**Syon Abbey and Prophetic Polity: Bridget of Sweden at Agincourt**

Mekil is Ynglan i-hold to pray for Kyng Herre,
That so worthele our worship in eueroche place,
Both in Fraunce, and in Breten, and in Normandy,
That oure faders had lost before, he get a3ayn be grace,
And more-ouer speciali
To make soche a house of religioun,
And to preueleche ther-to that gracious pardon,
Al Ynglond to haue remyssioune;
Now Crist on his soule haue merce.

- John Audelay

In *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England*, Helen Coote discusses the role that Bridget of Sweden’s *Revelations coelestis* played in the political landscape of 15th-century England. Copies of Bridget’s prophetic visions were available in England by 1400, and, particularly Book IV—the section pertaining to the political situation between France and England—was included in a number of *florilegia* and *compendia* of prophetic manuscripts commissioned by the Lancastrian regime. Coote remarks that Henry V “was capable of reading, understanding, and interpreting Bridget politically, but whether he actually *did* this is a question which cannot be answered conclusively.” Her historical sensibility precludes a leap from textual evidence to hermeneutics and political action.

This paper will investigate the ways in which Syon Abbey’s foundation and subsequent role in the religio-political landscape of the Late Medieval period give evidence for a direct link between Bridget’s *Revelations*, the foundation of Syon Abbey, and the *casus belli* for Henry V’s invasion of Harfleur and attack on Avignon in 1415. Central to this thesis is the politically motivated composition of Thomas Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*, John Audelay’s poem on Syon quoted above and, to a lesser extent, Margery Kempe’s account of her visit at the end of her *Book*, among others. I argue for an alternative to the accepted narrative for the foundation of Syon—that Henry V’s remorse for his father’s murder of Richard II and the subsequent need to justify the Lancastrian regime *within* England was its primary motivation—an insular and backward-looking cause.

Instead, Syon should be read in juxtaposition to political and civic institutions as a space of identify-formation and authorization concerned with futurity and international polity: its existence was the fulfilment of Bridget’s political vision, it looked forward to the unification of France and England, and called for the populace to enact this civil identity through acts of communal penance and pilgrimage.

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2 These include but are not limited to: Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 623 (1465), Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.iv.25 (second half of fifteenth century), and Oxford, MS Hatton 56 (1453).

3 *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England*, (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 171. To add just a tiny bit more weight to the refutation of Coote’s argument, I would like to point out that, after winning at Agincourt, Henry dedicated his victory to John of Bridlington, author of a series of political prophecies that often appear with Bridget’s Revelations in *florilegia*. 