Turan Bayram IN SEARCH OF "GENTLEMEN" IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY Bilkent University 2022

IN SEARCH OF "GENTLEMEN" IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY: "THE BOKE OF ST. ALBANS"

A Master's Thesis

by
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July 2022

To my family and friends

IN SEARCH OF “GENTLEMEN” IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY: “THE BOKE OF ST. ALBANS”

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explains the concept of "gentleman" and its place in the social and cultural world of fifteenth-century England. To this end it examines the Book of St. Albans, compiled by a mysterious individual towards the end of the century, which is concerned with the aristocratic pastimes and pursuits of the time. Familiarity with aristocratic codes and manners helped individuals create beneficial social connections and command respect, resulting in better social standing. Namely, an increasing interest in aristocratic culture was the result of a widespread presumption that manners and adequate knowledge of the gentle world would be enough to pass as a "gentleman". In this context, the Book of St. Albans is regarded as an example of courtesy writings whose principal aim was to instruct people on the complex cultural world of the aristocracy to better their chances of success in the highly competitive real world. For modern historians, the importance of these works lies in the definitions that they provide regarding "gentility" and its place in the social world of late medieval England.

Keywords: Aristocracy, Book of St. Albans, Gentleman, Hawking, Hunting

ÖZET

ON BEŞİNCİ YÜZYILDA CENTİLMEN'İ ARAMAK: "ST. ALBANS KİTABI"

Bayram, Turan

Yüksek Lisans, Tarih Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Paul Latimer

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Bu tez, "centilmen" kavramını ve bu kavramın on beşinci yüzyıl İngiltere'sinin sosyal ve kültürel dünyasındaki yerini açıklamaktadır. Bu amaçla, yüzyılın sonlarına doğru gizemli bir kişi tarafından dönemin aristokrat eğlenceleri ve uğraşları üzerine derlenen St. Albans Kitabı incelenmiştir. Aristokratik kodlara ve görgü kurallarına aşinalık, bireylerin faydalı sosyal bağlantılar kurmasına ve saygı uyandırmalarına yardımcı olurdu ve bu da genelde daha iyi bir sosyal konum ile sonuçlanırdı. Kısacası, aristokrat kültüre artan ilgi, aristokratik dünyanın görgü kurallarının ve bu dünyaya dair yeterli bilginin bir insanın "centilmen" olarak kabul edilmesine yeterli olacağına dair yaygın bir varsayımın sonucuydu. Bu bağlamda, St. Albans Kitabı, asli amacı insanları aristokrasinin karmaşık kültürel dünyası hakkında, son derece rekabetçi, gerçek dünyada başarı şanslarını artırmaları için eğitmek olan "görgü kitaplarının" bir örneği olarak kabul edildi. Modern tarihçiler için bu kitapların önemi, "centilmenlik" ve bunun Geç Orta Çağ İngiltere'sinin sosyal dünyasındaki yeri hakkında sağladıkları tanımlarda yatmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Avcılık, Centilmen, Doğancılık, İngiliz Aristokrasisi, St. Albans Kitabı.

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CHAPTER I: THE BOKE OF ST. ALBANS

Throughout the Middle and Early Modern Ages, both in vernacular languages and Latin, considerable numbers of examples of conduct literature and didactic writing were produced. The primary audience of these literary works consisted of presumably the luckiest sections of the society who could afford such luxuries. Books were relatively expensive in the Middle Ages and not everybody had the time and vanity, or even the intellectual profundity, for such concerns. Nevertheless, these works were possibly more popular among medieval readers than the more sophisticated genres of courtly lyrics, epics and romance. A gradual shift in the social identity of the consumers of these didactic materials can be perceived in relation to the spread of literacy, cultural education, and social mobility.[1] The printing press may have deepened these trends. English authors and printers, increasingly freeing themselves from the effects of Chaucer and traditional medieval genres, had to adapt to a transformed reading culture created by the printing press. This was a gradual process, but English literature began to implement radical innovations in text and formation well before 1500.[2]

The Boke of St. Albans,[3] or with its other name, *The Bokys of Haukyng and Huntyng; and also of coot-armuris*, was published in such a setting. Almost every English book produced during the birth of printing has the same nature: They have an awkward and imperfect form, often lacking a clear title, as was also not unusual in the age before

[1] Roberta L. Krueger, "Introduction: Teach Your Children Well: Medieval Conduct Guides for Youths," in *Medieval Conduct Literature: An Anthology of Vernacular Guides to Behaviour for Youths, with English Translations*, ed. Mark D. Johnston (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), IX.
[2] Allison Treese, "A *Flourynge Aege*: Tracing the Sacred and Secular in the Book of St. Albans" (Thesis, University of Arkansas, 2018), abstract.
[3] William Blades, ed., *The Book of St. Albans* (London: Elliot Stock, 1901). Hereafter mentioned as BSA.

printing. This often makes it "uncertain in what manner the present work was distinguished immediately after publication." Lacking an original title that we are accustomed to seeing in modern works of literature, BSA derives its name from the place where it originated.[4] However, with its colorful illustrations and subject matter, it is by no means an ordinary work of literature. On the contrary, it is one of the earliest examples of printed books and also one of the earliest examples of color printing. It was printed in 1486, containing the first printed color illustration. It was also printed within five years of the first English book with a book illustration of any kind and within ten years of Caxton's *Dictes or Sayinges of the Philosophers* printed in 1477.[5] Caxton's book is often credited with being the first book ever printed in England, though only because it has a date on it. It is true that Caxton was the printer of the first book in English, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, printed in 1473 in Bruges or Ghent. It was a translation of a courtly romance translated by Caxton himself from the French original. The first book printed in England, however, was probably an edition of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, most likely within a year after Caxton moved to England in 1476.[6]

So, BSA is an interesting example of late medieval English literature, and there is still much to unravel about it. It was immensely popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and twenty-two editions were published after its first issue.[7] Modern scholarship has not hesitated to show it the interest it deserves. Many scholars whose works will be discussed later have speculated about its creator and the origin of this

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[4] Joseph Haslewood, *Literary Researches into the History of the Book of Saint Albans.* (London: White and Cochrane, 1810), 68.
[5] Martin Hardie, *English Coloured Books* (Methuen and Co, 1906), 3.
[6] Matthew Wills, "The First English Books," JSTOR Daily, November 20, 2014, https://daily.jstor.org/first-english-books/.
[7] Roger B. Manning, *Hunters and Poachers: A Social and Cultural History of Unlawful Hunting in England, 1485-1640* (Oxford England: Clarendon Press; New York, 1993), 28.

highly appealing work of the Late Middle Ages. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to discussing the question of its author's or authoress's identity and to analyzing the individual sources for the different sections of the book that will be dealt with later in this thesis.

1.1. Authorship

BSA was printed by a mysterious schoolmaster in St. Albans (hence the name BSA) and has been the subject of much speculation revolving around its author. The identity of this mysterious schoolmaster has been discussed by historians on many occasions. Authorship of the book is often attributed to Julyans (or Juliana) Barnes (or Berners), who is believed to have been born towards the end of the 14th century and was supposedly the daughter of Sir James Berners of Roding-Berners. James's son was Richard, and Sir Richard was created Baron Berners. It has been suggested that, at some point in her life, Juliana was the Prioress of Sopwell Nunnery.[8] One of the sources on her life is Holinshed. Describing her approximately a hundred years after the BSA was published, he calls her "a gentlewoman endued with excellent giftes bothe of body and minde (who) wrote certaine treatises of hauking and hunting, (...): she wrote also a booke of the lawe of armes and knowledge apperteyning to Haroldes."[9] Supposedly, she was from a well-established family with honors and wealth. However, it seems her father experienced major political misfortunes leading to a temporary economic catastrophe for the family. He was executed in 1388 as a councilor of Richard II, and the family lost most of their possessions. Approximately twenty years later, the majority of the family's estates were restored. Even so, the family managed to sustain themselves in their times of trouble, and the remaining members enjoyed wealth and the favors of

[8] Haslewood, *Literary Researches,* 5

[9] I.e., "heralds"; Raphael Holinshed, Holinshed's Chronicles, vol. 2, 1577. 1355, **quoted in.** Haslewood, Literary Researches, 6.

the monarch.[10]

Although some historians believe there is enough evidence for the authorship of Juliana Berners, not every scholar of the Middle Ages agrees on that. As early as 1598, scholars had trouble identifying the author of the BSA. John Manwood, quoting the first edition of BSA, referred to *"the auncient booke of S. Albons, written by a Monke."*[11] The name of this *"monke"* was not clarified, and according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), in earlier use, the word could refer to either a man or a woman.[12] It is not certain how Manwood reached the information about this *monke*, yet it seems the identity of the author has been subject to confusion. Marjorie Gray Wynne boldly claims that earlier scholars have wrongly attributed the authorship of the BSA to Dame Juliana Barnes whose existence cannot even be proven. In a suspicious tone, she notes that the same scholars succeeded in providing biographical details of her life, such as her gentle birth and a love of sports and journal-keeping.[13] Much earlier than Wynne, *Monasticon Anglicanum* suggested that there is no evidence for the prioress Juliana Barnes as the prioress of Sopwell Nunnery. Accordingly, none of the authentic pedigrees of the Berners family mentions Juliana, and none of the county historians of Hertfordshire recognize her from the documents.[14] More modern sources suggest that Juliana Barnes was probably not the prioress of Sopwell Nunnery, but an inhabitant, perhaps an important one. However, again, sources are very limited.[15] Supposedly, Barnes re-read

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[10] Haslewood, *Literary Researches,* 7-8.
[11] John Manwood, *A Treatise and Discourse of the Lawes of the Forrest*, 1598. **quoted in.** Rachel Hands, "Juliana Berners and the Boke of St. Albans," *The Review of English Studies* 18, no. 72 (1967): 383.
[12] Hereafter OED. Oxford English Dictionary, "'Monk, N.1'.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/121259?rskey=8vXjvM&result=1&isAdvanced=false.
[13] Marjorie Gray Wynne, "The Boke of St. Albans," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 26, no. 1 (1951): 3-4.
[14] William Dugdale et al., *Monasticon Anglicanum* (London, 1840): 363.
[15] William Page, ed., *A History of the County of Hertford: Volume 4* (London, 1971), 422–26, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/herts/vol4/pp422-426..

her journals in her old age and wrote the treatises that formed the BSA. Wynne concludes that no person can be identified as the author or *authoress* of BSA since it was compiled from several sources with maxims, proverbs, lists, etc., scattered at random places, resembling the structure of other fifteenth-century compilations when copyright was unknown, and printers filled the blank pages with whatever they got their hands on.[16] However, she does not specify the sources of these contents.

Berners's name does appear on the BSA at the end of a hunting poem, a section resembling courtesy books in its structure, following the treatise on hunting, where *"Explicit Dam Julyans Barnes in her boke of huntyng"* appears. For this reason, this poem and hunting treatise, sometimes, perhaps incorrectly, the whole book, are often attributed to her. Yet, there is no clear evidence to assume the authorship of Berners of the whole book. The poem was also found on two separate manuscripts, both dated a bit earlier than BSA, but these contain no reference to any *Julyans Barnes.* The main hawking treatise from BSA does not specify any name. The name reappears in a manuscript of the third treatise of BSA and a collection of hawking and hunting treatises dated to the late fifteenth century, from the Pepys library as *"Explicit Iulyan Barne."* Still, this document should not be considered direct evidence of Juliana Barnes's authorship since it is more than likely a copy of the printed original.[17] Therefore, Rachel Hands concludes that the authorship should not be attributed to Juliana Barnes. As she claims, the schoolmaster printer, whose name remains unknown to modern researchers, is the best candidate for this role.[18]

If one hopes to reach some conclusions concerning the nature of BSA from the identity

[16] Wynne, "The Boke of St. Albans," 33-4.
[17] Hands, "Juliana Berners," 378.
[18] Hands, "Juliana Berners," 384.

of the author or authoress, it is futile. However, a later edition, namely the edition published by Wynkyn de Worde, could provide researchers with some depth.[19] In 1496, after the first printing, the book was published again when the printing house of de Worde prepared a new edition with some alterations and changes. De Worde's edition of BSA is important on two accounts: Firstly, de Worde was a successful businessman who trusted in his judgment regarding the preferences of his clients.[20] Secondly, BSA's first edition in 1486 had little success over the years. The real success and popularity of the book came with de Worde's edition.[21] So, de Worde, presumably, knew with what purpose the BSA was written and treated it as such. It is important to know that the printing enterprise in St. Albans was much smaller compared to that of de Worde's, and he was much more likely to utilize the potential of BSA. Lotte Hellinga, in her work on de Worde's edition, regards this potential in limited terms stating that BSA was a compilation of texts that provided necessary information to the landed gentry, such as hunting, hawking, coats of arms, short poems, and useful lists.[22] The target audience of the book will be discussed in Chapter Four more broadly, but one can suggest that the group of people aimed at was not only limited to the landed gentry, rather it was much broader.

De Worde, embracing the rustic nature of the literary work, added a section on the subject of "fishing with an angle."[23] Presumably De Worde's own voice, in the form of a short prologue and an epilogue, can be heard. In these parts, he claims that fishing is

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[19] M. G. Watkins, ed., *A Treatyse of Fysshynge Wyth an Angle* (Elliot Stock, 1880).
[20] Henry Stanley Bennett, *English Books and Readers 1475 to 1557* (Cambridge: University Press, 1952), *41.*
[21] Bennett, *English Books,*112.
[22] Lotte Hellinga, *Texts in Transit: Manuscript to Proof and Print in the Fifteenth Century* (Leiden Etc.: Brill, Cop, 2014), 396.
[23] The word angle, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, was originally used for a hook. Later, it gained a more general meaning as the apparatus used for fishing with hook, line and rod in combination. See. Oxford English Dictionary, "'Angle, N.1'.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/7541?rskey=6KE1zt&result=1&isAdvanced=false.

a gentleman's sport as long as it is done with an *angle* and not with the aim of material gain. For the same reason, the treatise on angling was not published separately since it might fall into the hands of *ungentylmen*.[24] What is also interesting about De Worde's handling of the BSA is his apparent disregard for the choices of any original author or authoress. Considering that the edition was published only ten years after the first, it might be expected that he was aware of any author/ess. He treats parts of the BSA differently, and places the treatise on "fishing with an angle" in between "The book of coat armor" and "The book of the blasing of arms."[25] He clearly does not see what modern researchers call BSA as a whole book. Instead, he treats it as a compilation of different treatises that can be found appealing by the *gentill man and honest persones.*[26] That's why de Worde did not hesitate to add the treatise on fishing into the book in a rather odd place. He regarded "fishing with an angle" as relevant as the coat of arms to the cultural world of gentle people and saw an economic potential in a society in which upward social mobility was widespread.

Juliana Barnes was perhaps involved at some levels in the original compilation, but there is no clear evidence for her authorship. James Dallaway made a similar argument in the late eighteenth century. He accepts the possibility of Juliana Barnes's authorship on the treatises prior to the *Liber Armorum* but claims that she cannot be an author of heraldry or even a mere translator for Nicholas Upton. According to him, the style of the sections before *Liber Armorum* bears no affinity to the sections on heraldry: The construction of language, he claims, is more scholastic, and the reader is no longer addressed.[27]

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[24] Hellinga, *Texts in Transit,* 396.
[25] Hellinga, *Texts in Transit,* 399.
[26] *BSA,* f. 2r.
[27] James Dallaway, *Inquiries into the Origin and Progress of the Science of Heraldry in England* (Gloucester: Printed by R. Raikes, For B. & J. White, 1793), 159.

To conclude, it is more likely that BSA was an anonymous work compiled by a mysterious schoolmaster printer whose identity remains unknown, and perhaps will remain so in the future. The assumption of Juliana Barnes's authorship could be a common mistake that occurred every time the BSA was copied. This does not necessarily mean Juliana Barnes had nothing to do with the BSA, but it is more than likely that her role has sometimes been deemed more significant than it actually was.

1.2. Sources

At first glance, the treatises compiled in the BSA seem quite unrelated for the modern reader. Treatises on hawking and hunting are very much related since they contain the necessary information on the ways and circumstances in which these activities are pursued. *Liber Armorum* (Book of Coats of Arms), which consists of two books, namely "The book of coat armor" and "The book of the blasing of arms," is on topics quite different from the first two treatises. However, they are more related than one might think in the first place. The interest in hawking, hunting, and coats of arms originated from one's place in the social order. De Worde's implementation of a fishing treatise is of a similar nature, and this fact is clearly stated. After all, in its essence, BSA was a handbook for *gentill man and honest persones*. Who these *gentill man and honest persones* were will be discussed more broadly in the fourth chapter, but at this point, it is important to note that, presumably, this term does not indicate one homogenous group.

The first treatise of the BSA is on hawking. The objective of the treatise is clearly announced at the beginning. At first glance, it seems this treatise is filled with technical details:

> *"In so much that gentill men and honest persones have grete delite in hawkyng and desire to have the maner to take hawkys: and also how in waat wyse they shulde gyde theym ordynateli: and to knaw the gentill termys in communyng of theyr hawkys: and to understonde theyr sekeneses and enfirmitees: and also to knaw medicines for theym accordyng. and mony notebutt termys that ben used i hawkyng both of their hawkys and of the fowles that their hawkys shall sley."*[28]

How accurate these practical details are is open to discussion, but according to A. E. H. Swaen, the treatment of the diseases of hawks and falcons in captivity is the primary concern of many medieval treatises on the subject. As mentioned, BSA was probably a compiled book derived from different sources, and it seems these sources, to a certain extent, can be identified. However, the nature of the material is an intricate one: a number of similarities in expression as well as in content may as well be produced independently or passed on orally.[29] Some manuscripts, however, show clear resemblance and scholars have studied multiple earlier ones to find the sources for this treatise.[30]

The most well-known and studied source of the first treatise, often paraphrased and expanded, is the *Prince Edward's Book (PEB)*.[31] It exists in a complete form in four manuscripts, two of them with a colophon which led to the name. In addition, two shortened versions and a fragment of a similar text remain. There is also another manuscript whose description indicates a resemblance.[32]

One of these manuscripts is preserved in the British Museum Bibl. Harley 2340, and was published twice, first by Wright and Halliwell in *Reliquiae Antiquae* and later by

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[28] *BSA*, f. 2r.
[29] Rachel Hands, *English Hawking and Hunting in the Boke of St. Albans: A Facsimile Edition of Sigs. A2-F8 of the Boke of St. Albans (1486)* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), xxiii.
[30] A. E. H. Swaen, "The Booke of Hawkyng after Prince Edwarde Kyng of Englande and Its Relation to the Book of St Albans," *Studia Neophilologica* 16, no. 1 (January 1943): 1-2, https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274308586935.
[31] The identity of Prince Edward will be discussed later.
[32] Hands, *English Hawking,* xxiii.

A. E. H. Swaen in *Studia Neophilologica*. This manuscript is "a new edition of an old text in English of the 15th century", a date established by the authority of the British Museum agreed by historians. As J. E. Harting claims, there is no doubt this manuscript is a copy of a treatise mentioned by an old French poem written in Norman French in the middle of the thirteenth century, which discusses the art of hawking and falconry. Its author clearly refers to a *liuere al bon rei edward* as the source, but the identity of Edward is still a matter of discussion among the scholars.[33]

Another manuscript suggested as a source for the BSA is from the fifteenth century, possibly not long before BSA itself, and is preserved in the British Museum MS. Bibl. Sloane, 3488, xviii F. It was first mentioned by Harting in his *Perfect Booke for Kepinge of Sparhawkes or Goshawkes*, and later transcribed by N. J. Shirley Leggatt in 1949. Both manuscripts have a lot in common, but the latter has significant differences that were adopted by the writer of the BSA's first treatise.[34]

> **British Museum Bibl. Harley 2340:** Take the nedill and ye yrede, and put throwte the neder lydde, and so of the oyer and knytte bothe thredes on the top of his hede. Then she is enciled as she oght to be.
>
> **British Museum MS. Bibl. Sloane, 3488, xviii F:** Take the oulyd of her ye and put thorgh ye nedell and thi threde, and bring it beside the beke, and put yi yrede and thi neld thorgh the other lyd, and make thi threde fast. And then thou maist sey, she is a seled.
>
> **BSA:** Take the needell and threde: and put it thorow the ouer igh lid and so of that other, and make hem fast under the beke, that she se neuer a deell and then she is ensiled as she awthe to be. Sum usen to ensile hem with the needer igh lidde aboue the beke on the hede almost: bot that is the wors way For of reeson the ouer igh lidde closith more iustly then the nether be cause of the largenesse.

It is apparent that BSA has a remarkable resemblance to the earlier manuscript.

[33] See the following discussion on page 12. N. J. Shirley Leggatt, "*The Book of St. Albans* and the Origins of Its Treatise on Hawking," *Studia Neophilologica* 22, no. 2 (January 1949): 135-6, https://doi.org/10.1080/00393274908587042.
[34] Leggatt. "*The Book of St. Albans,*" 135.

However, the method of "seeling"[35] described in the latter is advised, which ultimately means that the author of the first treatise could have utilized both manuscripts.[36] Another significant resemblance of the first treatise to the earlier manuscripts is how the author chose to organize his writing. The first treatise of BSA uses different headings for each subject covered. As a simple example, BSA has *"A medicine for the frounce i the mowth."* Similarly, the manuscript whose origins are dated to the eleventh century by Leggatt has *"Medicyne for the Frounce."* Both sections start with the same sentence, only to end with the same as well. BSA is more elaborate in its application of medicine, but the approach to the issue is almost the same, indicating a clear connection between the two. Similarities such as this are present in the rest of the writings.

It is obvious there is a connection between these three pieces. Rachel Hands states that this relation is much more complicated than one might anticipate. She claims that the Harley and Sloane manuscripts are not the source for the BSA's first treatise. Instead, they are derived from a common text (PEB). While the Harley manuscript was directly derived from PEB, the Sloane manuscript and BSA derived from immediate antecedents. The Sloane manuscript, she suggests, had three immediate antecedents of which two were shared with BSA. So, after careful consideration, she suggests that BSA was derived from PEB with two immediate antecedents which are now not extant.[37]

It is hard to establish an exact date for PEB. All remaining manuscripts are from the

[35] "To close the eyes of (a hawk or other bird) by stitching up the eyelids with a thread tied behind the head; chiefly used as part of the taming process in falconry." See. Oxford English Dictionary, "'Seel, V.2'.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174801?rskey=XWlQwZ&result=2&isAdvanced=false.
[36] Leggatt. "*The Book of St. Albans,*" 137.
[37] Hands, *English Hawking,* xxviii.

second half of the fifteenth century, yet not much is known about the original text. A small part of it was derived from *Dancus Rex*[38] which shows that it was not earlier than the twelfth century. The name on the colophon is "Edward," but this "Edward" too remains unidentified. Considering the historical meaning of *prince* as monarch or a king, the name could be suggesting one of the four post-conquest Edwards. However, modern scholarship has failed to finalize this discussion on the identity of Edward. Hands suggests that without further evidence it is hard to be precise: So, the treatise originated in the late twelfth century. Around this time, it acquired its colophon and a reference from the Anglo-Norman poem.[39] If the book acquired the colophon at this time, Edward has to be Edward the Confessor, but this does not necessarily mean that the book was written by him. It could be a book prepared for him as well. Afterwards, it was re-copied and underwent a large-scale revision and elaboration due to the increase in interest in the vernacular informative literature. Finally, it achieved its late fifteenth-century form.[40]

Hands also suggests that an additional source for the BSA's hawking material is a twelfth-century Latin text called *Dancus Rex (DR)*. This text is mainly made up of remedies similar to the ones in BSA, but the origin of DR is unknown. Existing manuscripts of DR are mostly extended by a second treatise attributed to Guillelmus, the falconer to King Roger II of Sicily (1095-1154). This text was widely translated in Europe, and according to Hands, the compiler of BSA used a French version. Its connection to the BSA is very limited though, only in the form of some reappearing remedies.[41] One point to make here is that all of the above were written for kings or

[38] See below.
[39] Hands, *English Hawking,* xxix-xxx.
[40] Hands, *English Hawking,* xxix-xxx.
[41] Hands, *English Hawking,* xxxi-ii.

princes, not for gentry and certainly not for gentlemen. In this sense, BSA stands apart from all the existing manuscript sources of both BSA and DR. At the beginning of every book, the compiler addresses the gentlemen directly, he or she forgets the *honest persones* later, which is peculiar to BSA, and these sections could be seen as the rare places that the voice of the compiler is heard.[42]

The next treatise is on hunting, namely the *Boke of Huntyng*, and as discussed above, it was supposedly written by Juliana Berners. Currently, there are two manuscripts that can somehow be related to this second treatise. However, both the Lambeth manuscript (L) and Rawlinson Poet (R) seem to have been individually developed and were not the base material for the treatise. Both BSA and R consist of a conflation of two works, the dame-child verses, which consist of instruction offered by a dame to her child, and the master-man dialogue which is a series of questions and answers between a man and his master, collectively called Tristram treatise.[43] The relation of L to both BSA and R is rather unclear, but nevertheless it helps in establishing a third reference point. A. L. Binns suggested that L, R, and the Tristram treatise, were derived from a source written at the beginning of the fifteenth century. This source possibly was derived from Twiti's *L'Art de vinerie* and served as the main text for other hunting treatises written in English.[44]

Later studies, however, state that the Tristram treatise came from two sources. These are *L'Art de vinerie* by William Twiti, huntsman to Edward II, and *Master of Game* (MG) by Edward, the second Duke of York. The Twiti text is found in four different

[42] *BSA*, f. 2r, 29r, 45r, 57r
[43] The name comes from a reference to Sir Tristram made at the first page of the book. *BSA*, f. 29r.
[44] A. L. Binns, "A Manuscript Source and the Book of St Albans," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 33, no. 1 (September 1950): 22, https://doi.org/10.7227/bjrl.33.1.2.

manuscripts, two in English (TE) and two in French (TF). This treatise uses a form of questions and answers about several topics related to hunting. The English texts are translated from the French, but there is no direct relation between the existing manuscripts. MG is thought to be a translation of *Le Livre de chasse* by Gaston Phoebus, also known as Gaston III, count of Foix and Béarn. This book, unlike the Twiti texts, is more comprehensive and more detailed. It could be suggested that this work was not intended to be a field manual; it is instead a prized possession that belongs in a library. The content is introduced much more directly than in the Twiti texts and does not use questions and answers.[45] All considered, the relation between TE, MG, and the Tristram treatise is rather complex. There is no doubt that all these works of literature are, in fact, related. The extent of this relation, however, needs further explanation. It is clear that without further evidence, there are two possibilities: either the Twiti text is the source of both MG and the Tristram treatise with one or more intermediaries, or all three are derived from a common source that today no longer exists. In both cases, the known texts are not enough to identify the direct source of the Tristram treatise. It has been suggested that a text that no longer exists, possibly derived from TF, must have been used as the source for TE and MG, and ultimately the Tristram treatise.[46]

What differentiates the BSA from its sources and counterparts is the targeted audience. Right at the beginning, the compiler notes that the book was addressed to the *gentill men and honest persones* to show them the manner of hunting and the knowledge of the beasts. A. L. Binns notes that there is nothing in the book which could not have come from books, meaning that the compiler was not necessarily a huntsman (or woman), minimizing the importance of the book's practical aspect. He also mentions

[45] Heidi Jill Smithson, "By Fryth or by Fell: The Boke of Hawkyng and the Boke of Huntyng in the Boke of St. Albans" (Thesis, University of Regina, 2004), xviii-xx.
[46] Smithson, *"By Fryth or by Fell,"* xviii-xx.

that the manuscript L, written presumably in the first half of fifteenth century, was found attached to a book of romance. Therefore, particularly the later manuscripts and BSA should be popular expositions of the terms related to the hunt derived, not from experience, but from another manuscript.[47]

Following the hawking and hunting treatises is the *Liber Armorum*, with its multiple articles on gentility, chivalry, and nobility. The subsequent treatise is the *Boke of Blasyng of Armys*, which exhibits several insignias, and demonstrates how to differentiate similar components of heraldic symbols from each other. Its colorful illustrations of heraldic symbols are the first example of tri-color printing in English history. The sources of *Liber Armorum* have not been revealed yet, but apparently, the bulk of the *Boke of Blasyng of Armys* comes from *De studio militari*, written by Nicholas Upton in 1446.[48] Though it is hard to identify the sources for both treatises, the *Boke of Blasyng of Armys* is one of the first of its kind in English. Its effects on heraldry studies are noteworthy. Adam Loutfut's miscellanies, dated to 1494 and 1500, derive some of their content on the subject from *Liber Armorum*.[49] Part of the 1494 manuscript edited under the name *The Deidis of armorie: a heraldic treatise and bestiary*, shows a remarkable similarity to BSA.[50] *Liber Armorum*, however, is a mystery by itself. Its subject matter is rather peculiar, mostly on the origins of coats of arms and the characteristics of gentle and knightly people. It will be discussed in Chapter Four, but certainly it reflects an interesting understanding on matters of gentility.

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[47] Binns, "Manuscript Source," 24.
[48] Karen Elizabeth Gross, "Hunting, Heraldry, and the Fall in the Boke of St. Albans," *Viator* 38, no. 2 (January 2007): 195.
[49] Gross, "Hunting," 195.
[50] See. L. A. J. R. Houwen, *The Deidis of Armorie : A Heraldic Treatise and Bestiary* (Aberdeen: Scottish Text Society, 1994).

It is hard to discuss the sources for the last two treatises, but it is perhaps necessary to mention the place of heraldry in English society. The historical development of heraldry is far too large of a topic to discuss in just a couple of sentences. What is more meaningful at this point is to discuss briefly the place of heraldry in English aristocratic culture. Heraldry was used in a variety of ways to symbolize politics and propaganda. In a time when most of the population was illiterate and social display was almost a necessity, arms, banners and badges were often filled with deep-rooted implications and meanings. So naturally, heraldry played an important role in the life of the aristocracy.[51] Most of them (and their liveries) successfully utilized arms and badges to notify others about their status, family connections (real or fabricated), and patronage.[52] Heraldry, in this sense, was the "iconography of honor, the recognition of one's gentility."[53] Many families, naturally, obtained their heralds much later. It was not uncommon for families to forge their pedigrees to justify their heralds. It should also be noted that heraldry was far less exclusive than one might think. Coats of arms could descend through all male lines, not just the eldest sons', and through women in certain circumstances. Even legitimate coats of arms and their elements could spread pretty widely over the generations, never mind the pretended ones. It is essential to see the last two treatises in this context. *Liber Armorum* and *Boke of Blasyng of Armys* were published with treatises on hunting and heraldry, which, as stated above, represented the interest of gentle people who by now were growing in number and had never been more heterogeneous.

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[51] Adrian Ailes, "Heraldry in Medieval England: Symbols of Politics and Propaganda," in *Heraldry, Pageantry and Social Display in Medieval England*, ed. Peter Coss and Maurice Keen (The Boydell Press, 2003), 83.
[52] Ailes, "Heraldry in Medieval England," 102.
[53] J. F. R. Day, "Primers of Honor: Heraldry, Heraldry Books, and English Renaissance Literature," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 1 (1990): 94, https://doi.org/10.2307/2541135.

1.3 Conclusion

The base material of the BSA's first two chapters affirms one thing clearly: The sources were not in general meant for a wide audience. They were prepared for a restricted group of people, probably the ones of the highest rank, sometimes even only for kings. In this sense, the compiler of the BSA successfully repurposed his/her base material for a much wider audience in accordance with the changing nature of English society. The sections that cannot be linked at first glance such as *Liber Armorum* and *Boke of Blasyng of Armys* should be considered in this framework. All the chapters are, indeed, related to the cultural and social life of late medieval English gentlemen. In all the chapters, technical details of the subject matter lose their significance to make way for the actual aim of the book, which is to educate the people who had risen to prominence recently about the complex cultural world of aristocracy. Therefore, BSA should be treated as a product of courtesy literature rather than a mere book on hunting, hawking, coats of arms or the blazing of arms. Directing scholarly interest only to the technical details of hunting, hawking, and heraldry would restrict our understanding of Late Middle English literature and people. Thus, the book must be examined within the context of its time and place. Filled with impressive historical stories and personal comments, BSA has a lot to tell us about the social order and the nature of aristocracy in late medieval England.

CHAPTER II: ARISTOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES

2.1. Introduction

"The Boke of St. Albans was more than just a glossary of terms or an exercise book: it was the *vade mecum* of the would-be gentleman, written in a language that he could understand," argues Marjorie Gray Wynne in her article on the famous fifteenth-century book, suggesting without detail that a shift in the fabric of fifteenth-century English society had taken place.[54] Undoubtedly, as Wynne indicated, late medieval English society was far from stable. Particularly after the Black Death of 1348-49 and ensuing outbreaks wiped out vast sections of the workforce, an unprecedented level of bargaining power was given to labor. The mobilization of able-bodied men for war in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the enlargement of the scope of government and the law, and continuing recruitment to the clergy, deepened this trend. Men (and to some extent women) with enough talent and luck were able to exploit this chance for the betterment of themselves both materially and socially. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to illustrating the social and economic changes that had taken place in the second half of the fourteenth and fifteenth century, and the effects of those changes on the emergence of a more broadly defined "gentility" in England. First, however, it would be useful to define some terms regarding the higher rungs of the social ladder, which might collectively be regarded as the "aristocracy" in late medieval England.

[54] Wynne, "Boke of St. Albans," 36.

2.2. Degrees of the Aristocracy in England[55]

In the fifteenth century, the term "aristocracy" generally referred to a form of government, in the context of long-running discussions over mostly Aristotelian political philosophy. Its use to refer to a group in society or, in the form of "aristocrat", to a person belonging to such a group was not common until the French Revolution. In this thesis, however, it is used to refer to a group of people whose members are from a wide range of elites, from the English king at the top, down to men who were of relatively low status, but nevertheless in possession of some measure of "gentility." Using "gentility" as a name for this group would perhaps seem rather awkward; so "aristocracy" is preferred here.[56] Many terms are too restrictive, and others are too vague to do the job or were used in different meanings very frequently. The clear intention of English society to keep different higher echelons of society separate, particularly after the thirteenth century, complicates the matter even further. In this sense, "aristocracy" provides a certain level of flexibility which cannot be found in other terms.

Next to consider are the terms "noble" and "nobility". The term "noble" is rather peculiar in the context of England because its use gradually becomes very restrictive, except in characterizing behavior, and by the Late Middle Ages, it increasingly refers only to the men who receive individual summons to parliament, those who come in the fourteenth century to sit in the House of Lords, along with their wives and eldest sons. Before their peculiar status came to be attached solely to the House of Lords, the term

[55] I acknowledge that this study neglects the interesting subject of the gentility of women, which would certainly have some special characteristics of its own. However, this would require a separate study and to some extent a different set of sources. So, I will leave this question at present for others to address.

[56] Oxford English Dictionary, ""Aristocracy, N."., " n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/10753?redirectedFrom=aristocracy.

was rather loosely applied, though landed wealth was an important factor. Poor knights, David Crouch claims, were a possibility, but poor *magnates* (his preferred name for the nobles) were not.[57] As early as the twelfth century, they were at the epicenter of the culture insomuch that "men of lower degree adopt as their own the virtues of those above them."[58] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the "baronage," which roughly equates to the upper section of the aristocracy, was much more available to the "new men" than its later forms. One thing to remember is that these terms, at least in their earlier use, were loosely defined, if they were defined in any way. "Magnates", for example, was frequently used in the sources, but never legally defined. "Baron" too is loosely used, though it gained a more settled meaning in time, referring to someone who held a significant estate directly from the king and by military tenure, and later used mostly again to describe the lay members of the House of Lords. Some time in the fourteenth century the already vaguely defined barriers of the social order crumbled, leading to a fresh flow of "new men" to the ranks of nobility. The process probably accelerated under the catastrophe created by the Black Death, and one should also note that the Hundred Years' War and the noble bloodletting that occurred during the reign of Edward II were also critical. This, in turn, gave rise to a new society in which distinctions between different sections are "rigidly defined, blatantly advertised, and more jealously guarded."[59] K. B. McFarlane claims fear from the "new man" should be dated to, at the least, the reign of Edward III.[60]

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[57] David Crouch, *Birth of Nobility: Constructing Aristocracy in England and France 900-1300.* (Pearson, 2005), 233.
[58] William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, Vol. 1*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors, R. M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford University Press; Oxford Medieval Texts, 1998), 11.
[59] Chris Given-Wilson, *English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages: The Fourteenth-Century Political Community.* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 57.
[60] Kenneth B. McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England: The Ford Lectures for 1953 and Related Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973),122.

From the first half of the thirteenth century, those who had individual summons to parliament, the group who would later form the lay part of the House of Lords, were collectively called "peers of the realm".[61] By the second half of the fourteenth century, they had already established themselves as the most powerful and privileged group at the top of English society. Their superior position emanated from their political and social roles, first as the military leaders and advisors to the King - of course not all advisors were of this group - and second from their land and the men over which they exercised lordship.[62] In the fifteenth century, the peerage was made up of fifty to sixty families whose members would be divided, in status and to a limited extent in law, from the rest of the landholding aristocracy. This division was ensured by hereditary privilege to receive a summon to parliament of each family's paterfamilias.[63] Peers of the fifteenth century were more aware of their peculiar and privileged position within English society than their thirteenth-century counterparts had been. One could aspire to become a knight or a mere gentleman, but it was difficult to enter the peerage, though not altogether impossible. So, one should envisage only the ones at the top who were right below the king when discussing the "nobility" in England in the context of Late Middle Ages. It should also be noted that the term was used to indicate a broader cultural world of manners and practices which were deemed superior to others, or a certain level of elegance which could be found originally only in the noble person. In this regard, one could adopt the cultural mentality of "nobility", but could not become a "noble", unless born that way.

Stratification of English society was rampant in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. One clear indicator of such stratification was the ranks created within the peerage. They

[61] Crouch, *Birth of Nobility,* 234.
[62] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility,* 1.
[63] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility,* 55.

could bear five different titles all of which were created between 1300 and 1500, except "earl."[64] "Dukes," "marquesses," "viscounts," and "barons" would constitute the remaining "peers," though "viscount" and "marquess" were not widely used before 1500. They were sometimes collectively referred to as "lords." However, one might guess, the "peers" were not the only members of the landholding aristocracy. Below them were the "knightly people" who, in recent modern historiography, are sometimes referred to as "gentry." "Gentry" in fifteenth-century England were the upper subset of the remaining aristocracy. They were the dominant group in the local country communities by the fifteenth century, but similar groups can be seen as early as the last quarter of the twelfth- century. "Knights" were the easiest ones to detect due to their primary characteristics, namely arms-bearing which did not go unnoticed by the clerical critics.[65] Social stratification that led to different ranks among the peerage affected the "gentry" in the same manner. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, there were two ranks among the lesser landholding aristocracy: "knights" and "squires." In times of war, the distinction was much clearer: a "squire" was paid half of a "knight's" wage. In social terms, however, it was more ambiguous. Chris Given-Wilson noted that, at the time, there were approximately 1500 "squires" who could match the wealth and status of the "knights" but did not assume knighthood for various reasons.[66] The ones who had the required assets but did not take up knighthood could be fined. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the required income for a knighthood was at least £40 per annum either from land or rent. A "squire's" supposed income had to range from £20 to £40. A subgroup also existed, and it was made up of "landless squires" who, presumably, belonged to the cadets of good families and had the right to bear coats of

[64] McFarlane, *Nobility,* 123.
[65] Crouch, *Birth of Nobility,* 236.
[66] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility,* 70.

arms.[67] Nevertheless, the difference between the two ranks was fairly clear since "squires" were not permitted to bear coats of arms until the middle of the fourteenth century. A hundred years had to pass for "gentlemen" to obtain that right.[68]

"Gentleman" is a rather peculiar term in the context of the English aristocracy. It can be regarded as the lowest of the ranks of the gentry, and supposedly their income was comparatively low. However, the term's use and definition were certainly vague. Being a "gentleman" could mean belonging to a wide section of society occupying the social space between the peerage and the free peasantry, or it could only mean the lowest degree of the gentry.[69] Certainly, if a free peasant could accumulate enough resources, he and his family could pass as "gentle" people. Unlike all other ranks, "gentility" did not specifically require any income or aristocratic birth, though income was probably a prerequisite for introduction to the upper sections of society, and, if necessary, pedigrees could be forged. More important than other factors was one's familiarity with the aristocratic culture and mentality. Crouch claims that as early as the twelfth century, any ambitious man could copy the manners of a magnate, and if he could do it with dignity, he would pass as "gentle."[70] The Pastons, for example, claimed a Norman knightly ancestry, but it was well known that they were peasants not more than a century before.[71] Another example is the Spencer family, which was accused by the Earl of Arundel of being lowborn during the reign of James I. Lord Spencer's reply is rather amusing: While Spencers were keeping sheep, the Earl's family was plotting treason.[72]

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[67] Maurice Keen, *English Society in the Middle Ages, 1348-1500* (London: The Penguin Press, 1990), 9.
[68] Given-Wilson, *English Nobility,* 70.
[69] Philippa Maddern, "Gentility," in *Gentry Culture in Late Medieval England*, ed. Raluca Radulescu and Alison Truelove (Manchester University Press, 2005), 19.
[70] Crouch, *Birth of Nobility,* 235-6.
[71] Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 20.
[72] Spencers moved up in the society all the way to peerage, but their ancestors were not necessarily peasants. They come from a family of "Dispensers," the name of a household

Who was then the "gentleman"? By the fifteenth century, it seems the term "gentleman" did not refer to an unchangeable status whose members were strictly defined by unquestionable social or legal criteria. There were definitely ways to achieve this status that people knew and implemented, and the status was never out of the reach of someone lowborn. It was barely regulated, and mostly existed in the mentality of aristocracy. Claimants to this status would enter a new world of social meanings in which one's "gentility" would be under the constant scrutiny of his superiors and peers. Under these circumstances, the person had to portray himself in the role of a "gentleman" perfectly: The food had to be eaten in the proper way, a "gentleman" had to know the appropriate terms for the appropriate sports and pastimes, and he even had to die in the proper way.[73] Similarly, a "gentleman" was expected to ride rather than walk: There was a whole cultural and social world of meanings regarding the horse breeds, their quality, and to whom they belonged to.[74] The increase in the number of courtesy books by the fifteenth century should be seen in this context. Socio-economic changes that had taken place during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries would create a more socially mobile group of people whose interest in the cultural world of aristocracy would grow remarkably.

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official, a kind of steward, and not necessarily a very high office. However, both Lord Spencer and his grandfather loved husbandry and countryside. John Horace Round, *Studies in Peerage and Family History.* (New York & Westminster: Longsman & Constable, 1901), 279.

[73] Maddern, *"Gentility,"* 31.

[74] For a cultural consideration of horses in the Early Modern world, See. Peter Edwards, Karl A. E. Enenkel, and Elspeth Graham, eds., The Horse as Cultural Icon: The Real and the Symbolic Horse in the Early Modern World (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2012).; for a more technical assessment, See. John Clark, ed., *The Medieval Horse and Its Equipment: C.1150-c.1450* (London: H.M.S.O, 1995).

2.3. Social Change in England in the Late Middle Ages

How did a group of new men come to expand (relatively) their wealth and status in the Late Middle Ages? By far, the most critical change that England experienced was the number of people in the region. John Hatcher claims that the population of England declined by 30 to 45 percent.[75] Furthermore, due to the combination of ensuing outbreaks, and extensive low fertility, the population would not recover to the pre-plague level, at the earliest, until the early seventeenth century.[76] It is true that until the first decades of the fourteenth-century, economic life in England had been bustling, and towns and commerce had been growing. After 1100, the population of England rose by between two and three times.[77] Towards the first quarter of the fourteenth century, growth in the population exceeded the capacity of land to produce enough food. The level of technology was not sophisticated enough to make up for the excess population. Holdings of families were getting seriously small, meaning that a considerable minority could not live off the land they were meant to. The fertility of the farmland decreased, and marginal lands failed to compensate for the deficit.[78] Worsening climate, too, cannot be ignored since it had long-term effects on English society beginning from the 1290s until the last quarter of the fourteenth century.[79] The population of England was already declining in the first quarter of the fourteenth century, but, by the time the Black Death arrived, England was still overpopulated. In this regard, the first wave of the plague was unable to transform the social and economic relationships. Instead, A. R. Bridbury suggests that repetitive outbreaks of a disease or different diseases enabled

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[75] John Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy: 1348-1530* (London: Macmillan, 1977), 25.
[76] For a more extensive study on the replacement rates of the population, See. John Hatcher, *Plague, Population and the English Economy: 1348-1530* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
[77] Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), 155.
[78] Christopher Dyer, *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages: Social Change in England, C. 1200-1500* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 287.
[79] Dyer, *Standards of Living,* 296.

the transformation of English society. The changes related to the land and labor became noticeable only in the 1370's.[80] In this regard, repetitive outbreaks could be credited with restoring the equilibrium, thus creating a better environment for economic growth.[81]

The most important results of the plague were the demand by labor for better payment and an impatience with old customs. Immediately after the Black Death, the labor shortage was not as apparent as one might expect. Replacements could still be found, and landlords resisted wage increases on many occasions, but some decades later, the rise in wages became evident and permanent. Though smaller than in Edward I's time, the enlistment of the able-bodied for war added to the shortage. Christopher Dyer suggests that particularly after the middle of the fourteenth century, a significant group of consumers emerged made up from the wage-earners. A substantial number of landless workers acquired holdings in the countryside, rising to the levels of middling peasants. Women contributed to the household income by taking up jobs like brewing, or spinning. There was a general tendency to maximize income which would be spent on relatively expensive manufactured goods.[82] Around these times, the first attempts were made to regulate the workforce by *The Ordinance* (1349) and *Statute of Labourers* (1350). *Effrenata cupiditas*, a decree named after its opening words and issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury, dictated the same conditions to the members of the Church who worked for stipends.[83] One might guess that making law and enforcing it are entirely different. People basically would not give up their newfound opportunities for

[80] A. R. Bridbury, "The Black Death," *The Economic History Review* 26, no. 4 (1973): 591, https://doi.org/10.2307/2593699.
[81] See. M. M. Postan, *Medieval Trade and Finance* (Cambridge Etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1973).
[82] Dyer, *Standards of Living,* 311.
[83] F. R. H. Du Boulay, *An Age of Ambition: English Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Curwen Press, 1970), 14.

a better life. There were natural attempts to enforce these new regulations, mostly by the land-owning aristocracy, but to what extent they achieved their aim is open to discussion.[84] Sumptuary statutes of 1363, 1463, and 1483 were aimed at regulating the dress of people according to their respective estate and degree. At the least, the Act of 1363 failed to achieve its purpose. In the next parliament, the Commons successfully asked for the law to be repealed, the king affirming in reply that "all people shall be as free as they were at all times before the said ordinance."[85]

It is clear that the economic and demographic trends of the late fourteenth century created a favorable environment for social advancement. Even the most established families had room for advancement, and they exploited this chance with every means possible. Demographic trends meant that the higher rungs of the social ladder were waiting to be filled. Political turmoil played a role in this too, intermittently throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At a rural level, high mortality and political disorder meant available and cheap land for peasants. The ones who benefitted the most were the already relatively rich rural elite. The wealthiest peasants, and the lower aristocracy were able to exploit this chance better than most. The ability to pay the entry fines necessary to acquire vacant holdings and the required money, or credit, for the vacant land, allowed them to improve their position further.[86] The Knatchbull family, which was elevated to the peerage in the nineteenth century, originated from a yeoman family that first established themselves in the early fifteenth century as gentlemen in

[84] See. Paul Booth, "The Enforcement of the Ordinance and Statute of Labourers in Cheshire, 1349 to 1374," *Archives: The Journal of the British Records Association* 39, no. 127 (December 2013): 1–16, https://doi.org/10.3828/archives.2013.6.
[85] Stephen H. Rigby, "English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Deference, Ambition and Conflict," in A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, C.1350-c.1500, ed. Peter Brown (Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 34.
[86] Rigby, *"English Society,"* 29.

Kent.[87] At about the same time, in Caernarvonshire, Wales, a member of the gentry, Bartholomew Bolde, bought parcels of land, leaving thousands of acres of land to his son-in-law, William Burkeley.[88] Rising to the gentry, the boundaries of which were increasingly becoming unclear, was surely possible, and it was often the result of land accumulation, even though the occasional absence of an heir prevented it. As stated above, the lowest sections of English society were also doing relatively well. Rising wages and low grain prices meant an increase in the standard of living, much to the disappointment of William Langland.[89]

Perhaps more socially mobile in nature during the Late Middle Ages was urban society. London trades would recruit from husbandmen and yeomen and required £1 to £2 to begin a career in metal and leather working trades.[90] In the provinces, entry to the artisan class was more open and straightforward. Thrupp argued that once you had established yourself as a lesser family in the urban environment, you were able to aspire to become a wholesale trader. Urban merchantry was traditionally seen as a common way to acquire membership of the rural gentry during the Late Middle Ages. However, it seems that even though there was a substantial interest in acquiring rural estates, they had little effect on the characteristics of the landed gentry.[91] As significant as the mercantile class was the rise of lay lawyers, administrators, professionals, and bureaucrats. Starting from the late fourteenth century, an increase in the number of educational opportunities provided by lay administrators and royal administrative services increasingly became available to people from non-clerical backgrounds. Hugh Latimer talked about his

[87] Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition,* 56.
[88] Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition,* 57.
[89] William Langland, *William's Vision of Piers Plowman*, ed. Ben Byram-Wigfield (Ancient Groove Music, 2006), 72-3, https://www.ancientgroove.co.uk/books/Piers_Plowman.pdf.
[90] Sylvia L. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London, 1300-1500* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968), 215-9
[91] Thrupp, *Merchant Class,* 215-9.

father and how he was only a poor yeoman with little or no land: "He kept me to school, or else I had not been able to have preached before the king's majesty now."[92] Those successful were primarily trained in the law, a field important parts of which had always been dominated by laymen. Legal professions were not as lucrative as commercial activities and were not as promising as the Church, but overall, they had the most significant impact on the creation of a socially and economically dynamic social group. Indeed, the practice of law, sometimes together with manorial administrative duties, which often involved the law, was more likely to grant a gentle status than agricultural practices alone. The Brudenells, Townsends, and Dudleys originated in this way. The Pastons, too, sent their boys to the Inns of Court for an apprenticeship, though not all of them continued in the practice of the law.[93] Any gentleman would value the training provided by the Inns of Court. Another way of service to the Crown was warfare. Warfare promised quick and lucrative gains, particularly in the war in France, as well as a chance to move up the ranks. Sir John Fastolf, for example, bragged about how he took so many French prisoners in a single day at the Battle of Verneuil. One of them was the Duke of Alençon. Supposedly, Fastolf had acquired "by the fortune of war 20 thousand marks sterling."[94] While there are examples of prosperous Englishmen who utilized the war for their benefit, it could also end in catastrophic failure.[95] Death was certainly a negative outcome, but it was not necessarily a catastrophe for a family. Capture and ransom could mean the loss of a substantial amount of money which would affect the fate of the family much more deeply.

England in the Late Middle Ages witnessed people from different backgrounds taking

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[92] Hugh Latimer, *The Sermons and Life of Hugh Latimer*, ed. John Watkins, vol. 1 (London: Aylott, 1858), 94.
[93] Du Boulay, *Age of Ambition,* 72.
[94] Keen, *English Society,* 138.
[95] Rigby, *"English Society,"* 31.

full advantage of the possibilities present at the time. However, this does not necessarily mean that people had changed their approach to life in general. Instead, everything listed above was already utilized for better social status, at least from the twelfth century onwards. The reason for this image of accelerating social mobility is due to substantially widened opportunities starting from the mid-fourteenth century as the result of a combination of high mortality, warfare, the enlargement of government, and increasing lay literacy. It is important to note these avenues for social mobility were already present before the fourteenth century. English aristocratic society had never been completely closed to aspiring members, even at the top. For example, by 1400, when the nobility was becoming increasingly restrictive, only three comital families had enjoyed their privileges for more than a century. The remaining fourteen were the creation of the last 75 years. Similarly, there were 136 families whose paterfamilias would receive a personal summons to parliament. Only fifteen survived until 1500 in unbroken male descent.[96] English society after the mid-fourteenth century became much more socially and geographically mobile compared to previous centuries.

2.3 Conclusion

The fortunes of individuals, be they from the aristocracy or otherwise, forged complex socio-cultural and socio-economic practices that obscure the image of late medieval social life even more. Aristocracy at the time was more than anything a cultural phenomenon, a complex web of habits, traditions, relationships, behaviors, and beliefs that created a common, shared world that helps historians to talk about the members of the aristocracy as a unit.[97] In the face of increasing penetration from the lower section,

[96] Stephen H. Rigby, *English Society in the Later Middle Ages: Class, Status, and Gender* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1995), 204.
[97] Kate Mertes, "Aristocracy," in Fifteenth Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England, ed. Rosemary Horrox (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 79-81.

they tended to increasingly use their courtly codes to strengthen and maintain their social identities. Interestingly, the upwardly mobile social groups, as long as their fortunes let them, would become keener consumers of the same aristocratic culture to define their new sense of worth and place in late medieval society.[98] Distinctions between different sections of society would become more ambiguous with frequently acquired knighthoods, mercantile investments from the established aristocracy, land investments of the middle classes, and intermarriage between the gentry and wealthy commoners.[99] Interest from the upwardly mobile sections of the society in aristocratic culture would shape their appearance and behavior. Much to the resentment of the already established aristocracy, a more significant portion of the population would favor delicate food and clothes and use refined behavior to strengthen their self-view in the face of a certain level of sensitivity from the aristocracy. Thus, it is no surprise that most late medieval courtesy writings clearly failed to distinguish the different sections of society. Modern researchers tend to see courtesy writings as the precursor of modern books on etiquette and self-improvement. They indeed were, but their meaning is much deeper than their supposed function.[100] They were the demonstration of an aristocratic, courtly mentality which became increasingly important in determining one's social status. It is because "gentility" was largely defined by such informal prerequisites as behavior, food, clothes etc., it was easier for a "new man" to find his place. Birth or blood was important, but almost impossible to truly control, and the Late Middle Ages would provide opportunities for a better financial status. The rest depended only on cultural affinity.

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[98] Kathleen Ashley, "Medieval Courtesy Literature and Dramatic Mirrors of Female Conduct," in The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality, ed. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (London: Routledge, 1987), 25.
[99] Michael Foster, "From Courtesy to Urbanity in Late Medieval England," Parergon 29, no. 1 (2012): 28.
[100] Foster, *"From Courtesy,"* 27.

CHAPTER III: THE MENTALITY OF COURTIERS

3.1. Introduction

Courtly culture was born out of the intricate relationship between the members of the aristocracy, including the King and his family. In this context, the court originally would imply the hall of a king and his household. This meaning was later extended to refer to "the establishment and surroundings of a sovereign with his councilors and retinue."[101] It could also refer only to the retinue of a sovereign or a dignitary. So, basically, a court would involve the most powerful and capable individuals in its body. These people were frequently from the higher rungs of society; aristocrats and members of the clergy would often seek for themselves a place in the court to counsel the King in matters of great importance. Low-born people, too, found themselves places in the court, which did not go unnoticed by the high-born members. On a more local level, greater lords' courts would be subject to admiration as much as the king's. They were places where connections were made, so people with enough ambition and skill would seek to engage in "courtly activities" for political, social and economic gains. Naturally, it was a highly competitive setting. Individuals were constantly subject to evaluation, and in such an environment, proving the worth of the individual was the essential motive. Military prowess and loyalty were critical from an earlier time. Even though they did not lose their importance altogether, one's competence in matters other than the military had become more critical. One's skills in negotiation and debate drew much interest and admiration. According to Baldassare Castiglione, the writer of the archetypal Renaissance guide for courtiers, "good custom in speech" would indicate a

[101] Oxford English Dictionary, "'Court, N.1'.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/43198?rskey=F6pIqf&result=1&isAdvanced=false.

man's talent, and sophistication achieved through study and experience.[102] Social skills and the ability to demonstrate the proper ways of conduct were, in fact, another way to prove the worth of an individual[103] In essence, the courts were where one built one's network and career as a "courtier." Acting within courtly manners would allow one to demonstrate one's goodwill and virtue, which in return would result in trust and affection.[104] These courtly manners and values varied from military prowess to simple gestures of respect, but all are highly critical to understanding the essence of the courtiers' mentality in medieval England. Thus, this chapter is dedicated to studying them in order to explain the mentality of the courtiers. This explanation will be crucial in the subsequent discussion on the characteristics of BSA, and its definition of gentility.

3.2. Military Prowess

The relationship between "court" and "courtesy" thus becomes apparent: courtesy essentially meant acting in accordance with the ideals of the members of a court. The word "courtesy" seems to surface as the term that implies patterns of conduct evolving in the courts of kings or noble magnates. Since it became an integral part of the ideals of medieval knighthood, it was very much about the self-perception of medieval Europeans. However, the priorities of the aristocracy and its ideals were subject to change. Earlier Anglo-Saxon aristocrats showed great respect for someone with a warrior soul and prowess. Being highborn, too, played an important role in estimating the worthiness of a person. These attributes did not vanish: they were relevant

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[102] Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Leonard Eckstein Opdycke (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 48.
[103] J D Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature in Medieval England* (London; New York: Longman, 1998), 8.
[104] Johann Heinrich Zedler, *Grosses Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon Aller Wissenschafften Und Künste* (Leipzig and Halle, 1736). **quoted in.** Norbert Elias, *Über Den Prozess Der Zivilisation: Soziogenetische Und Psychogenetische Untersuchungen*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1969), 8.

throughout the Medieval Ages and the subsequent Early Modern period. Nevertheless, there seems to have been a transformation towards what modern people would regard as a more civilized society. David Burnley demonstrates this change rather accurately by comparing two literary products of medieval England, *Beowulf* and the *Romance of Horn*.[105]

According to Burnley, the story of Beowulf, was transcribed - and perhaps adapted to Christian Anglo-Saxon society in the process - by an unknown monk living in the south of present-day England towards the end of the first millennium. In the story, Beowulf and his companions are great warriors *"in their wargear"* that were *"worthy of esteem of warriors."* Beowulf's lineage and the king's familiarity with it are announced, and by his prowess and lineage, Beowulf is accepted into the royal household. *The Romance of Horn* was transcribed, and perhaps adapted, in Anglo-Norman French approximately a hundred and fifty years later than *Beowulf* by a member of the court of Henry II, and it shows clear similarities to the story of Beowulf. After a series of adventures, both Beowulf and Horn acquire military glory and return to their native lands to become kings. Both stories depict a band of young men whose nobility is apparent to the reader (or listener), and the leaders of both bands are clearly more competent than the rest. The differences, however, are quite intriguing. While Beowulf is depicted in times of war in which he could demonstrate his abilities, Horn is depicted in peace-time. The first clear impression of Horn comes not from his warrior appearance but from his self-evident intelligence and eloquence. While the court described in *Beowulf* is reasonably straightforward with its formal speeches, music, horse racing, and hunting, Horn's story in the court is much more detailed, with careful expressions of the hero's character. The themes of knighthood and vassalage, the education of a young courtier, courtly love,

[105] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,*10-15.

and the heroic warrior are depicted in the story in a sophisticated way that Beowulf lacks. His martial skills do not go unnoticed, but in the greater theme of the story arc, it plays only a complementary role. Though not openly expressed, it is apparent that military prowess alone has become insufficient for a hero to be worthy of esteem and respect. The hero became obligated to demonstrate his worthiness in the fields outside of martial practices. Thus, intelligence, education, and mastery over the ways of proper conduct became more and more associated with the essence of aristocratic culture.

It is noted that medieval monastic rules contained several detailed instructions from table manners to simple behavior in public. Undoubtedly, the less military aspects of medieval aristocratic culture owed an outstanding debt to the more refined manners of clergymen. The natural connection between the monastic orders and the aristocracy, particularly in the Early Middle Ages, cannot be omitted.[106] Perhaps the court served as a space where the ideas of clergy and aristocracy could meet each other, sometimes to synthesize and sometimes to collide. Stephen Jaeger claims that the emergence of the courtly culture was profoundly related to the movement that wished to tame the aristocracy of European peoples by limiting their freedom in their manners and morals. By doing so, the primitiveness and assertiveness of the aristocracy would be overcome, and the aristocracy would be put in an obedient position.[107] The change in the social behavior of the aristocracy is noticeable, and there was an increasing interest in courtly manners by the twelfth century. In this regard, chivalry and the whole chivalric romance ethic were intended to curb and redirect the aggression of the young aristocrats. This view is perhaps a little simplistic given that clergy and aristocracy had a natural connection, and knighthood at the time had been less aristocratic than it became in the

[106] Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility* (Oxford University Press, 1998), 59.
[107] C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University Of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3.

subsequent centuries, but it could help to understand the basis of the matter. The codes of knighthood would be formulated, and aggression in general would be put to good use. Supposedly, a knight would uphold the weak, be loyal to the king, and serve God and the Church.[108] Nigel Saul suggests that chivalric culture was formulated at a time when Europe was experiencing an unprecedented intellectual and theological awakening. In the twelfth century, the pessimism of the earlier Christian writings would be gradually laid aside, and writings of Greek antiquity would be sought out. The result was a more intellectually dynamic society in which the roles of people were redefined. In this regard, the violent warrior who would fight for survival was transformed into an idealized figure.[109]

Indeed, military prowess lost its prominence as the sole source of courtly respect, but it did not completely vanish. Instead, it was joined by new courtly values, and this mixture persisted for quite some time. Literary sources tell the same story. *Richard Coer de Lion*, a romance from the early fourteenth century, still retains the older heroic values.[110] This was true for England as well as it was for France. According to Zeynep Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen, French authors eagerly claimed that just wars were the means for divine justice, the punishment of sinners, the common good, and the protection of the defenseless. Moreover, one could partake in a war if it was waged by the right authority. War was also acceptable if it was in self-defense or had a holy purpose. These ideas were previously prevalent among the ecclesiastical authors, and by the Late Middle Ages, it was increasingly expressed in the writings meant for the lay

[108] Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 41.
[109] Nigel Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 37-38
[110] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 23.

audience.[111] At around the same time, however, the biography of Jean II le Maingre, *Le Livre de Boucicaut*, was written by an unknown author. Boucicaut would constantly seek battlefields on which he could gain glory by his prowess. Always in search of confrontation with an enemy, Boucicaut served as an outstanding example for an aspiring knight, albeit a self-serving one.[112] So, it seems both ideals actually co-existed. Education, for example, was increasingly becoming more closely linked to one's gentility. Courtesy books like John Russell's *"Book of Nurture"* frankly criticize the uneducated noble who prides himself in his inability to read. They also stress the importance of military talent, but, interestingly, the stress is not actually on learning warfare but on constant training, much like a sport.[113] It looks like aristocracy in England became less dependent on the battlefield for validation and appreciation, despite the ongoing unrest and frequent battles. However, the apparent characterization of the aristocracy as "men of war" would remain in the mentality of its members. Henry V's success in France in the early fourteenth-century, for example, reinforced his and the early Lancastrians' position while subsequent setbacks between 1430-50 became important political issues.

3.3. Genealogy and Heralds

Historians cannot deny the fact that one's gentility was associated with a proper pedigree. This belief was persistent, widespread, and can be found in many sources. However, it seems attitudes toward one's lineage evolved as a reaction to the social change that England underwent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Before the mid-fifteenth century, formal regulation of gentle society was limited. Existence of the

[111] Zeynep Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen, "Interpreting Warfare and Knighthood in Late Medieval France: Writers and Their Sources in the Reign of King Charles vi (1380-1422)" (Thesis, Bilkent University, 2012). 144-157.
[112] Kocabıyıkoğlu Çeçen, *"Interpreting Warfare,"* 94-95.
[113] Mertes, "Aristocracy," 52-3.

Curia Militaris goes back quite a long way in an informal way, and handled some issues of social precedence, but its work was generally confined to military matters. At the local level, regulation was often informal, and presumably, it was based on one's reputation. This does not necessarily mean that one's lineage was not significant or relevant, but the discourse of gentility was not obsessed with the issue yet. Various sources of gentility existed, and one's claim of ancestry mainly did not require proof.[114]

From the second half of the thirteenth century, traditional boundaries of status began to be violated by people from non-gentle origins. The English in the Middle Ages were not unfamiliar with rising families of various kinds. Nevertheless, the extent and impact of these new, socially mobile people was now more disruptive. More and more people aspired to higher positions in their respective communities. Many began to assume gentility and its trappings. The Crown expressed its discomfort with the practice by a proclamation in 1417. In the same year, by an ordinance, heralds were ordered to regulate and record the use of coats of arms in their respective provinces. They were strictly forbidden to issue coats of arms to persons with "vile blood." However, the measures taken seem to have failed to prevent the rise of new families. Many were granted arms in response to their petitions, particularly after the 1450s.[115] Written and visual genealogies became evidence of suitable blood. It is also important to remember that coats of arms could descend through all male lines, not just the eldest sons. Daughters could also inherit heraldry in some cases. Therefore, even the legitimate coats of arms could spread quite widely in a couple of generations. After the system of visitation became operational, many arms-bearing families were asked to provide proof

[114] Jon Denton, "Genealogy and Gentility: Social Status in Provincial England," in *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Medieval Britain and France*, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu and Edward Donald Kennedy (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 157.
[115] Denton, *"Genealogy,"* 158.

in the form of a written genealogy. In some extreme cases, families lost their right to bear arms, and their gentility was refuted.[116]

Clearly, one could forge an entire pedigree, and people often did. J. F. R. Day claims that bestowal of arms and forging of pedigrees were prevalent, and heraldry books were often used as guidelines by the new men who wished to educate themselves on the matter.[117] Thomas Smith, in his *De Republica Anglorum*, states:

> "But ordinarily the king doth only make knights and create barons or higher degrees: for as for gentlemen, they be made good cheape in England. For whosoever studieth the lawes of the realme, who studieth in the universities, who professeth liberall sciences, and to be shorte, who can live idly and without manuall labour, and will beare the port, charge and countenaunce of a gentleman, he shall be called master, for that is the title which men give to esquires and other gentlemen, and shall be taken for a gentleman: for true it is with us as is saide, 'Tanti eris alijs quanti tibi feceris: (and if neede be) a king of Heraulds shal also give him for mony, armes newly made and invented, the title whereof shall pretende to have beene found by the sayd Herauld in perusing and viewing of olde registers(...)."[118]

Smith is pretty direct in what he says: if a man has what it takes to live like a gentleman, he should be treated as such and be given the coat of arms. Smith's attitude towards "new men" might be an exception, but this does not make it less close to reality. Many indeed acquired their heralds by forging spectacular genealogies, presumably with the help of government officials.

3.4. Luxury and Recreation

Not everybody was as a matter of fact about the rising families as Smith was. His contemporary, Thomas Becon, despised parvenus and adversely mentions a proverb:

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[116] Denton, *"Genealogy,"* 158.
[117] See. J. F. R. Day, "Primers of Honor: Heraldry, Heraldry Books, and English Renaissance Literature," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 1 (1990): 93-103, https://doi.org/10.2307/2541135.
[118] Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum: A Discourse on the Commonwealth of England*, ed. Leonard Alston (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 39-40.

"as riseth my good, so riseth my blood." Following the proverb, Becon heavily criticizes the self-made gentlemen of his era, claiming that they think nobility only consists of the abundance of worldly goods, gold chains, pleasant houses, and gardens. As he keeps on condemning the ways of these self-made men, he claims they work hard to possess much, but they give back nothing, thus living in leisure.[119] Becon's ideas could potentially be unrealistic; his belief in a righteous gentility whose members would act as he presumes could be an illusion. Unlike what Becon thought, a certain notion of leisure was seen as an integral part of gentle refinement. Daily obligations such as wars, administration, commerce, or even religious duties could potentially lessen the refinement of the gentle person. Enjoyment of leisure was the only way to cultivate and preserve gentility. Guillaume de Lorris saw *Oiseuse* (idleness, leisure) as the guardian of the courtly ways in the *Roman de la Rose*.[120] Chaucer, too, imagined the leisurely life to be worthy of the aristocracy of Troy. The romance of Galeran de Bretagne tells the same story in which genteel idleness is considered the lesson of a noble heart:

> "My heart, madam, teaches me this, that I should do no other work each day than read my psalter and make embroideries with gold or silken thread, or listen to stories of Thebes or of Troy, and play lais on my harp, and beat another at chess, or feed my pet bird on my wrist: I have often heard my mestre say that this manner of behaviour arises from nobility."[121]

Like women, men were also expected to be proficient in chess, backgammon, or reading and would indulge themselves in unproductive activities. However, more importantly, a prime leisure activity for noblemen was hunting and hawking, given that the practices were aimed not at substance but leisure.[122] *"The Parlement of the Thre Ages"* elaborately describes a hunting scene of a young man, a hawk on his wrist, enjoying the pursuits of a courtier.[123] Authors of these literary works clearly assumed that the readers

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[119] Thomas Becon, "The Fortress of the Faithful in the Works," in English Historical Documents V 1485-1558, ed. David C. Douglas (London: Routledge, 1996), 268.
[120] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 53.
[121] Jean Dufournet, Galeran de Bretagne **quoted in.** Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 53.
[122] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 54.
[123] Israel Gollancz, ed., *The Parlement of the Thre Ages; an Alliterative Poem on the Nine*

would be interested and informed on these topics and incorporated these into their stories in one way or another. The most important aspect of these activities was that they were not directed toward a common good. The essential goal of hunting was not to provide meat for the table, though it certainly did. It was to achieve almost purely aesthetic goals and resulting refinement. A certain level of beauty, elegance, and refinement within the company of people who could be regarded as *curteis* was the primary purpose of the action.[124] It should be noted that hunting and hawking are strenuous. Apart from the company of other courtiers, they served a practical purpose. They certainly taught young gentlemen how to ride a horse properly. They were also forms of physical training in which the aristocrats would ride for hours in a harsh environment. It could also be an opportunity to observe each other in action before an actual battle.

Nevertheless, not everybody would agree on the virtue of leisure and recreation. Much earlier than Becon, *"Wynnere and Wastoure"* discusses the virtues of being a *wynner*e and *wastoure* at length.[125] *Wynnere*, in this discussion, represents financial prudence, while *wastoure* represents extravagance. They face each other in the presence of a king to determine who is just in their way of life. Both make plausible arguments, yet the poem ends inconclusively, perhaps leaving the decision to the reader, and perhaps implying that a happy medium would be best. Certainly, lower sections of society would have a hard time understanding the recreational activities of the aristocracy. A madman from Poggio Bracciolini's *Facetiae* would be utterly shocked hearing that a young horseman with a hawk and hunting dog spent fifty ducats on the animals and the gear

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Worthies and the Heroes of Romance. (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), lines 215-235.

[124] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 56.

[125] See. Warren Ginsberg, *Wynnere and Wasture and the Parlement of the Thre Ages* (Medieval Institute Publications, 1992).

yet he made a mere six from the game.[126] It is fair to assume that the "already gentle" sections of society would be more interested in leisure and recreation, and certainly, the *"nouveau riche"* did not completely abstain from them, but for a lot of them, wealth was the result of a long endeavor. Most created their fortunes by working relentlessly, and their newfound prosperity could be something that they wished to preserve. Also, life for the nobility was getting better by the fifteenth century, at least when they were not at war. In general, more luxuries were within the reach of the richest, and nobility used these luxuries to differentiate themselves from the rest of the aristocracy. For example, more comfortable housing with private chambers was preferred like the duke of Buckingham's new castle, built in the early sixteenth century at Thornbury in Gloucestershire.[127] Another example is nobility's increasing preference for wild bird meat, allegedly due to the more widespread consumption of regular meat.[128] Presumably, modest versions of these luxuries were preferred by the lower aristocracy, in an attempt to imitate the noble culture with relatively limited means.

3.5. Etiquette

Eating a particular meal or exercising a particular sport naturally was not enough to be able to count as a gentle person. In a larger sense, the name "courtier" refers to a more complex social and cultural engagement, and within this relation, a person should be able to demonstrate a certain level of competency in a range of social skills. These social skills typically served one's personal advancement in which, to this end, eloquence and affability were exploited. Besides that, they also served the order and stability of

[126] Poggio Bracciolini, *The Facetiae or Jocose Tales of Poggio*, vol. 1 (Paris: Isidore Liseux, 1879), 12-4.
[127] Dyer, *Standards of Living,* 286.
[128] Umberto Alberella and Richard Thomas, "They Dined on Crane: Bird Consumption, Wild Fowling and Status in Medieval England," Acta Zoologica Cracoviensia 45, Special issue (2002): 36.

society. Basically, the essence of the matter comes down to the appropriate manners, i.e., etiquette, for various changing public situations in the greater court.[129]

Seating, for example, was critical since sitting close to the lord and lady represented a symbolic honor.[130] Greater or lesser gentlemen attending the court were expected to know their place. Albeit in a more violent form, table manners and the supposed honor of precedence, be it seating or eating, were present in European culture from earlier times. An earlier Irish saga, *The Tale of Mac Da Thó's Pig*, notoriously depicts a fighting scene over the *Curadmír* (Champion's Portion), which is the best cut of the meat and is often awarded to the bravest warrior at a feast. Fighting over the best piece of meat is exactly the behavior one would expect from the "primitive" and "aggressive" aristocracy that Jaeger wrote about. This aggressiveness was, as mentioned, confined and redirected to a greater purpose: to uphold justice, protect the weak, and serve the overlord faithfully. Fifteenth-century gentlemen shared the same principles, although in a less militaristic way. Duties to the family, both in a narrow and broad sense, were of utmost importance. Respecting the overlord and maintaining the social order were crucial to their understanding of life. It seems they were able to remodel their knightly values, without relinquishing their status, into a form whose principal aim was preserving the peace, though not all the courtiers were knights.[131] Therefore, it is no wonder that fifteenth-century gentlemen embraced the notion of manners or etiquette in a sense that is very close to the modern-day meaning of the latter word.[132] Stress on

[129] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 57.
[130] The same mentality can be seen in the early architecture of Ottoman cities. When Edirne became the Ottoman capital, the city was designed to make sure that the Sultan's waqf was at the center and the elites' waqfs at its vicinity, placed according to their status. For a full study See. Panagiotis Kontolaimos, "The Formation of Early Ottoman Urban Space. Edirne as Paradigm," in The Heritage of Edirne in Ottoman and Turkish Times: Continuities, Disruptions and Reconnections, ed. Birgit Krawietz and Florian Riedler (De Gruyter, 2019).
[131] Mertes, "Aristocracy," 54.
[132] Mertes, "Aristocracy," 54.

the importance of proper conduct was not new to the fifteenth-century gentlemen, but it became increasingly attached to the essence of their identity. Clearly, more and more people believed that "manners maketh man."[133]

Courtesy books were at the center of the discourse formulated around the remodeled purpose of aristocracy. They would become one of the most vibrant strands of English literature for centuries to come. While broadly focusing on the formulation of etiquette, courtesy books involved many different subjects, some of which were ideals of character, morals, manners, and even the courtly sports and pastimes of the time.[134] Their effect and consumption were far more significant and broader than that which concerned the court itself. For example, the Latin versions of conduct manuals were associated with the schools, and clergymen were surely interested in refined manners. Indeed, monastic orders adopted table manners earlier than most. Generally, though, their aim can be boiled down to teaching the reader how to be a flourishing member of the aristocracy. Burnley suggests that most of the courtesy books did not provide the reader with a deep knowledge, instead they introduce good manners to the reader in a superficial manner.[135]

As one might guess, they were highly practical in the upbringing of a child. These types were essentially intended as guides to teaching the children appropriate behaviors. As an old proverb puts it: "A child were better to be unborn than to be untaught and so to be lorn."[136] Barbara A. Hanawalt claims young people who strived for success in

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[133] Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). 116.
[134] Michael Curtin, "A Question of Manners: Status and Gender in Etiquette and Courtesy," *The Journal of Modern History* 57, no. 3 (September 1985): 395-396, https://doi.org/10.1086/242859.
[135] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 129.
[136] Edith Rickert and L. J. Naylor, trans., *The Babees Book: Mediaeval Manners for the Young*

London utilized courtesy books to make themselves acceptable in wealthy households. Ambitious parents also needed to learn how to instruct their children in an increasingly "polite" environment.[137] The socialization of children and young people into a society whose members increasingly identified themselves with gentle ideals and manners would make up an essential part of medieval English culture.[138] For adult readers, there were hunting manuals, the earliest of which was the Twiti text discussed in Chapter One.[139]

3.6. Conclusion

Already gentle persons' obsession with pedigree was growing in the fifteenth century in response to the rising families. Some were eager to see gentility as tied to the family's status: gentility could be claimed only by someone from a gentle family. However, it is apparent that reality was very different from that ideal. Courtesy books, in general, are quite straightforward in stating that one's gentility was determined by nurture: "The Godemans Son" is a famous example of this.[140] Discussions on the importance of "nature" and "nurture" never came to an end in the fifteenth century, but families that rose to prominence by various means never disappeared from English history.

All of the above aspects featured in the minds of courtiers, though certainly some more than others at times. However, none of the above, except for pedigree, would immediately make a man gentle, and even a gentility based only on pedigree could be lost with improper behavior. What made a man gentle was his familiarity with the

(Cambridge; Ontario: Middle English Series, 2000), 62.
[137] Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 70.
[138] Hanawalt, *Growing,* 71.
[139] The significance of the hunting manuals is discussed at length in Chapter Four within the scope of BSA.
[140] Mertes, "Aristocracy," 54.

complex world of the high culture he was part of. The mentality of courtiers and gentility in this sense was not limited to a particular social group whose boundaries were precisely defined. On the contrary, it was much more vibrant and variable. Boundaries, if there were any, were often violated at the expense of those who were already gentlemen. It is true that the term “court” suggests a limited participation from the general public, if not to exclude it completely. Indeed, it was restricted to a group of lucky people, but courtly culture and mentality were not. It was participated in, shaped, and perhaps produced by a larger section of society who called themselves gentlemen.

CHAPTER IV: "GENTLEMEN" OF THE BOKE OF ST. ALBANS

As demonstrated in Chapter One, BSA is a mysterious piece of literature compiled from diverse sources in a relatively sophisticated manner. It is fair to assume that by bringing together topics related to the lifestyle of the higher echelons of society, it enjoyed a certain level of interest and success in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern period. With a careful consideration of the transformation of English society and the mentality of its aristocracy, BSA's function is much clearer. Its author does not hesitate to inform the reader about his/her intentions right at the beginning, and this is repeated at the beginning of each book in the same manner: BSA was clearly written as a guide for the "*gentill men and honest persones,"*[141] first in the gentlemanly sports of the time, and later to inform the reader on coats of arms. Who might these *"gentill men and honest persones"* be is a question that needs to be answered. In times of trouble, when the supposed natural order of the society was to be disrupted by external and internal forces, defining such terms becomes complicated. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the term "gentleman" was applied to a wide range of people who aspired to become a member of the upper strata. In a way, one's adoption of the term was the articulation of cultural affinity. It was not applied by the Crown to certain groups of people like the terms noble or knight. Instead, it was a term specific to those who chose to apply it to themselves when required to provide an identifying label. Thus, the term served as a catch-all label that did not require the holding of a certain administrative, political or economic role.[142] Anyone, even those at the fringes of aristocracy, could lay claim to this name.

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[141] *BSA*, f. 2r.

[142] Kristin Canzano Pinyan, "*Changing Understanding* of Gentility: Status, Gender, and Social Opportunity in England, C. 1400-1530" (Dissertation, The State University of New Jersey, 2017), 78.

4.1. The "Boke of Hawkyng" and "Boke of Huntyng"

BSA's first two books are filled with technical details on adequately caring for a tamed wild bird and hunting. While reading the first book, what would amaze someone would be the comprehensive descriptions of the lives of hawks ranging from the times when they were eggs to their sicknesses and diet.[143] Several times, required medicine for a particular sickness is mentioned,[144] and the manner of feeding these birds is discussed. The first passage from the book is directed to teach the reader "the manner to speak of hawks,"[145] which generally focuses on their birth and when to catch them. Then it deals with their diet, and subsequently comes a massive section on their sicknesses and medicine. Following these sections comes "the kindly terms that belong to hawks."[146] This section focuses on diverse topics ranging from the taming of the bird to the different names and features of hawk kinds.[147] In the section, the author suggests that the reader should "mark well these terms," dedicating pages to the "convenient terms."[148] These pages cover the names and descriptions of different hawks as well as the names and descriptions of different parts of a hawk's feather.[149] More pages of detailed information follow on the proper care of a hawk, such as the manner of guiding their flying and rewarding them. Occasionally, warnings are made in the headings like "mark these terms" or "now you shall know these terms," but the section is overwhelmingly on medicine for the birds. This section ends with a note on how to understand the time that the bird is ready for the *querre*, and a section on the hawks' bellies.[150] The author, or more possibly the compiler, ends this section by saying, "here

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[143] *BSA*, f. 2r-3r.
[144] Starting from: *BSA*, f. 3v.
[145] *BSA*, f. 2r.
[146] *BSA*, f. 6r.
[147] *BSA*, f. 8r-8v.
[148] *BSA*, f. 6v-7r.
[149] *BSA*, f. 9v.
[150] *BSA*, 10r-27r.

ended the process of hawking. And now follows the names of all manner hawks and to whom they belong."[151]

A listing is mostly the case with the BSA, so the following is a listing of different types of hawks set alongside the aristocratic ranks of a medieval society. Accordingly, an eagle would suit an emperor, while kings should own a gyrfalcon. The list goes all the way down to a yeoman and a clerk whose proper bird would be, respectively, a goshawk and a sparrowhawk.[152] Ranking birds is a common tradition in European culture. For example, Albertus Magnus ranks falcons according to their "nobleness" in his *De Animalibus* in the thirteenth century.[153] According to him, a gyrfalcon is one of the noblest birds, deemed as suitable for kings by BSA. A mountain falcon, which is noted to be the peregrine by the translator of *De Animalibus*, is on the same level, that is the third, and worthy of a prince, with the *"fawken gentill"* of BSA, which is a name given to peregrines in the Middle Ages. A "hobby", for example, was listed in BSA as suitable for a young man, most probably from an aristocratic family, and *De Animalibus* considers it as one of the noble ones. Interestingly, "lanners" are deemed inferior birds by Albertus, but BSA claims that they are worthy of squires. "Merlins," worthy of a lady, are considered as noble as the others, while BSA lists them under "lanners." Generally, both listings are close to each other, but they sometimes contradict. Another contradiction is the bird deemed proper for a knight. "Saker" is listed as the noblest of the falcons in *De Animalibus*, which might have lost its value in the meantime. If there is a connection between the listing of BSA and *De Animalibus*, and it seems, to an extent, there is, one could claim the author of the treatise was trying to find appropriate

[151] *BSA*, f. 27r.
[152] *BSA*, f. 27v-28r.
[153] Albertus Magnus, *Man and the Beast: De Animalibus (Books 22-26)*, trans. James J. Scanlan (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1987), 228-246.

birds for ever-increasing layers of English society, though it is hard to make such a comment without looking at some intermediary texts. Eagle, for example, is not on the list of *De Animalibus*. Birds for the yeoman or the poor man are not included in Albertus's listing either. After the superior ones listed, BSA declares: "and yet there be more kinds of hawks," just like there were more kinds of people.

It is clear that BSA sees hawking within reach of a larger section of society. Considering that hawking had been essentially a sport of the higher echelons, one might claim it was, by itself, no longer enough to be the provider of a status. Even a poor man could potentially do it, even if he did it with a "tercel." One's knowledge of the appropriate terminology had become more critical. Understanding the conditions of the sport, how to address the birds, and demonstrating enough knowledge on the matter may have been more crucial than actually practicing hawking.[154] BSA is not shy in admitting this right at the beginning. Accordingly, it was necessary "to know the gentle terms in communing of their hawks," and the treatise included "many notable terms that have been used in hawking, both of their hawks and of the fowls that their hawks shall slay."[155] Frequent reminders to the reader, some of which were noted above, strengthen this notion.

The second book shares a lot in its rendition with the first one. Right at the beginning, the author claims: "in the book of hawking, the terms of pleasure belonging to gentlemen are noted, in the same manner, this book following showed each gentle persons the manner of hunting."[156] This book, too, has occasional warnings to the reader

[154] Robin S. Oggins, *The Kings and Their Hawks: Falconry in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 117.
[155] *BSA*, f. 2r.
[156] *BSA*, f. 29r.

like “mark well these seasons,” and “mark well these terms.”[157] A small poem is dedicated only to the proper ways of talking about a hart; a discussion on the qualities of the animal takes part because, according to the author, it is “diverse.”[158] In a didactic nature, the book generally focuses on the methods of hunting several animals, such as roe deer, hare, and boar. It also focuses on how to reward the hounds, how to make use of the horns of different animals, and how to differentiate the outcry of the animals. Although the book is enjoyable and easy to read, it is relatively short and does not offer much to speculate on except the characteristics that it shares with the first treatise. Perhaps less detail is necessary: a wide range of people had always been involved in helping with the hunt - and always would be - so perhaps it is more familiar to the less gentle types than hawking.

There is one more section before the author moves on to the *Liber Armorum*. This section, not more than ten pages, is filled with listings and advice, and they are almost entirely unrelated to each other.[159] It starts with the beasts of chase, then moves on to hounds and horses. Then comes a section on the things a wise man should mark, followed by a section on fortune. This is followed by two relatively long lists of beasts and fowls. One section is rather interesting, and it goes like this: “Arise early, serve the God devoutly and the world carefully, do thy work wisely, (...), answer the people demurely, sit discreetly, (and) of the tongue be not too liberal.”[160] Finally, the section ends with a list of shires, bishoprics, and the provinces of England. This section is rather peculiar in terms of the whole book. Its characteristics resemble commonplace books which have been present in English literature since before the Norman invasion and

[157] *BSA*, f. 33r, 35r, 35r.
[158] *BSA*, f. 29r.
[159] *BSA*, f. 40v-44r.
[160] *BSA*, f. 41r.

were becoming increasingly popular in the fifteenth century.[161] The emergence of the commonplace books as a common genre in English literature is attributed to the rise of the London merchant class, which presumably was the source of a good portion of Wynkyn De Worde's customers.[162] The seemingly random selection of topics with no underlying theme separates this section from the rest of the book. They do not serve a bigger purpose, but simply the section is filled with practical and entertaining information that the reader might find helpful. A random selection of topics would potentially produce a larger audience and was credited to be the main feature that separates the genre from the rest of generic miscellanies.[163] In nature, however, they resemble the courtesy writings of the same era since they are aimed "to improve the reader's soul, or to multiply his accomplishments and increase his stock of useful, and even cultural information."[164]

Both the hawking and hunting books are highly didactic and can offer practical benefits. However, one can never be sure that this practical knowledge is actually put to use. One could simply use it to become acquainted with the proper terminology and culture without actually practicing it. In her study on hunting manuals, Anne Rooney noted that English hunting manuals were remarkably limited in practical matters compared to their French counterparts.[165] Similarly, Burnley remarked that Duke Edward, author of the *Master of Game*, intentionally passed over the parts on utilitarian trapping in favor of an elaborate description of a chase. He later follows his French source more faithfully

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[161] David Parker, "The Importance of the Commonplace Book: London 1450-1550," *Manuscripta* 40, no. 1 (March 1996): 29-30.
[162] Parker, "Importance," 31.
[163] Parker, "Importance," 30.
[164] Malcolm B. Parkes, "The Literacy of the Laity," in *Literature and Western Civilization 2: The Medieval World*, ed. David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London: Aldus Books, 1973), 562. **quoted in.** Parker, "Importance," 32.
[165] Anne Rooney, *Hunting in Middle English Literature* (Suffolk; Rochester: Boydell Press, 1993), 7-20.

and adds the hunt of the otter and wild cat, but by a note, he disclaims any extensive knowledge of the otter.[166] Moreover, *Master of Game* lacks the introduction parts where the compiler's own voice is unusually heard, which was clearly directed at a "gentle" and "honest" audience.[167] One should remember Binns's remark on BSA that the book's practical content comes from another book, not from experience.[168] So, it seems that what is aimed at by the manuals on hunting and similar matters is to give a sense of cultural engagement to a person, rather than providing an actual practical education. Burnley states that the terms related to hunting constitute a large portion of existing hunting manuals in English.[169] It can be claimed that this also applies to the first and second treatise of BSA, which was clearly composed to teach "the gentle terms in communing of their hawks" or show "all the terms convenient to the hounds."

Burnley uses a modern analogy for such writings and states that hunting and similar manuals of the Middle Ages resemble the British magazines *The Field* and *Country Life*.[170] Accordingly, these magazines attract people who hope to participate in this lifestyle and offer them a potential route. However, in the end, the readership of the said magazine would exceed these people, and these topics would be enjoyed by people who would never take part in the activity.[171] Here, Wynkyn De Worde's edition of BSA should be mentioned: Lotte Hellinga states that the target audience of the books previously printed by De Worde is overwhelmingly urban. Nevertheless, De Worde

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[166] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 133.
[167] See. Edward, Second Duke of York, *The Master of Game: The Oldest English Book on Hunting*, ed. William A. Baillie-Grohman and F. Baillie-Grohman (New York: Duffield & Company, 1909).
[168] Binns, "Manuscript Source," 24.
[169] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 133.
[170] I have actually managed to find a transcribed 1957 version of "Fishing with an Angle" in an online sports magazine. It is of no value but still interesting. See. Alfred Duggan, ed., "The Treatise of FISHING with an ANGLE," Sports Illustrated Vault, 1957, https://vault.si.com/vault/1957/05/20/the-treatise-of-fishing-with-an-angle.
[171] Burnley, *Courtliness and Literature,* 135.

would go on to print the BSA, a book on the rustic pastimes of landed gentlemen, with an additional book on fishing with an *angle*. Hellinga also notes that De Worde made specific changes to the book in order to make it more appealing to the urban reader.[172] In this sense, Michael Foster claims the cities and small towns in the fifteenth century would become cultural centers wherein courtesy would flourish as a part of middle-class culture.[173] Indeed, urban centers played an essential role in the flourishing culture; many people living in urban centers sought to engage in courtly activities, but calling it middle-class can be a little anachronistic. Above all, the city and countryside in the late fifteenth century were much more intertwined than one might expect. Many people from the gentry who characteristically lived in the countryside owned houses in the regional towns, and many had social, economic, and political connections in the towns. Conversely, many merchants who usually dwelt in the cities sought to purchase land in the countryside when they succeeded in their mercantile ventures. There were also prosperous city habitants, clothier graziers, or butcher graziers, who owned pastureland but kept living in the city. These people were not part of the gentry in a traditional way, but they called themselves "gentlemen" with ease. There were also lawyers and regional administrators who conducted their business both in towns and in the countryside.[174] Therefore, the flourishing culture was only partly urban. Many had the opportunity to actually practice hawking and hunting. Certainly, though, this interest was more intellectual than it was practical. As stated, by the fifteenth century, hawking and hunting could be practiced even by the "poor man," and expertise in appropriate terminology became more critical. In this sense, BSA would often appeal to people who were not generally of "gentle" birth but were still able to engage in the cultural world

[172] Hellinga, *Texts in Transit,* 399-402.
[173] Michael Foster, "From Courtesy to Urbanity in Late Medieval England," *Parergon* 29, no. 1 (2012): 27.
[174] Keen, *English Society,* 106-7.

of gentility that they had already become part of.

4.2. The *"Liber Armorum"* and "Boke of Blazyng"

The definition or meaning of "gentility," in a detailed manner, is discussed in probably the most original section of the BSA, the third book, "the book of coats of arms." The section begins with a statement that the book following will be on how to differentiate the "gentlemen" from the "ungentlemen."[175] Following this, the author declares that "bondage began first in angels and after succeeded in mankind," giving the layered social order a heavenly source, and indicating the supposed belief that "gentleness" and "ungentleness" existed since the beginning of time.[176]

The first section after the introduction begins with this: "how gentlemen shall be known from churls and how they first began. And how Noah divided the world in three parts to his three sons."[177] Interestingly, angels had the notions of "gentleness" and "ungentleness," but, as the author puts it, Adam and Eve had no mother or father, so there was no way to comment on their gentle status. Their children were those among which the "gentleman" and the "churl" would be first found. Cain would slay his brother, Abel, leading to his and his descendants' damnation as "churls," while Seth, another brother, and his descendants would rise to "gentleness." This short story is significant in summarizing the viewpoint of the author toward "gentility." Lineage was at the forefront in deciding one's status, but it was by no means a must. Besides, it did not protect one from the results of ungentle behavior: one could be of gentle birth, but it was possible to lose that "gentility" with "ungentle behavior," and one could obtain that status with gentle behavior. The following story clarifies this even more. According

[175] *BSA*, f. 45r.
[176] *BSA*, f. 45r.
[177] *BSA*, f. 45v.

to the story, Noah, naturally a descendant of Seth, had three children among which "gentleness" and "ungentleness" were to be found. One of the sons, Cham, disrespected and laughed at his father, demonstrating a clear sign of his ungentleness. In contrast, like a gentleman, Japheth reprieved his brother. Through his actions against his father, Cham became a churl. After that, Noah would divide the world between his three children, Cham getting the land of churls, Europe, Japheth getting the land of gentleman, Asia, and the third son, who is also a gentleman, getting the land of temperateness, Africa. Abraham, Moses, the other prophets, and most importantly, the gentleman Jesus were the descendants of gentleman Japheth.[178]

The following several sections are on the origin of the coat of arms. According to the story, Japheth made the first boat, and afterward, (…) two thousand and eighteen years before the incarnation of Christ, heraldry was made.[179] The first coat of arms, according to the story, was made during the siege of Troy, and it was the first beginning of the laws of arms which began before any law in the world. Subsequently, the author says that the law of arms was "founded upon the nine orders of angels in heaven crowned with nine diverse precious stones of diverse colors and virtues." The author then starts to describe each of these precious stones, all nine of them, in a detailed manner.[180] After that, she/he goes on to list several things such as colors for the coat of arms, stones, angels, and their order, all are in a way connected. Noble dignities of the regality are also listed: Gentleman, Squire, Knight, Baron, and Lord are all noble dignities, while Earl, Marquess, Duke, and Prince are excellent dignitaries.[181] It should be noted that the author here uses the term "noble" in a much broader definition, one of the possible

[178] *BSA*, f. 46r.
[179] *BSA*, f. 46r-46v.
[180] *BSA*, f. 46v-48r.
[181] *BSA*, f. 48v.

applications of the word covered in Chapter Two. Not only gentlemen, but others listed as "noble dignitaries" can definitely be considered as noble in their behavior, but they were not noble in any legal sense. One interesting aspect of this listing is the gentleman's appearance along with the knights and squires. Earlier in the century, there were some attempts by the Crown to define the gentleman more clearly, but it succeeded only to a degree. The list matching social status with the falcons at the end of the hawking treatise does not mention any gentleman either, probably because of its earlier sources.

Subsequent passages are essential in determining what is and is not perceived as convenient for the gentleperson. A passage on the virtues of chivalry states that the first virtue is "just in his best," cleanliness, having pity on the poor, being gracious to people, and being reverent and faithful to God.[182] The second is being wise in his battle, prudent in fighting and "knowing and having mind in his wittis." The third is not being slow in working, abstaining from overindulgence in regard to eating, and being thankful to God in case of a victory. The fourth one is to be firm and steadfast in governance. Interestingly, none of these traits are related to one's lineage or even material possessions. The following passage on the "articles of gentleness" has the same characteristics as well.[183] As stated in the passage, a gentleman should have a "lordly countenance" and speak temperately. He should also be wise in his answers, perfect in governance, and cheerful to faithfulness. Accordingly, "sovereign gentleness been this: few othes (outcry, clamor) in swearing, buxom to God's bidding, knowing his own birth in bearing, and to dread his sovereign to offend." These characteristics do not require a highly regarded pedigree, and all can be obtained after proper nurturing. After the

[182] *BSA*, f. 48v.
[183] *BSA*, f. 49r.

stories of Cain and Cham, who lost their gentleness by misgoverning their behavior, it increasingly becomes clear that the BSA regards gentility as more related to nurture and decent behavior. A small reference to one's birth comes at the end, as the fourth feature, but it seems that the author does not pay too much attention to it. All other features listed clearly refer to behavior and regard it as superior. The next section intensifies the stress on decent manners.[184] In this section, the author claims it is contrary to gentleness to be a sloth in work as well as being cowardly towards the enemy and being lustful. It is also advised to avoid drunkenness, slaying the prisoner, and lying to the sovereign.

One thing that catches the attention in these passages is the repetitive advice on not being lazy concerning working. Unlike the noblemen of Guillaume de Lorris and Chaucer, whose works were mentioned in Chapter Three, BSA strongly suggests abstaining from a life filled with leisure and laziness. Instead, gentlemen were expected to fight valiantly and work relentlessly. In this sense, it can be assumed that BSA did a reasonably good job at describing the restrictive but ambitious *zeitgeist* of English society. Most of the gentlemen in fifteenth-century England earned their position by working, trading, or fighting. One can assume that this position would be open to danger at any given time. It should be noted that while BSA suggests working hard, the primary goal of it was to instruct the reader on the respected pastimes of the time. Needless to say, hunting and hawking were expensive and time-consuming activities. In this manner, it resembles the advice that can be derived from "Wynnere and Wastoure" discussed in Chapter Three. A happy medium between the two would be ideal; after all, leisure is one of the cornerstones of aristocratic mentality.

The balance between leisure and labor certainly worked for a lot of people at the time.

[184] *BSA*, f. 49r.

As demonstrated, different avenues to better lives were enjoyed by a considerable number of people. Certainly, the author of BSA was aware of this. As the list goes:[185]

> Nine manner of gentlemen there been
> There is a gentleman of Ancestry and of blood
> And there is a gentleman of blood
> There is a Gentleman of Coat of Arms: and these be iii. one of the king's badge. Another of a lordship. And the third is of the killing of a Saracen.
> And there is a gentleman untried
> And there is a gentleman Apocryphal
> And there is a gentleman Spiritual
> There is also a gentleman spiritual and temporal and all these been more plainly declared in this book.

"Nine manners of gentlemen" is presumably linked to the "nine orders of angels" mentioned before in the same book. The author's clear acknowledgment of different versions of gentility reinforces even further the notion of the widespread existence of social mobility. The following section states that the "Gentleman of Ancestry" is a gentleman precisely due to his blood.[186] Accordingly, there should also be three "gentlemen of Coat of Arms and not of blood." First one is "gentleman of Coat of Arms of King's badge" which means acquiring the gentility by Coat of Arms given by a herald and could be referring to a "retainer" of the king; "Retainers" often wore a badge from their lords. A second form exists in the form of a bestowed "lordship to a yeoman (...) and to his heirs," and they are "not of blood." The last version is a "Christian yeoman" defeating a Saracen gentleman in battle and taking his coat of arms as his. According to the OED, the name Saracen, in the Late Middle Ages, was used to refer not only to Muslims but all infidels.[187] Maurice Keen states that a surprisingly large number of Englishmen fought against the Infidel in Spain, Prussia, and the Middle East at the end of the fourteenth century.[188] The Crusading era was fading away, Englishmen in the fifteenth century fought with the Saracen less and less, but certainly some did, and the

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[185] *BSA,* f. 50v.
[186] *BSA,* f. 51r.
[187] Oxford English Dictionary, ""Saracen, N. And Adj."., " n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/170917?redirectedFrom=saracen.
[188] Keen, *English Society,* 142.

notion of fighting against Saracens might have persisted. The last three were specifically noted as being "not of blood" and the last two of them were noted to be "yeoman." "Yeoman" could potentially refer to a wealthy peasant who might have a chance to rise in society with various means, but it seems BSA considers these "yeomen" in a military/heraldic context which may refer to "military yeomen" who were around since the fifteenth century at least. It is rather vague and hard to interpret but it is clear that one can become gentle by service to the Crown or a greater lord. The difference between "gentleman of ancestry and blood" and "gentleman of blood" are not elaborated either.

And then there is a "gentleman Spiritual" who is a member of the clergy. If a churl's son becomes a priest, the BSA claims, he would be only a "Gentleman Spiritual," but if a gentleman's son becomes a priest, he would be both "Gentleman Spiritual and Temporal." "Gentleman Untried," in this context, refers to the religious men as "priorys Abbottis or Bysshoppis," but it is not explained why these people were not grouped with "Gentleman Spiritual." It could potentially be referring to the inexperienced member of the clergy but becoming an abbot or a bishop would require a certain level of experience. The last group is called "in arms a Gentleman Apocryphal," and they were given the name and the livery of a gentleman, potentially referring to the lower-ranked soldiers dependent on higher-ranking nobles. Both "Untried" and "Apocryphal" were later referred to as "gentlemen be made of Gromis." According to OED, grooms can potentially refer to male servants of any kind.[189] In this sense, "Gentleman Untried" potentially refers to the servants of the clergy, while "Apocryphal" had a meaning closer to the actual use of the word, that is people who look after the horses, and it is quite

[189] Oxford English Dictionary, "'Groom, N.1'.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81719?rskey=8FwgJ7&result=1&isAdvanced=false.

close to the original function of esquires. Presumably, both groups had lived where a gentle culture could be observed, and potentially found opportunities to prove their worth.

The final book of the BSA is the blazing of arms, and is written in English, French, and Latin. As stated in Chapter One, this section is highly influenced by Nicholas Upton's work *De studio militari* that was written in 1446. It was intended to "rehearse all the signs that are born in arms," such as a dragon, a dolphin, and most worthy of all, a cross.[190] It describes the different kinds of arms, their meaning, and their importance for pages. With its details and colorful images, this section is interesting, but there is no need for a detailed description and discussion. It differs in terms of subject matter from the first two treatises, but the nature of the section is apparently similar to them. The accuracy of the descriptions made by the author is too large of a topic to cover in this thesis, but, presumably, it helped some of the gentle families who later obtained the right to bear a coat of arms.

Fifteenth-century England was already witnessing an acceleration in the expansion and evolution of the armorial officials. The office of arms, that of the heralds, became increasingly professional and organized during the reign of Henry V, though certainly there was already an informal tradition to begin with. By the time BSA was printed, heraldic tradition was already recognized by Richard III (1483-5) in 1484.[191] The growing importance of heraldry and the officers of arms can be attributed to the threatened position of the aristocracy due to the reasons explained in Chapter Two.[192]

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[190] *BSA,* f. 57r.
[191] Jackson W. Armstrong, "The Development of the Office of Arms in England, C.1413–1485," in *The Herald in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Katie Stevenson (Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 10-11.
[192] See also Chapter Three, Heraldry.

As mentioned in the same chapter, attempts aimed at controlling the lower echelons who eagerly sought social mobility, and the growing position of the Crown certainly led to more strictly defined social boundaries, though these boundaries were very often violated. Witnessing the society she/he lives in, "there are four wise manners to have coats of arms" claims the author at the last pages of the book. The first one is our own arms which we bear from our fathers, mothers and predecessors. The second one is by our merits, and according to the author, the Battle of Poitiers witnessed the addition of so many coats of arms of France to England that a poor archer could take a prince or a noble lord and take his coats of arms too. The third manner of having a coat of arms is by the granting of a prince, or a lord which, according to the author, receives no question. And the fourth manner to have coats of arms is by our own proper authority since "any men are made nobles by their grace, labor or desiring."[193] It is interesting to see that in *Liber Armorum*, one was to become a gentleman by "killing of a Saracen" but here it is clearly the French they killed. Also, there is no reference to "yeomen" in this section, complicating the matter even further. At the least, the author's clear recognition of coats of arms earned by labor, grace or merit could help in detecting a certain level of social mobility.

Before concluding this chapter, the treatise added by de Worde should be mentioned, namely "Fishing with an Angle." Like the rest of them, this treatise is filled with technical details on fishing ranging from making a rod to different types of fish and their qualities. The author claims that s/he does not like hawking, hunting, or wildfowling because they are too exhausting to be enjoyable.[194] Before that, however, three cures for a man's soul are given, if ever he does not have any leech or medicine.[195]

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[193] *BSA,* f. 88v-89r.
[194] *A Treatyse of Fysshynge Wyth an Angle,* f. 2r.
[195] Leech is a bloodsucking worm used as a treatment. See. Oxford English Dictionary,

The first and the third cures are the merry thoughts and a reasonable diet, attributes of a gentleman suggested by BSA. The second one is particularly interesting in this context because its advice is to "labor, but not excessively," much like the proposed medium between leisure and working. Warnings are made after long pages of technical details, and they almost perfectly resonate with the rest of the book. Accordingly, one should never fish in a "poor man's" private water or break another man's traps. One should never be greedy and take too much game; because someone "may easily do (take too much game) by following this treatise," and one should never fish to save money or profit, only for entertainment.[196]

4.3. Conclusion

The principal purpose of BSA seems to be clear: men could become "gentleman" by education although the author does not precisely or openly define what a "gentleman" is. This message would appeal to the interest of those who would like to become part of the world of gentle customs and manners. In this sense, BSA goes further than expected in defining the boundaries of gentility, even including the smallest actors in its assessment. This assessment, by all means, is a correct one, and in line with the definition made in Chapter Two. Medieval England was, without a doubt, a layered and hierarchical society. However, room for advancement was always present, even more so in late medieval England. It is fair to assume that the paths towards gentility were plenty, yet it is hard to be precise on that matter by looking only at BSA. Warfare seemed to help a lot of people and the Church was surely another logical route. However, in general, competence in various matters, from hunting to being able to conduct a proper conversion, all of which could be obtained from a proper education,

"Leech, N.2.," n.d., https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/106917.

[196] *A Treatyse of Fysshynge Wyth an Angle,* f. 12v-13r.

seems to have been the underlying cause.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

"Many men are made nobles by their grace, labor or desiring," exclaims the compiler of BSA, and adds "as well as by their prudence, and by their strength, and by their cunning."[197] This is actually a perfect summary of what has been said so far. Indeed, many men made their fortunes by utilizing the opportunities that late medieval life had presented them. In this sense, England had never been a land of fixed identities. There were, and there had been, opportunities for people with enough talent and luck to advance in society. Going from the bottom to a decent position would indeed take generations, perhaps excluding exceptional cases, but this is an attribute that medieval society shares with the modern world.

To uncover the BSA's mysteries, its source material was examined in Chapter One. The most important result of that examination is that, in terms of their sources, the treatises originally were not meant for a wide audience. They were about the concerns and interests of a lucky minority who belonged to the most powerful section of society. It should be noted that books were relatively expensive, and the activities described in the BSA were not cheap either. However, BSA in its printed forms addressed a considerably wider audience. Perhaps it is no coincidence that BSA was produced and became popular at a time when relatively cheap and mass-produced books were a possibility. In this sense, both the original compiler and Wynkyn de Worde knew what they were doing: bringing together diverse topics that attracted a growing section of society, who were waiting as eager consumers.

[197] *BSA,* f. 89r. This statement is made in the context of the acquisition of coats of arms.

Chapter Two is dedicated to identifying these “eager consumers” and their place in English society. Indeed, many were socially mobile people seeking to understand a world they had, or wished to, become part of. As BSA refers to them, gentlemen were plenty, and becoming a part of this group had few or no preconditions. It was not a fixed social or legal status that the lower classes could not assume. Rather, it would manifest itself in the manners of a person. With enough funds, a person could imitate a life of gentility and thus pass as “gentle”. There had always been social mobility in England, but the proportion of socially mobile people was noticeably greater in the fifteenth century. As a result, a more intricate aristocratic culture would emerge.

Chapter Three is dedicated to the analysis of this intricate aristocratic culture. It was born out of the courts of kings and great lords and slowly became the culture of a considerably large section of society who would call themselves gentlemen. Military prowess, though not as important as it had been, was and remained an essential part of the courtly mentality. It would undergo certain modifications and be reshaped to serve a better purpose, but by the fifteenth century, the talents of a man on the battlefield were still noteworthy. Another aspect was the growing interest in coats of arms. The development of heraldry was a gradual process, but towards the end of the fifteenth century, it gained a more official outlook. This, however, would not limit people in attaining coats of arms. The practice itself was already relatively inclusive, since coats of arms could be inherited more easily than land. Moreover, if you met the preconditions of gentility, which were, informally, relative wealth and proper manners, you could always forge a pedigree that would lead to obtaining a coat of arms. Luxury and recreation were as important as other elements, but it seems people had questions regarding their logic and morality. Indulging in worldly pleasures could be seen as a sin by the Church, but it could also be financially ruinous for many people. Of course, lay

members of society were quite capable of criticizing churchmen on the subject of worldly pleasures too. Perhaps a more modest version was preferred by the gentlemen who could not enjoy the extravagance of the high nobility but could in certain ways imitate it. And finally, etiquette was a perfect tool for someone aspiring to a better status. In this sense, the word etiquette would refer to a range of social and cultural skills, from one's table manners to knowledge of the proper terminology used in hunting. Courtesy books could help a variety of people far wider than one might expect to learn etiquette. The court was more or less limited to a group of lucky individuals, but its culture and mentality would be endorsed by many more people who would gladly call themselves gentlemen.

So, all considered, there is a lot that can be learned from BSA. The first treatise is surely interesting with its vivid descriptions of different birds, but perhaps the most important thing was the list that was placed right at the end of the chapter. This list clearly states that many ranks of people, even a "poor man," could potentially practice the most noble sport of the time. It is, after all, a world where "manners maketh man." So, where everyone could participate in the noblest sport, then one really should know the proper terminology in order to be able to distinguish oneself from the crowd. This was certainly one of the functions of the first book. The second book, and the subsequent section, described as having some attributes of a "commonplace book" in Chapter Four, serves much the same purpose for the reader. Both of the first two treatises, and the commonplace book" give information one might find useful in social life. There is actual practical information on hunting and hawking, but certainly the more important purpose was to give people a sense of cultural engagement. People would utilize this information to socialize, whether actually at a hunt or not.

The next book is interesting since it provides the reader with the manners of gentlemen and knights, with their different attributes, and finally, with the different ways a person could become a gentleman. These attributes could potentially be obtained by individuals from a large section of society who are not originally from gentle families. It is clear that one's gentility was more related to nurture and required decent behavior. BSA portrays a society where people are quite able to seek ways to improve their lives. This is in contrast to the popular view in modern times of medieval European society where people were divided by strictly defined boundaries that determined their fate from birth. In this sense, BSA was a guidebook for those people who wished to improve their standing in society and needed to educate themselves on the manners and customs of a world that they had just entered or were soon to do so.

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