‘These three: “Swearing an oath has three requirements, namely, truth, judgment, and justice. Truth, namely, that in swearing one know or believe true what he swears. Judgment, that is prudence, that he swear wisely, not precipitately”, etc.’).

The correspondences between text and gloss are characteristically close. Hoccleve’s first stanza amplifies the first of Crisostom’s sentences and gives a discursive form of attribution to him, while the second stanza is based on his second sentence, and the third, on the biblical citation. Latin sources and English translation are brought into close juxtaposition, setting contemporary advice in a timeless frame; the near-duplication of text and gloss suggests that the sententiae of existing texts may be extracted and re-presented with no loss of relevance or change of meaning. The visual impact of the glosses and what is implied by their content thus come together to suggest that this is a text whose authority derives from a source external to itself. Although they are very different in kind from the Latin summary glosses that Gower included in his Confessio Amantis, they resemble Gower’s in demonstrating that a vernacular text is ‘cased or boxed in Latin’, and thus implicitly authoritative. And – unlike that of Gower’s summarizing glosses – the content of Hoccleve’s marginal citations seems to emphasize this authorizing effect: whereas Gower’s glosses represent a creative adaptation of academic commentary, and thus emphasize the interpretative processes involved in translatio, Hoccleve’s record in the margins of passages from his sources implies that no such interpretation or alteration is necessary. They apparently constitute a physical representation, on the manuscript page, of a theory of authorship according to which, in Evelyn Tribble’s words, ‘the auctor is always an other, located outside the writer and conferring authority from a historical distance [and in which] authority … implies a grounding, a foundation, an origin to which the present writer refers and defers’. The phrase with which Hoccleve prefaces many of his citations, ‘scriptum est’, is particularly telling in this regard, implying that they do not simply authorize specific details of Hoccleve’s arguments, but assert the innate trustworthiness of the written word because it is written, as if this were a guarantee of its permanence, and its timeless, immutable meaning.

Matters are not really quite so simple, however. In the Regiment, Hoccleve’s glosses are just one of the text’s distinctly articulated parts. The most obvious division is between the lengthy introductory section, in which the figure of ‘Thomas Hoccleve’ confronts anxieties about his life – most notably his financial situation – and is counselled by a still more impoverished old man, and the Regiment ‘proper’, the mirror for princes addressed to the future Henry V. Each of these parts takes the form of a dialogue – the first literally so, the second
due to recurrent reminders that Henry is Hoccleve’s intended reader – and
the relationship between the two parts of the text constitutes a further level of
exchange. Thomas’s anxiety about the fickleness of fortune is not, of course,
merely a concern for himself. Just as the Old Man is an image of what he most
fears to become, the way in which he recalls how ‘nat longe agoo / Fortunes strook
doun thraste estat rial / Into mescheef’ (lines 22–4) serves as a pointed reminder
to Prince Henry not just of fortune’s generic mutability, but very specifically
of the insecurity of his own position: what his father did to Richard II may be
done to him in turn.13 Without directly threatening the prince, the lines imply
that he may well have as much need of the advice that Hoccleve is about to
provide for him as Hoccleve himself has of the prince’s financial support. At the
same time, Hoccleve implies that a prince who is willing to accept the Regiment
is one who has already internalized its advice, and who – although he has no
real need of it – will reward its poet ‘not as mere compensation, but as a sign
of his devotion to morality’.14 The text is thus structured as an extended series
of mirrors. Not only is the Regiment proper a speculum providing Henry with
an image of the ideal ruler, but the Old Man mirrors Thomas; both together
mirror Prince Henry; the prince himself is flatteringly presented as impervious
to flattery, and hence as a mirror to others. Drawn primarily from Hoccleve’s
source-texts, the pseudo-Aristotelian Secreta secretorum, Aegidius Romanus’ De
regimine principum, and Jacobus de Cessolis’ De ludo scaccorum, the glosses
provide points of reference that seem to stand firmly outside this series of self-
reflexive likenesses.15 It is their heteroglossia, their status as ‘another’s speech in
another’s language’, that gives them their authority; by contrast to the contingent
meanings of the text they surround, they appear to convey timeless sententiae.16

Yet despite their apparent immutability, the glosses are used to highly timely,
rhetorical effect. Thus, several of the potentially contentious points in the text
are attributed to authors other than Hoccleve, as when one piece of particularly
direct advice as to appropriate princely behaviour is attributed to Aristotle:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A prince moot been of condicioun} \\
\text{Pitous, and his angyr refreyne and ire,} \\
\text{Lest an unavysid commocioun} \\
\text{Him chaufe so and sette his herte on fyre,} \\
\text{That him to venge as blyve he desyre,} \\
\text{And fulfille it in dede. Him owith knowe} \\
\text{His errour, and qwenche that fyry lowe. (lines 3102–8)}
\end{align*}
\]

The first gloss to these lines takes the form of what appears to be a fairly precise
reference, but in fact misattributes Aegidius’ work: ‘Aristoteles, in principum
regimine, capitulo de regis providentia.’ The attribution of Aegidius’ De regimine
principum to Aristotle was a common one in the period, yet in Hoccleve’s Regiment it appears not to be purely conventional, but an instance of a more
extensive practice of misattribution: at several points he attributes quotations taken from Jacobus de Cessolis to the sources cited by Jacobus, and occasionally he gives entirely spurious attributions. This habit may be a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that Hoccleve’s main source-texts, Aegidius’ De regimine principum and De Cessolis’ De ludo scaccorum, were themselves potentially contentious tracts against tyranny rather than treatises on good governance. Although citation of Hoccleve’s immediate sources in both text and margins posits Hoccleve as translator and compiler, rather than originator, of the advice he provides, his misattributions constitute a further deflection, with the aim of reaffirming what Paul Strohm has called his ‘strategic unexceptionality’ – that is, not only his own unexceptionality, but that of his sources as well.

Such diplomatic deployment of sources is one way in which the glosses belie their straightforward appearance. Another is the way in which their use enables Hoccleve to advise through the form as well as the content of the Regiment. It has long been recognized that Hoccleve’s use of the dialogue form is not politically neutral. Hoccleve frequently adds direct speech to the exempla taken from his sources, and it has been argued that his ‘alterations of voice … have a cumulative effect, placing dialogue between ruler and subject at the centre of the poem’, thus implicitly as well as explicitly discouraging individualist tyrannous rule. The proliferation of glosses has a comparable effect. As well as stabilizing the text by underwriting its moral instruction, they contribute to its ‘bricolage’ of voices, and thus suggest that ‘authority’ is not monolithic, but rather something to be constructed through negotiation of different perspectives, so that good reading becomes an image of good governance. In Hoccleve’s warning to Henry to beware of flatterers, for example, the recommendation:

… conseil take of the wyse
  And nat of fooles
  …
  Cheesith eek good men, and away shove
  The wikkid whos conseil is deceyvable;
  Thus biddith Holy Writ, it is no fable (lines 4936–7; 4940–2)

is accompanied not by one gloss, but by five, of which four are biblical. These provide minimally different versions of the linked messages that one should take counsel only of the wise, and that the impious are by definition foolish and therefore not to be heeded: ‘Thobie 4: Consilium semper a sapiente perquire et non a fatuo’ (Tobias iv[.19]: ‘Seek counsel always of a wise man and not of a fool’); ‘Scriptum est, Cum fatuis non habeas consilium, quia non possunt diligere nisi quod eis placet, et cetera’ (It is written, ‘Do not take counsel with fools because they are not able to choose except what pleases them, etc’); ‘Iterum Thobie 4: Omnia consilia tua in deo permaneant, et cetera’ (Again Tobias iv[,20]: ‘[Desire that] all your counsels may abide in God, etc’); ‘Scriptum est, Cum bonis fac
tuum consilium, non cum impiis, et cetera’ (It is written, ‘Take your counsel with the good and not with the impious, etc’); ‘Proverbiarum 12: Consilia impiorum fraudulenta (Proverbs xii[.5]: ‘The counsels of the impious are fraudulent’). Thus, rather than the text providing an almost verbatim translation of a single gloss, it becomes one of a number of parallel texts, each providing a variation on a theme. Rather than directly transferring meaning from an old text to a new, the use of multiple glosses encourages a comparative kind of reading that is the textual counterpart of engaging in dialogue. As Karen Smyth has argued:

While the various narrative episodes enact the moral of the digressions in the text proper, Hoccleve also extracts the stable signifier of these moral lessons – the Latin explanations and associations – from the narrative, by placing them literally in the physical framework. Thus the apparatus of the glosses implies a hermeneutical frame of reading advice about reading the advice, rather than the persuasive enactment we would expect in a didactic genre.

The potentially radical consequences of such advisory tactics are clear from the following stanza, where the text exhorts:

Cheesith men eek of old experience
...
Waar of yong conseil, it is perillous.
Roboa fond it so whan he forsook
Old conseil and unto yong reed him took. (lines 4943; 4947–9)

The gloss provides details of Roboa’s error: ‘3 Regum 12: Ad Roboam dixerunt juvenes [qui nutriti erant] cum eo: “Sic loqueris ad eos: Minimus digitus meus est grossior dorso patris mei; et nunc pater meus posuit super vos iugum grave; ego autem addam super iugum vestrum; pater meus cecidit vos flagellis; ego autem cedam eos scorpionibus, et cetera’ (III Kings xii[.10–11]: ‘The youths who were with him said to Roboam: “Thus you will say to them: My smallest finger is larger than my father’s back, and already my father placed upon you a heavy yoke. I moreover will add to your yoke. My father felled you with scourges; I moreover will fell you with scorpions”, etc’). The effect of this is the opposite of the attribution of a potentially controversial piece of advice to a source other than Hoccleve; in a text addressed to the future Henry V, the gloss invites a reading that is far more politically contentious than that of the text, but does so only implicitly, and only for the reader who reads dialogically, across the gap between text and gloss.

This gloss, then, demonstrates how the form of the text may exemplify the kind of dialogue the Regiment seeks to foster through its content. It also shows how, rather than adducing authorizing pre-texts for Hoccleve’s speculum, the glosses may serve as an active part of his text: one of the means by which ‘compiling’ shades into ‘authoring’. Although, as he will do again in the Series, Hoccleve
presents himself as ‘noon auctor’ of the text, his manipulation of citations shows that he is, in a very real sense, in control of it. The *auctores* who are cited in his margins are less invoked than deployed: their appearance looks forward to Hoccleve’s readers at least as much as it looks back to the authoritative texts that are cited. In Smyth’s words again, one consequence of his glossing is a foregrounding of ‘the role of the interpreter’ that makes visible the way in which he creates new meanings from old, and thus reveals him to have precisely the originary authority he denies.25

It is not surprising, then, that at certain points we find a quite noticeable level of play – of tension, or contradiction – between text and gloss. Some of the most striking instances are found in the ‘Dialogue’ that precedes the *Regiment* proper. At first sight, these appear fairly straightforward; the gloss to the Old Man’s first speech, for example, corresponds almost verbatim to the text, just as so many of the glosses do in the body of the *Regiment*:

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The Book seith thus – I redde it yore agoon:
‘Wo be to him that list to been allone,
For if he falle, help ne hath he noon
To ryse.’ (lines 204–7)
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Here the text does the work of the introductory formula ‘scriptum est’ that we find in so many of the glosses, emphasizing the importance of having a written source for the advice that is given. Its almost verbatim translation of the gloss suggests that the fictional Old Man embodies textual authority: that he has learned to read his experience in the light of the Latin *auctoritas* and thus forms an instructive example of effective reader as well as reformed prodigal. In A. C. Spearing’s words, his glosses embed ‘the mimesis of speech in forms that call attention unmistakeably to their origin in writing’.26 This is a consistent strategy throughout the ‘Dialogue’. The majority of the glosses to the Old Man’s speeches are taken from the Bible (particularly the Book of Proverbs), and thus constantly reaffirm the orthodoxy of the arguments with which he attempts to stabilize Thomas’s mental vagaries; they provide an apparently independent witness to the accuracy of his frequent references to ‘what is written’ and ‘the book’. Yet in the ‘Dialogue’ the very presence of glosses is remarkable in itself. Whereas in the *Regiment* proper Hoccleve was drawing on specific named sources, and assumes the voice of translator and compiler, the ‘Dialogue’ has no such sources, and is presented as a personal and private conversation between Thomas and the Old Man. The fact that it is glossed at all thus confirms that Hoccleve’s glossing is not an unthinking replication of passages from his sources in the margins, but a rhetorical strategy: less evidence of a seamless transfer of meaning than a creation of the *impression* of seamless transfer.

This is reaffirmed by several points at which both text and gloss call into
question the value of exemplary teaching through *translatio* on which the *Regiment* ostensibly depends. Some of the most striking of these occur early in the text. Despite his close association with textual authority, the Old Man comments wryly on his own use of *auctoritates*; after drawing on numerous biblical exempla in order to condemn adultery, he declares: ‘Of swiche stories cowde I telle an heep, / But I suppose thise shul souffysse’ (lines 176f.). Even as he asserts that he could prove his point many times over, he also implies that the sheer weight of the material available to him threatens to become counter-productive. So too does the way in which he goes on to state his intention to ‘make a leepe’ away from the examples and back to his first purpose of comforting Thomas (lines 1767–71). Like Troilus’ impatient exclamation to Pandarus in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*: ‘Lat be thyne olde ensamples, I the preye’ (I.760), his lines suggest that texts are only dubiously relevant to present experience.27 He thus voices a reservation that is also implicit in the glossing of Thomas’s speeches in the ‘Dialogue’. When Thomas declares that all worldly happiness inevitably ends in poverty:

> And when I hadde rolld up and doun  
> This worlds stormy wawes in my mynde,  
> I sy wel povert was exclusioun  
> Of al welfare regnynge in mankynde;  
> And how in bookes thus writen I fynde,  
> ‘The werste kynde of wrecchidnesse is  
> A man to have be weleful or this’ (lines 50–6)

the gloss states: ‘Boecius de consolatione: Maximum genus infortunii est fuisse felicem’ (Boethius, *Consolation*: ‘The worst kind of misfortune is to have once been happy’). Given its prominence as the first gloss in the poem, this seems to signal what kind of text the *Regiment* will be, aligning it with previous writings in which a distressed first-person narrator is counselled by an authority figure and guided to faith in God’s providence. In general terms, of course, the association is accurate. There are generic resemblances between the ‘Dialogue’ and Boethius’ *Consolation*, and these were recognized by Hoccleve’s near-contemporaries: there are three surviving manuscripts in which the *Regiment* appears alongside John Walton’s 1410 translation of Boethius, and a number of early reader annotations also refer to the *Consolation*.28 Yet there is nonetheless a noticeable discrepancy between the detail of the text and the gloss. The text shows Thomas misconstruing ‘felicity’ as exclusively financial ‘wealth’; his disconsolate lines are a strangely worldly, pecuniary interpretation of the Boethian lines that advise that, because all things of the world are mutable, the remedy is to seek happiness in spiritual self-reliance instead.29 Rather than confirming Thomas’s perspective, then, the gloss seeks to correct it, or show its limitations; although Thomas asserts that what he says is what ‘in bookes thus writen I fynde’, the citation either implies...
that the Boethian teaching is simply not relevant to Thomas, or alternatively identifies Thomas as a poor reader. In neither case does the written *sententia* transfer effortlessly to lived experience.

In a similar way, the following gloss is just slightly at odds with Thomas’s claim that:

What wight that inly pensyf is, I trowe,
His moost desir is to be solitarie.
That this is sooth, in my persone I knowe. (lines 85–8)

Although the gloss, ‘Unde Martialis Cocus: Ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet’ (Whence Martial the Cook: ‘He truly grieves who grieves without a witness’) does address the same state of mind as the text, it suggests that want of companionship increases pensiveness, rather than that pensiveness creates the desire to be solitary. Moreover, there is a clear contrast between Thomas’s assertion that he knows the truth of what he says from his own experience, and the appearance of a gloss that defines his experience as exemplary: not personal, but generic. The phrasing of the gloss is also curious; the introductory ‘unde’ (‘whence’) suggests that here, unlike in the majority of citation glosses, Hoccleve’s text gives rise to the gloss, rather than the other way around. All of these things show that the meaning of the gloss is not static; far from providing a point of stability that anchors Hoccleve’s writing, it is itself dependent on the way it is interpreted. What Eleanor Johnson says of Hoccleve’s use of Boethius in the *Series* – that it ‘makes Boethius at once present, a living part of the contemporary readerly landscape of late medieval England, and profoundly past, a literary forebear so always already overfamiliar that his work’s power is more talismanic than actual’ – is true of these citations in the margins of the *Regiment* too. They draw attention to what we might call the ‘conditions of reading’ – the fact that it is only through reading and interpretation that authority and experience can be connected – but also to the difficulty of such interpretation, particularly the way in which a (fallible) reader may wrest a text from its intended sense. Although the *Regiment*’s dialogic form is presented as politically beneficial, the glosses make visible the problems inherent in the very assumptions about textual stability and immutability of meaning on which their rhetorical efficacy depends.

They thus anticipate, in a discrete way, concerns that are more explicitly the focus of Hoccleve’s *Series*. In John Burrow’s words, this ‘not only describes the making of a book, but also *is* that book’. It might be described as a highly self-conscious exploration of how the context in which a text is presented changes its meaning. Thus, the first lines of the ‘Dialogue’ completely alter our understanding of the ‘Complaint’, as the assumption that it is a finished piece of writing in an established genre is overturned by Hoccleve’s reference to the business of writing it; the belated addition of the moral to the tale of Jereslaus’
Wife changes it from a text in praise of a virtuous woman to a religious allegory; in the final part of the Series, ‘Lerne to dye’, the abandonment of the dying man by his friends mirrors that of the narrator by his friends in the ‘Complaint’, and so retroactively justifies what appears, from a first reading of the ‘Complaint’ alone, to be his paranoia. The Series’ record of second thoughts and additions is a fictional representation of the actual conditions of book production. As Watt has argued, Hoccleve’s engagement with the process by which the text comes into being reflects his intimate knowledge of ‘the conventions and constraints of contemporary book production’. He shows a text being constructed from a series of booklets: that is, physically discrete units containing a single text or selection of texts which may be combined in any order, and reordered up to the time of their binding. Precisely because these texts are ‘only connected by “and” and “and”’, they are given meaning primarily by the figure of the writer who juxtaposes them. The Series thus gives fictive representation to the transfer of authority that is implied by the glossing of the Regiment: by showing the construction of the text it makes the compiler more important than the component parts, the author more important than his inherited material.

For Hoccleve, this is not wholly a liberating or enabling discovery, however; rather, because it shows how the meaning of a text is subject to alteration, it is also a source of anxiety about the ‘truth value’ of authoritative texts, and by extension a source of anxiety about the stability of Hoccleve’s own writing: the extent to which its meaning, in turn, is likely to be altered by being taken out of context or misunderstood. The famous episode from the ‘Complaint’ in which Hoccleve attempts the impossible feat of catching sight of himself in a mirror unawares, so as to determine whether he looks ‘sane’, provides a striking objective correlative for this anxiety:

Many a saut made I / to this mirour
Thynkynge / ‘If þat I looke / in this manere
Among folk / as I now do / noon errour
Of suspect look / may in my face appeere.
This contenance / I am seur / and this cheere
If I foorth vse / is no thyng repreueable
To hem þat han / conceites resonable.’ (lines 162–8)

As Knapp has argued, Thomas’s use of an actual mirror results in ‘a simultaneous presence of two images of the self and the consequent fragmentation of that self into both subject and object of perception’. Mirror image and poetry are intimately linked. Like his literal self-image, Thomas’s writing too is a public face, prepared to meet the faces he must meet; paradoxically, neither can represent the truth of his condition unless they conform to set conventions. And just as his demeanour is open to misinterpretation, so too is his writing. For Thomas, his written ‘Complaint’ is designed to correct the misreading of his public behaviour,
yet the Friend who enters just as he has finished writing it simultaneously refuses to believe that anyone sees anything odd in Hoccleve’s behaviour and argues that the ‘Complaint’ itself will confirm people’s doubts about his sanity (lines 22–35). The Friend’s well-intentioned advice draws attention to the inevitable gap between form and content, or signifier and signified; it is itself a telling instance of the misinterpretation Thomas wishes to avoid.

The glosses of the Series both combat and emblematize such misunderstanding. At first sight, they appear surprisingly conventional for a text that in all other respects is so highly experimental. As in the Regiment, most are citation glosses. Those in the ‘Complaint’ are taken primarily from an epitome of Isidore of Seville’s Synonyma; those in the ‘Dialogue’ from the Bible and from proverbs; those in the moralizations to the tales of Jereslaus’ Wife and Jonathas and Felicula also from the Bible; those in ‘Lerne to dye’ from the *ars moriendi* contained in Henry Suso’s *Seven Points of True Love*.36 The fact that the moralizations and the explicitly didactic ‘Lerne to dye’ are among the most prominently glossed parts suggests that the glosses are designed to highlight for the reader what the ‘value’ of Hoccleve’s text is: although the complex form of the Series calls into question the possibility of identifying any stable ‘truth-value’ independent of context, the glosses seem stubbornly to reaffirm that this is possible, and that (contrary to what is implied by the experience of reading the text or texts) reading is not inevitably misreading.

But just as in the Regiment, there are a number of glosses that belie the possibility of a seamless transfer of meaning from text to text. The most striking of these occur at the point where the Friend asserts that ‘The wyf of Bathe take I for auctrice’ (‘Dialogue’, line 694) and defends women’s ‘maistrie’ accordingly. His lines are accompanied by two biblical glosses that stand in such a sophistical relationship to the text that they really might have been provided by the Wife. Just as, in the *Canterbury Tales*, the Wife’s citation of biblical examples is notoriously selective, the Friend too engages in a highly partial use of Scripture and literary authorities.37 The first appears where the Friend offers in proof of women’s power the argument that God told Eve that she should break the serpent’s head, concluding:

> Now, syn womman had of the feend swich might;  
> To breke a mannes heed / it seemeth light. (lines 727–8)

The Friend does acknowledge in passing that Eve is granted this power only because she was previously deceived by the snake, but the gloss reinforces the impression that Eve triumphs, affirming, ‘Ait dominus ad serpentem / Ipsa conteret caput tuum, &c’ (God said to the serpent, ‘She shall crush thy head, etc’).38 Gloss and conclusion thus collude in a visibly partial interpretation of the story, reprising in a minor key the theme of misreading that characterizes
the Series as a whole. So too does the following gloss, attached to the lines where the Friend argues that women’s

… reson axith haue of men maistrie;
Thogh holy writ witnesse and testifie
Men sholde of hem han dominacioun,
It is the revers in probacioun. (lines 732–5)

Here the gloss affirms that holy writ does indeed testify just that: ‘Sub viri potestate eris / & ipse dominabitur tui &c.’ (‘You shall be subject to man’s power and he shall have dominion over you, etc’). It is emasculated, however, by being attached to lines where the Friend points out that its teaching has no effect in practice. Far from being an extra-textual authority guaranteeing the validity of the text, the text invokes the gloss only for the gloss’s inefficacy to be demonstrated. Moreover, its authority is further called into question by the way it appears alongside the words of the Friend, who is a demonstrably unreliable reader throughout the Series, and who at this point has invoked as his ultimate authority a fictional character notorious for her own misreadings of Scripture. The mismatch is so extreme that it is impossible that a marginal citation – even a biblical one – should stabilize the text; instead, it turns the very idea of stability into a joke.

The creative response to Chaucer that is in evidence in these two glosses arguably characterizes all of Hoccleve’s glossing. Chaucer is, of course, the writer whom Hoccleve explicitly claims as his ancestor in the Regiment of Princes, not only through the assertion that he was personally acquainted with him, but – in the earliest manuscripts – through the famous Chaucer portrait that accompanies this claim, and that functions as a kind of meta-gloss, invoking the personal presence of Chaucer as a means of guaranteeing the credentials of Hoccleve the writer. Moreover, one possible model for Hoccleve’s first experiment in glossing, in the Regiment, is Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales. Yet his glosses do not simply constitute a kind of formal imitation; rather, they draw attention to the instability of textual meaning in a way that is consonant with Chaucer’s own interest in the problems inherent in translatio – a subject he addresses directly in the House of Fame, but which is close to the surface in all his dream-visions, as well as in Troilus and Criseyde, and the Canterbury Tales. Whether in the narrator’s struggles with his supposed source-text and Pandarus’ opportunistic use of commonplaces in Troilus, in the constantly shifting narratorial perspectives in the Canterbury Tales, or the imaginative reworking of multiple source-texts in the dream-visions, Chaucer consistently calls into question the possibility of the seamless transfer of meaning from text to text or from context to context, and it is this apprehension which Hoccleve in turn explores through his glossing.

Hoccleve’s glossing thus witnesses one of the tensions at the heart of his
writing. Although at first sight it may appear to imply that texts breed texts, untouched by human hand, it is also a visible sign that _translatio_ is a form of appropriation rather than mere replication: the seemingly close correspondences between text and glosses are themselves a rhetorical strategy that is very much in Hoccleve’s control. The kind of authorship they assert is therefore linked not to stable inheritance, but to process: to the ongoing business of writing and interpretation that the glosses both constitute and represent. One significant effect is the implicit substitution of Hoccleve’s text for external sources as that which ‘scriptum est’, that of which a reader might say ‘In bookes thus writen I fynde.’ Yet this is not only enabling: rather, it leads to a noticeable anxiety that Hoccleve’s own texts will necessarily be subject to an identical process of (mis)interpretation. Even as it makes a visual claim to authority, the very presence of glosses also tacitly acknowledges the power of the reader to construe or misconstrue. Glossing thus physically or materially demonstrates that a theoretical belief in textual stability and seamless _translatio_ cannot stand up to the practice of writing; it modifies as well as expresses thinking about ownership and control of the text. The fullest expression of Hoccleve’s poetics in his _Series_, which explores these questions through means other than glossing, does so by making the problem that is implicit in the earlier texts explicitly the question, and thus shows how glossing is key to Hoccleve’s understanding of how texts (don’t) work. The first conclusion that might be drawn, then, is that Hoccleve’s glosses reveal a desire or nostalgia for the seamless transfer of meaning even as they reveal that to be an impossibility.

There is a second possible conclusion, however, and this is a more radical one: namely, that Hoccleve’s glosses not only emblematize his poetics, but are also a significant influence on them. In his reading of the _Series_, Matthew Clifton Brown connects Hoccleve’s ‘poetic obsession with … the citation of generic forms and formulaic narratives’ with his work for the Privy Seal, notably his _Formulary_. As Brown describes it, the main point about this ‘large … collection of exemplars or patterns, in French and Latin, for writs and letters of the type written and handled daily by employees of the Office of the Privy Seal’ is that its exemplars are ‘repeatable’ or ‘citable’, because their ‘signifying form is distinct from [their] particular act of inscription … [allowing] them to be used autonomously, apart from their originating agency’.43 For Brown, the _Series_ is the result of applying an equivalent method of composition to poetry, as Hoccleve juxtaposes exercises in a range of pre-existing forms such as complaint, exemplary tale, and _ars moriendi_. It confirms that Hoccleve’s muse is essentially a bureaucratic one. But the _Series_ might additionally be considered as influenced by Hoccleve’s previous literary practice: it is possible that, like the _Formulary_, his glosses too reveal the phenomenon of texts becoming separated from their origins and from the intentions of their authors – and that they thus inform the conspicuously
experimental way in which the *Series* presents its author-narrator as at once a reader and the subject of others’ reading. As well as aligning Hoccleve’s writing with the formal experimentation engaged in by near-contemporaries such as Chaucer and Gower, they are a more personal enterprise: one of the ways in which Hoccleve’s interest in the process by which texts come into being demonstrably affects how he thinks about his position as writer. His glosses thus reveal one of the ways in which literary theory is affected by literary practice.

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NOTES


3 For Hoccleve’s self-publication, see for example J. A. Burrow, ‘Hoccleve’s *Series*: experience

4 For a description of these manuscripts, see Watt, *Making of Hoccleve’s Series*, pp. 4f.


6 For an overview of these and other broadly contemporary instances of self-glossing, see Jane Griffiths, *Diverting Authorities: Experimental Glossing Practices from Manuscript to Print* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 7–11.

7 All quotations from the *Regiment* and translations of its glosses will be taken from Blyth, *Regiment*.


11 This is confirmed by the way that some glosses that have an exact attribution in Harley MS 4866 are prefaced ‘scriptum est’ in the later holograph Royal MS 17.D.xviii. The implications are first, that Hoccleve was not working from an exemplar with all the attributions in place; second, that he considered ‘scriptum est’ to be an entirely adequate substitute for an attribution, even in a presentation manuscript.

12 I follow Nicholas Perkins in referring to the first part of the *Regiment* as the ‘Dialogue’ rather than the ‘Prologue’; for the rationale, see his *Hoccleve’s Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 178–85.


For Hoccleve’s sources and his use of them, see further Perkins, *Hoccleve’s Regiment*, pp. 85–125.


Perkins, *Hoccleve’s Regiment*, p. 107; cf. Scanlon’s argument that counsel in the *Regiment* is ‘a transformation of royal power to virtue that occurs in and through speech’ (*Narrative, Authority, Power*, p. 315).

The term ‘bricolage’ is taken from Taylor Cowdery’s ‘Dialogic collapse and royal presence: inventio and the “makyng” of a king in Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*’, paper given at the 49th Annual Medieval Congress, Kalamazoo, Mich., 10 May 2014. Cf. Scanlon’s argument that the text of the *Regiment* contains a repeated reminder of the importance of dialogue in the consistency with which Hoccleve addresses Henry in the second person, and in the inclusion (in Arundel MS 38 and Royal MS 17.D.vi) of a miniature of the poet presenting his book to the prince precisely at the point where the direct address to Henry – the *Regiment* proper – begins (*Narrative, Authority, Power*, p. 309). An equivalent miniature was originally also included in Harley MS 4866, but has been cut out.

The second quotation, which is unattributed in manuscript, is taken from Ecclesiasticus viii.20; the fourth is of unknown origin.


Cf. ibid., pp. 120–2.

Ibid., pp. 120f.


For detailed discussion of Hoccleve’s allusions to *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Nicholas Perkins, ‘Haunted Hoccleve? The *Regiment of Princes*, the Troilean intertext, and conversations with the dead’, *Chaucer Review*, 43 (2008), 103–39; and Sebastian Langdell, “What shal i calle thee? What is thy name?” Thomas Hoccleve and the making of “Chaucer”, *New Medieval Literatures*, 16 (2016). I am grateful to Dr Langdell for allowing me to see a version of this article prior to publication.

The manuscripts are Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 185; Society of Antiquaries, MS 143; Rosenbach Foundation, MS 1083/30 (Seymour, ‘Manuscripts of Hoccleve’s *Regiment*’, 259f.). For consonances between the ‘Dialogue’ and Boethian consolation, see Perkins, *Hoccleve’s Regiment*, pp. 180f.

between the ‘Dialogue’ and its Boethian pre-text include Blyth (Regiment, p. 8), and A. C. Spearing (Medieval Autographies, p. 147); cf. also Eleanor Johnson’s reading of the Series in her Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve (Chicago, Ill., 2013), pp. 203–13.

30 Johnson, Practicing Literary Theory, pp. 206f.

31 Burrow, ‘Hoccleve’s Series’, p. 266.


33 Watt, Making of Hoccleve’s Series, pp. 65–143.


35 Knapp, Bureaucratic Muse, p. 170.

36 Neither the ‘Complaint’ nor the first part of the ‘Dialogue’ (up to line 252) survives in holograph; in Durham Cosin V.iii.9 the first quires were lost, and have been supplied in a copy by John Stow; given the existence of all other glosses in this holograph and the consistency of the glosses to the ‘Complaint’ and ‘Dialogue’ that appear in scribal copies Bodleian MSS Bodley 221, Laud misc. 735, and Selden supra. 53, Beinecke MS 493, and Coventry City Record Office MS Acc. 325/1, it nonetheless seems reasonable to assume that these, too, are authorial.

37 As a ‘glosing’ reader of the Bible, the Wife of Bath provoked further glossing from early readers of Chaucer, notably in BL, Egerton MS 2684, where her readings are contested in the margins; conversely, in the Ellesmere manuscript, the glosses are largely sympathetic to the Wife. See further Clarke, Chaucer and Italian Textuality, pp. 136–51; Susan Schibanoff, ‘The new reader and female textuality in two commentaries on Chaucer’, Studies in the Age of Chaucer, 10 (1988), 71–108; cf. also Heather Hill-Vásquez, ‘Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, Hoccleve’s arguing women, and Lydgate’s Hertford wives: lay interpretation and the figure of the spinning woman in late medieval England’, Florilegium, 23 (2006), 173–7.

38 Genesis iv.15. Hoccleve’s ‘ipsa’ reflects the version of the text found in the Vulgate; in the later Authorized Version Eve’s seed is what is predicted to bruise the serpent’s head.


40 For the Friend, see for example Matthew Clifton Brown, “Lo, heer the fourme”: Hoccleve’s Series, Formulary, and bureaucratic textuality’, Exemplaria, 23 (2011), 31f.