Introduction

Scholars have long recognized *A Mirror for Magistrates* as one of the most widely read and influential works of English poetry of the entire Tudor and Jacobean periods. For more than sixty years, this collection of tragic verse narratives spoken in the voices of ghosts from Britain's past remained almost constantly in print, appearing in numerous ever-expanding editions between 1559 and 1610 and in several reissues of earlier editions between 1575 and 1621. Its poems' style and subject matter inspired a host of early modern authors, including such figures as William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, and Michael Drayton. In addition, it led numerous poets not connected with the original group of *Mirror* contributors to try their own hands at tragic verse narratives in the *Mirror* tradition. A number of these poems were added to the earliest gatherings of *Mirror* tragedies in new editions of the text, swelling the number of *Mirror* poems from nineteen in 1559 to ninety-one by 1610. Few Tudor works inspired such adulation and emulation as *A Mirror for Magistrates*; the full extent of its appeal to and influence on early modern readers remains still to be assessed.[1]

The Origins of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, 1554–*c.* 1556

The work that would become *A Mirror for Magistrates* began its life in 1554 under the title *A Memorial of Such Princes, as since the time of King Richard the Second have been unfortunate in the realm of England.* The text was an unlikely collaboration between a religiously conservative (and soon to be openly Catholic) printer John Wayland (d. *c.* 1571–3) and his evangelical Protestant employee William Baldwin (1526/7–1563). In the reign of England's reformist monarch Edward VI (1547–1553), William Baldwin had worked in the print shop of Edward Whitchurch, perhaps the most prolific printer of Reformation texts in England. King Edward died in 1553, however, and he was succeeded by his Catholic sister Mary I (1553–1558), whose new government was hostile to the activities of those who had

advanced religious reform under her brother. In the months after Mary's accession, many evangelical printers thus either voluntarily left their trade or were removed from it. Among the latter group was Whitchurch. While it allowed Whitchurch to maintain ownership of his printing house, Mary's government forced him to accept a new man, John Wayland, as his shop's overseer. Wayland took control of Whitchurch's employees and presses for a specific purpose: to use them to print a new, ultimately Catholic version of the church's most popular book of private devotion, the English primer.[2]

Wayland received permission to print the Marian primer in October 1553, and he installed himself in Whitchurch's shop in the months thereafter. Unfortunately, church leaders had not yet agreed on a text for this revised devotional manual, and Wayland had no sense of when that decision might be made. Therefore, to bring in money and to keep his print servants employed while he waited, he decided to release new editions of venerable literary works from England's past. The first text to which he turned was Stephen Hawes's *Pastime of Pleasure* (1509), which came off his presses in June 1554; as the *Pastime* was being prepared, he determined to follow this publication with a new printing of John Lydgate's *The Fall of Princes* (*c.* 1431–7), a massive poetic work which recounts in voluminous detail the downfalls of historical figures stretching from Adam and Eve to King John II of France (d. 1364).

To make his edition of *The Fall* more appealing to contemporary readers, Wayland commissioned a supplement to the poem, one which would continue Lydgate's narrative plan of recording in verse the falls of famous men and women (a genre scholars have termed *de casibus* tragedy), but which would focus solely on fallen English, Scottish, and Welsh figures of the previous two centuries. Wayland assigned this project to Baldwin, who during his time with Whitchurch had become both an expert printer and a celebrated author. Reluctant to take on the task alone, Baldwin gathered seven 'learned men' to assist him.[3] Evidence suggests that this group of contributors initially met sometime between 20 April and 21 May 1554. Reading through copies of two Tudor chronicles, Robert Fabyan's *Fabyan's Chronicle* (first printed in 1516) and Edward Hall's *Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (first printed in 1548), the men planned a series of individual poems, each telling the story of a British figure who endured tragedy sometime after the narratives included in Lydgate's *Fall* ended, in the mid fourteenth century.[4]

While they used the *Fall* as their general literary model, the *Memorial* poets modified Lydgate's style of recording his historical tragedies. In composing his poem, Lydgate had offered chiefly a paraphrase of his prose

source, Giovanni Boccaccio's *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* (*Concerning the Falls of Illustrious Men*) (1355–74), which Lydgate knew through a French translation (Laurence de Premierfait's *De Cas de Noble Hommes et Femmes* (1400–9)). In his text, Boccaccio had presented the ghosts of famous figures from the past as coming before him to tell their woeful tales. Lydgate, by contrast, in most cases only summarized in his own voice how the ghosts interacted with Boccaccio (or 'Bochas', as Lydgate called him). The *Memorial* authors chose to replace Lydgate's paraphrastic presentation with a more dramatic one, in which each spirit would rise before William Baldwin to narrate his own tragic verse narrative himself. The result was a poetic form of immediate and often intense emotional power, which invited readers to imagine hearing the actual voices of some of the most famous men of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Britain relating in tones of personal grief, regret, or outrage the course of their lives and the events that led to their tragic ends.

The poets spent the summer of 1554 composing their historical verse tragedies, and they met at least once more in late August or early September to share with each other the poems they had created.[5] Baldwin evidently took notes at both the initial gathering and at this later one, and he then combined his records of the two meetings into a fictionalized running prose narrative that provided means of transition between the various tragedies of *A Memorial of Such Princes*. For the prose links, Baldwin created the fiction that the *Memorial* contributors all gathered on a single evening, in which they read accounts from the chronicles and, in a burst of extemporaneous inspiration, immediately composed poems in the voices of the fallen subjects they found most worthy of comment. The result was a prose frame for the collection unique in English literature of the time, one that purported to share with readers a record of the authors' actual comments on their own and others' contributions, as well as their thoughts on a wide range of other topics related to the poems' contents.

After arranging the collection into a form suitable for printing, Baldwin took the *Memorial* to Wayland's shop and had it printed at the end of the new *Fall of Princes* edition. Unfortunately, someone in Wayland's shop (most likely Wayland himself) detected controversial matter in the *Memorial* poems and brought the newly printed work to Mary I's lord chancellor, Stephen Gardiner, for review. Gardiner found enough of the contents of the *Memorial* objectionable to order the entire work suppressed before publication. The *Memorial* was never allowed to appear in Mary's reign, and most of its pages were simply scrapped. As a result, copies of only a single leaf of text and two title pages relating to the 1554
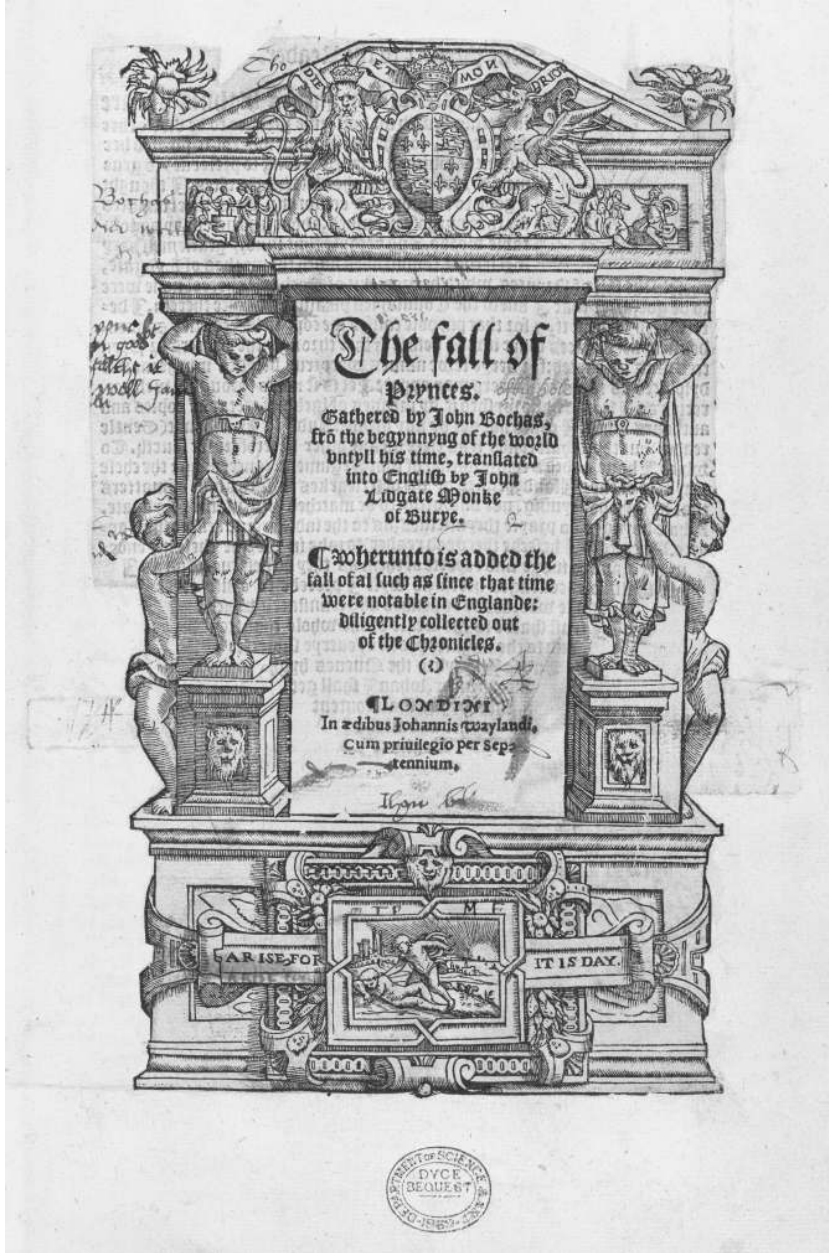
1. Title page of the prohibited *Fall of Princes-Memorial of Such Princes* volume (London, John Wayland, [1554]; STC 3177.5). © Victoria and Albert Museum. Reproduced by permission.

Memorial now survive (see Illustrations 1 and 2). Although his methods were harsh, Gardiner's suspicions were not in fact unfounded, for some of the *Memorial* indeed contained controversial political content, including assertions of the right to actively oppose unjust rulers and elements that could be read as composed to admonish and/or allusively indict some of the chief rulers of the Marian regime.[6]

Despite the government's suppression of the 1554 *Memorial*, Baldwin remained determined to publish some sort of *de casibus* tragedy collection in the 1550s. To that end, in about late 1555 or early 1556 he commissioned new poems in the style of the original *Memorial* contributions. Whereas the original *Memorial* had sought to present the ghosts of figures from Richard II's reign (1377–1399) to that of Edward IV (1461–1483), Baldwin's new gathering of tragedies, informally called the 'Second Part' of the *Memorial*, would recount the falls of men and women who suffered under Edward V and Richard III (1483–1485). Baldwin received several poems for this collection, and he acquired as well George Ferrers's tragedy 'Edmund Duke of Somerset', which belonged with the original set of *Memorial* tragedies, and at least part of Humphrey Cavell's 'Blacksmith', which was intended for a planned third volume of tragedies covering the falls of Tudor subjects. Now wiser with experience, Baldwin took the precaution of presenting his *de casibus* tragedy idea to members of Queen Mary's privy council before attempting to put his collection into print. Unfortunately for Baldwin, Mary's officers forbade the publication of this second literary attempt, despite its relative lack of controversial political content, just as Chancellor Gardiner had prohibited the first one. It would not be until Elizabeth's reign that any of the Marian poems Baldwin had collected could see publication.[7]

A Mirror for Magistrates, 1559

The death of Mary I in November 1558 finally allowed Baldwin the opportunity to guide *A Memorial of Such Princes* into print. Through the assistance of his fellow *Memorial* contributor Lord Henry Stafford, Baldwin received in early 1559 a licence from the Elizabethan regime to release *A Memorial of Such Princes*, now lightly re-edited and retitled *A Mirror for Magistrates* (see Illustration 3). In a newly composed dedication 'to the nobility and all other in office', Baldwin no longer presented his collection as a supplement to Lydgate's *Fall* but as an admonitory 'mirror' designed specifically to dissuade England's highest officers from the sort of political misbehaviour its tragedies portray. 'For here as in a looking glass,' Baldwin told England's rulers in his dedication, 'you shall see (if any vice
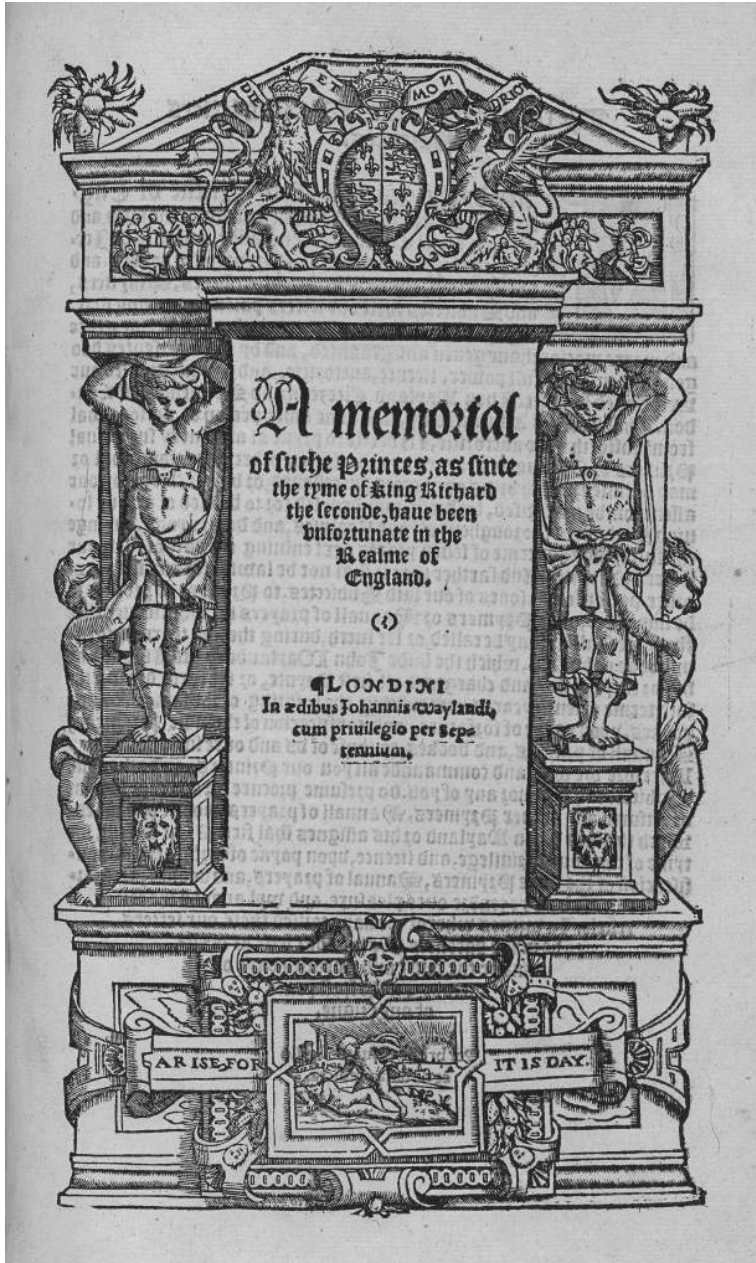
2. Internal title page of the suppressed *A Memorial of Such Princes* (London, John Wayland, [1554]; STC 1246), sig. [GG4r]. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike 4.0 International Licence.

3. Title Page of *A Mirror for Magistrates* (London, Thomas Marshe, 1559; STC 1247).
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be in you) how the like hath been punished in other heretofore; whereby admonished, I trust it will be a good occasion to move you to the sooner amendment. This is the chiefest end why it was set forth, which God grant it may attain.'

While Baldwin made the politically admonitory purpose of many of his collection's poems clear, one *Memorial* tragedy evidently remained too controversial to publish, even in the wake of Mary I's death. This was George Ferrers's poem 'Good Duke Humphrey Murdered and Eleanor Cobham his Wife Banished', which appeared in the table of contents of the 1559 *Mirror* but not in the text itself (see Appendix 1). That poem, eventually revised and split into two separate tragedies, did not come before the public until 1578 (see Tragedy 28 and Tragedy 29, as well as their associated prose links).[8]

A Mirror for Magistrates, 1563

In the early 1560s, Stafford encouraged Baldwin to publish the poems he had gathered in or around 1556 for his unpublished 'Second Part' of *A Memorial of Such Princes*. At some point in this project, Baldwin decided not merely to print his manuscript of Marian *de casibus* tragedies and prose links but to revise it, adding new, Elizabethan creations composed by himself and others to augment and, it seems likely, in some cases to replace the poems he had received years ago.

Baldwin was still at work on his new *Mirror for Magistrates* project when he passed away suddenly in September 1563. Left with only a partially revised manuscript, *Mirror* printer Thomas Marshe released what he had, combining Baldwin's partly revised Elizabethan manuscript with the remaining original material from the Marian collection. This additional material contained eight new poems that were on the whole much longer than the original works gathered for the *Memorial*. Among those works were George Ferrers's 'Edmund Duke of Somerset', which Ferrers had intended for the original *Memorial* but did not finish in time, and the poem 'Blacksmith', which would likely have been saved for a planned third volume of *Mirror* tragedies. Also included in this edition were two poems that were to help to ensure the enduring success of *A Mirror for Magistrates* for decades to come: Thomas Churchyard's oft-imitated 'Shore's Wife' and Thomas Sackville's lengthy tour de force of flowing verse, classical allusion, and high tragic emotion, 'The Induction and Complaint of Henry Duke of Buckingham'.

A Mirror for Magistrates, 1571–1621

William Baldwin did not live to see the full success of his long-troubled *de casibus* tragedy collection. Such was the enduring popularity of his work that a third edition of the *Mirror* appeared in 1571, which revised and in some cases rearranged several of the poems and prose pieces in the collection. Unlike the edition of 1563, this offering mentioned Humphrey Duke of Gloucester and Eleanor Cobham in its table of contents, but it now presented what had been described as a single poem in the 1559 edition as two different texts, one in each of the voices of the fallen pair. Despite this listing, neither Humphrey's nor Eleanor's tragedy appeared in the edition itself.

A fourth offering of the *Mirror* appeared in 1574, with a companion volume of tragedies by the poet John Higgins – not a member of Baldwin's original gathering of contributors – presenting fallen men and women of Britain's mythic past.[9] The 1574 text was reissued in a new printing of 1575, followed by a fifth edition of Baldwin's work in 1578. It was in the first released version of the 1578 *Mirror* that a poem in the voice of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, finally appeared. Sometime after this edition was published, the printer Marshe added as a cancel to unsold copies a new poem in the voice of Eleanor Cobham. With both Gloucester's and Cobham's poems now published, all the poems originally compiled for *A Memorial of Such Princes* in 1554 were finally, at least in some form, in print. Many questions, however, still remain concerning the poems 'Gloucester' and 'Eleanor Cobham' and their precise relation to Ferrers's original hybrid 'Gloucester–Cobham' tragedy included in the suppressed *Memorial* text.[10]

In 1587 yet another edition of the *Mirror* appeared, this one combining Baldwin's gathered poems with those of John Higgins, as well as adding new poems by various hands, including a tragedy by Thomas Churchyard in the voice of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey (d. 1530). In 1610 the seventh and final edition of the *Mirror* came before the public, conjoining Baldwin's and Higgins's editions with poems by one Thomas Blenerhasset, who in 1578 had released an independent collection of *de casibus* tragedies titled *The Second Part of the Mirror for Magistrates.* The editor of the 1610 edition, Richard Niccols, added a new induction to the work and several tragedies of his own, and he removed all the prose links of the previous editions. Niccols's offering of this now fifty-year-old text was the last in the early modern period. Copies of this edition were reissued in 1619, 1620, and 1621 and thereafter the text ended its six decades before the eyes of early modern readers. Despite its troubled beginning, few literary texts in early

modern England proved themselves to be as long-lived, earnestly admired, and widely influential as William Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrates*.

Known Authors of Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrates* (1559 and 1563 Editions)

Although the titles of twenty poems appear in the table of contents of the 1559 *Mirror for Magistrates*, only nineteen are actually included in the text itself. Of those nineteen, eight are credited to three particular authors, while a single surviving leaf of the suppressed 1554 edition identifies Sir Thomas Chaloner as the author of the poem 'Richard II'. Ten tragedies in the 1559 *Mirror* are anonymous, though evidence points to Henry, tenth Baron Stafford, as the author of one of them. By contrast, the 1563 edition clearly identifies by last name each of the authors of the eight poems added to it, though more than one hand evidently took part in at least one of the tragedies, namely Tragedy 27, 'The Blacksmith'. The known authors of Baldwin's *A Mirror for Magistrates* are as follows.

Authors of the 1559 Mirror for Magistrates

WILLIAM BALDWIN (author of at least Tragedies 4, 6, 8, 13, 18, 20, 23, and perhaps others, as well as creator of all the prose sections of the text) William Baldwin, the compiler, editor, and chief contributor to the first two editions of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, was born in London sometime between 15 January 1526 and 14 January 1527.[11] Nothing certain is known of his life before the year 1547, when he published his earliest extant work, a commendatory sonnet attached to a medical text printed by Edward Whitchurch (Baldwin's is the first sonnet known to have been printed in England). Baldwin's next work, a collection of wise sayings attributed to ancient thinkers titled *A Treatise of Moral Philosophy* (January 1548), was an immediate and lasting success, going through four editions in Edward VI's reign and a remarkable twenty over the course of the succeeding 100 years. In 1549 Baldwin followed his *Treatise* with a metrical paraphrase of the Song of Songs, *The Canticles or Ballads of Solomon*. Baldwin printed this work himself in the shop of Edward Whitchurch.

In the 1550s Baldwin's writings became more controversial. Near the opening of the decade Baldwin released anonymously his translation of Pier Paolo Vergerio's scabrous anti-papal satire *Wonderful News of the Death of Paul III*, and he likely took part, as the pseudonymous 'Western Wyll', in the 1551 public flyting (exchange of poetic invective) occasioned by future