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Ways of Reading and Framing Collection
in Late Medieval England

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in English

by

Emily Christina Runde

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Ways of Reading and Framing Collection
in Late Medieval England

by

Emily Christina Runde

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Matthew N. Fisher, Co-Chair

Professor Donka Minkova Stockwell, Co-Chair

Medieval literary and intellectual culture intertwined ideas of reading with ideas of collection. Many surviving manuscripts bear witness to accretive and aggregative approaches to text. Medieval writers in Latin, French, and Middle English, in sophisticated theological texts and casual household books, characterize reading itself as a process of collection. This under-considered trope surfaces in vernacular literary collections, whether housed in manuscripts or textual frameworks. Such assemblages bear witness to the eager transmission and consumption of their collected contents even as they enact visual and textual interventions that condition their reception. My dissertation investigates the ways in which collections of texts self-consciously encode the processes of reading and of textual gathering and arrangement. Text collections—a term that ought

to be applied to manuscripts as well as individual texts—shape a range of intellectual and morally-inflected activities encompassing consumption, reflection, and transformation. In doing so, they reveal how lay vernacular reading practices were theorized, prescribed, and performed.

The first part of the dissertation examines reading as a concept in the Middle Ages. I assess how Latin and vernacular treatises on reading and compilation metaphorically articulate the act of reading as a range of dynamic assimilative and generative processes, including assembly and extraction, summarizing and ordinating. These discourses of compilation argue for a fundamentally integrated understanding of processes of reading and processes of collection and textual production. The second part of the dissertation explores the resonances of these metaphorical expressions and the processes they represent in English medieval vernacular literary production, with a particular focus on the Middle English *Seven Sages of Rome* and two manuscripts in which it was copied: Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Adv. 19.2.1 (Auchinleck) and Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354. These and other text collections render processes of reading, of collection, and of textual production visible and penetrable, fixing upon the page the reading mind's engagement with text. Textual framing devices—from brief headings to elaborate narratives—ventriloquize the guidance of compiling encyclopedists and spiritual advisors or the visions of dreamers and tale-tellers. Along with the material interventions of the physical framers of these texts—the compilers, the scribes, the illuminators—they work as textual intermediaries, conditioning not only what was read as collection, but also articulating how these texts might be read and interpreted well.

The dissertation of Emily Christina Runde is approved.

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2014

For my parents, my earliest guides through a multitude of books.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
CUL	Cambridge University Library
ECCO	Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale, 2008. http://find.galegroup.com/ecco .
EEBO	Early English Books Online. ProQuest, 2003-2014. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home .
EETS	Early English Text Society (o.s., Original Series; e.s., Extra Series)
<i>LALME</i>	<i>A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English</i> . Edited by Angus McIntosh, M. L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin with the assistance of Margaret Laing and Keith Williamson. 4 vols. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986.
Lewis and Short	Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds. <i>A Latin Dictionary</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879. Cited from the <i>Perseus Digital Library</i> , last accessed 30 November 2014. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper .
<i>MED</i>	<i>The Middle English Dictionary</i> . Edited by Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn, and Robert E. Lewis. 17 vols. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1954-2001. Cited from the online <i>Middle English Dictionary</i> , last updated 24 April 2013. http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med .
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> . 60 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Cited from the online <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , last updated September 2014. http://www.oxforddnb.com .
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> . Edited by J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1844-1865. Cited from the <i>Patrologia Latina Database</i> . ProQuest, 1996-2014. http://pld.chadwyck.com .
<i>STC</i>	<i>A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640</i> . Compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Revised and enlarged, begun by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976-1991.

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- “Sages *In Situ*: Representations of Reception in *Seven Sages of Rome* and its Medieval English Manuscripts.” The Dynamics of the Medieval Manuscript Conference. April 2013.
- “Sense and Insensibility: Trials of Interpretation in *The Seven Sages of Rome*.” 7th Oxford Medieval Graduate Conference. April 2011.
- “Rodolfus of Saint-Vaast and the Spiritual Valuation of Monastic Book Production.” Authority and the Book in Medieval Culture – 26th Annual New England Medieval Studies Consortium Graduate Student Conference. April 2009.
- “Scribal Orthography and Dialect in the Auchinleck Manuscript, Revised.” Sixth International Congress on Middle English. July 2008.
- “Reading Between the Lions: Interpreting Ambiguity in *Le chevalier au lion*.” General Session at the 43rd International Congress on Medieval Studies. May 2008.
- “Scribal Orthography and Dialect in the Auchinleck Manuscript.” *Studies in the History of the English Language* 5. October 2007.
- “Gawain and the ‘Wylsum Way’: Revelatory Wilderness in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.” General Session at the 42nd International Congress on Medieval Studies. May 2007.

INTRODUCTION

TEXT COLLECTIONS AND THE STAKES OF READING WELL IN THE VERNACULAR

The Middle English poem *Of Arthour and of Merlin* opens with a preface addressing its author's use of English, notable at the time of its earliest extant copying in the early fourteenth-century Auchinleck manuscript. Most of the preface's specifically linguistic remarks are fairly commonplace in prefaces of the time:

Auauntages þai hauen þare
Freynsch ʒ Latin eueraywhare.
Of Freynsch no Latin nil y tel more,
Ac on I[n]glisch ichil tel þefore.
Riȝt is þat I[n]glische vnderstond
Þat was born in Inglond.
Freynsche vse þis gentil man
Ac euerich Inglische Inglische can.¹

In this formulation, English is emphatically not the language of privilege, nor is it, the author implies, the language in which texts conferring *auauntages* were likely to be written. This preface frames the choice of English as an inclusive move, meant to render “auauntages accessible to euerich Inglische rather than merely to þis gentil man.” While this gesture towards inclusivity may appear less than entirely effective issuing as it does in an expensive manuscript and from a time and a place in which literacy and textual accessibility were far from universal, it performs a significant rhetorical function in this passage, asserting a claim to potential, if not actual, access to the *auauntages* that reading confers.

¹ *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, lines 17-24. This and the subsequent reference to the Auchinleck *Arthour and Merlin* are my transcriptions. See also “Of Arthour & of Merlin,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/arthur.html>.

As the lines above suggest, this passage upholds a valuation of reading that transcends the particularities of language. The lines directly preceding these elaborate upon the nature of the *auauntages* conferred by textual access:

Childer þat ben to boke ysett
In age hem is miche þe bett
For þai mo witen ȝ se
Miche of Godes priuete
Hem to kepe ȝ to ware
Fram sinne ȝ fram warldes care,
ȝ wele ysen ȝif þai willen
Þat hem no þarf neuer spillen.²

What emerges immediately from this passage is the centrality of book-based learning to the *auauntages* so often restricted to readers of French and Latin. Taken as a whole, then, this preface frames the choice of English as a means of promoting a specifically pedagogical inclusivity. Education that entails being *to boke ysett*—that involves pursuing, in other words, a systematic program of reading—affords a means of protection, of warding off the spiritual ills of sin and the material ills of need and suffering. As articulated here, this protection depends on the capacity of such reading to offer its practitioners a means of perceiving (*se*) and comprehending (*witen*) knowledge of *Godes priuete*, God’s sacred mysteries. This *priuete* essentially furnishes guidance, a means of steering a wise and ethical course through life. This preface predicates its Englishness upon a teleology of reading intrinsic to education, but not to the language in which such education takes place. It implies that access matters, that the Englishness of its accompanying text—and, by extension, other texts—answers a perceived *moral* need for reading material in the vernacular.

² Arthur and Merlin, lines 9-16.

We might struggle to explain why a popular account of Merlin's and Arthur's origins and exploits supplies the occasion for staking such an ambitious and ethically freighted claim—surely this is not a text to which a medieval reader of any language would turn seeking *Godes priuete!*—but the impenetrability of this juxtaposition is revealing in and of itself. For all that this preface delivers a resounding endorsement of reading's ethical potential and English's inclusivity, it sheds little light on how or why the accompanying text would have been read or where, if not here, a lay reader of English might turn to be *to boke ysett*. Like many contemporary English prefaces it offers plentiful rhetorical assertions of the accessibility and even the potential utility of English texts, but it leaves a great deal unsaid. How did medieval lay people read vernacular texts? How did they *think* about the ways in which they read? And what did it mean for them to read well in a vernacular context?

Taking up these questions in this dissertation, I premise my inquiries on the centrality of collection to medieval reading experience. For medieval readers and thinkers, collections offered a way of talking about reading and an opportunity for thinking about it. As a physical process with a physical outcome, collection shaped the formal organization of manuscripts and texts. As a concept grounded in these physical instantiations, collection provided a means of articulating the implications of textual selection and arrangement, whether this selection and arrangement took place within the mind of a reader or inscribed upon a manuscript page. My project exposes the potent convergences of these two dimensions of collection, first as they figure in medieval intellectual discourses of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and then in their codicological and

textual realizations in English manuscript witnesses. These vernacular collections furnish sites at which their framers mediated and encoded reading practice and probed the stakes of reading well.

I use the term ‘collection’ deliberately in referring to these manuscripts. One of a constellation of terms with which scholars indicate the multitextuality of medieval codices and medieval texts, as well as the processes through which such multitexts would have come into being, ‘collection’ has the immediate virtue of relative clarity without undue specificity. Unlike the overused and diversely connotative ‘miscellany,’ often the word of choice when multitext works defy our ability to probe or explain their textual configurations or when such considerations are entirely set aside, ‘collection’ refers to a process as well as the outcome of that process and, in doing so, acknowledges the agency or agencies that drive the gathering of multiple texts, however baffling these assemblages may remain to us. In this sense, it operates similarly to the related, but more specific, term ‘compilation,’ which encompasses the processes by which one or more people produce a more or less coherent, and more or less transparently multitextual, work out of an assemblage of texts.

While this sense of ‘compilation’ figures prominently within the pages to come, the concept of ‘collection’ embraces a more potent and significant network of ideas central to this project. One of the most telling distinctions between these two terms lies in their etymologies. As the first chapter will discuss at far greater length, the modern ‘compilation’ lexeme derives from the Latin verb *compilare*, which denotes the act of plundering; the earliest references to textual compilation treated the assemblage upon which it depends as a specific extension of this sense, as textual pillaging. What I wish to emphasize here is that the concept of ‘compilation’ originally

focuses on the agency of the person or people responsible for gathering disparate texts and assembling them in a new and deliberate form. When we speak of the process of compilation we speak, if not of an author, then of a nearly authorial agent.

The Latin verb from which ‘collection’ ultimately derives also highlights the actions that enable the process of textual gathering and assemblage, but it does so without attributing these actions so specifically to a textual creator. The acts of choice and of reading fundamental to the Latin verb *legere* (and thence *colligere*) drive a more inclusive sense of ‘collection’ as a process concerned as much with textual reception as with textual creation and as a multitextual product that confronts subsequent readers with the necessity of choice. I have chosen this as my central term because I wish to acknowledge the significance of reception, of this readerly choice, in the medieval experience of multitextuality. Whether medieval framers of collections worry about this choice or revel in it, constrain it or expand it, conceal it or reveal it, they inevitably inscribe their own particular readings in their handling of texts even as they come to grips with the agencies of later readers, their capacities to choose what they read and the manner in which they read it.

As readers in their own right and as the shapers of textual collections invested in the modes and outcomes of their own consumption, these medieval framers of collections—and the devices with which they frame them—furnish the focal point of my inquiries. As with the term ‘collection,’ the terms ‘framer’ and ‘frame’ acknowledge both reception and creation and the potential for the confluence of these activities in the work of a single agent. Furthermore, these terms encompass both the material and textual dimensions of textual production, dimensions that inform and enrich each other. The textual compilers featured within my first chapter position

themselves as framers of text, but many of their compilatory interventions entailed increasingly sophisticated methods of visual presentation on the manuscript page and ordination within the manuscript codex. The two scribes whose work supplies the focus of the next three chapters determined, more or less, the physical form of the text collections they inscribed within their respective manuscripts, but in their handling of these texts they also impart their own interpretive and even authorial visions and their own negotiations of an ethics of reading.

Chapter One establishes a necessary foundation for probing the medieval anxieties and values that condition these framing interventions. Analyzing the figurative representations of reading in writings on *lectio divina* found in Jerome, Gregory, and Augustine, as well as the centrally important *Didascalicon* of Hugh of St Victor, I trace a discourse of compilation permeating these discussions of meditative reading. The compilatory terms employed by these writers furnish a metaphorical framework whose semantically linked and morally loaded terms of textual production invest reading with high spiritual and ethical stakes and anatomize it as a system of multifarious processes that span from the initial selection and ordination of what is read to the meditative recollecting and rearrangement of readings within the mind. Textual compilers self-consciously intervene in these processes. Examining the deployment of compiling discourse within the writings of self-described compilers, most especially the *Libellus apologeticus* of Vincent of Beauvais, I expose the tendencies of these writers to concretize the component processes and, in the process, to position the compiler as an intermediary reader. Vincent's acknowledged participation in some, but not all, aspects of the reading process undergirds a dynamic tension between heterovocal *auctoritates* and the ordered vision with which he, the compiler, attempts to

circumscribe them. Compilers like Vincent and, earlier, Abelard, reveal a productive but reconfigurable space for readerly choice between their compilatory guidance and their collections of texts, a space that endows their work with pedagogical potential.

Extending the idea and implications of intermediary readers and their potentially guiding roles, my next three chapters address the framing interventions of two English scribes and probe the different ethics of reading that emerge in each scribe's negotiations of collection. Most lay readers' contact with texts and books would have been idiosyncratic, shaped by contingencies of availability and access and by the interventions of bookmakers. The two manuscripts on which I focus—Auchinleck (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS 19.2.1) and the early sixteenth-century commonplace book of Richard Hill (Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354)—embody such idiosyncrasy within the bounds of their bindings, but for all their apparent eccentricities these books bear material and textual witness to meaningful planning. Multiple deliberative agencies shaped Auchinleck, among them Scribe 3, with whose contributions my project is chiefly concerned. Hill devoted several decades to assembling and shaping his book according to his own wishes.

The manuscript booklet offers a useful vantage point from which to scrutinize the work of these two scribes, for reasons both practical and conceptual. Defined in codicological terms as a unit within a manuscript that is both materially and textually self-contained, a booklet comprises one or more quires whose contents are confined within its outer bounds rather than continuous

beyond them.³ As such, booklets offered bookmakers a smaller-scale space within a book in which to conceive of collection and to fashion meaningful configurations of texts. Indeed, booklets might circulate as independent units for assemblage into books or for individual consumption, though such was probably not the case in respect to the booklets I examine here. Hill appears to have compiled individual booklets before gathering them into the book that is Balliol 354. Scribe 3's work appears within only one extant booklet within Auchinleck, Booklet 3, but his substantial contributions to this booklet largely determine its shape and trajectory. The two booklets I examine—Auchinleck Booklet 3 and the Balliol *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet, which I name for its contents—both encompass multiple texts within their bounds that are themselves collections. Scribe 3's and Hill's material and textual negotiations of these collections speak to the ways they think about reading both within and conceivably beyond these booklets.

Chapter Two examines how the mechanics and temporality of the Auchinleck manuscript's physical compilation shaped the literary project of Booklet 3. This booklet has often been dismissed in even some of the most recent scholarship on the manuscript as an anomalous part of the book, a divergence from the planned and discernible coherence on display elsewhere in the manuscript, a well-known and notably early collection largely comprising Middle English verse narratives. I attribute much of the booklet's eccentricity to Scribe 3, who not only copied the bulk of the booklet, but, as I argue, conceived and executed an arrangement of texts profoundly concerned with processes of reading. The chapter culminates in an analysis of two of the least studied and understood texts within the booklet, *On the Seven Deadly Sins* and *The Paternoster*.

³ For a discussion of this term in respect to medieval manuscripts, see Pamela Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts," *Codicologica/Litterae Textuales* 3 (1980).

Both collections, these texts use their structural frameworks as means of prescribing and scrutinizing reading practices within their own confines. Placed at the opening of the booklet, they also function as goads to self-conscious and sophisticated reading of the texts that follow.

Notable among these texts is *The Seven Sages of Rome*, which occupies a central position in Auchinleck's third booklet. Like *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*, this Middle English poem encompasses a collection of texts in whose reception it evinces palpable investment. As a narrative, however, *Seven Sages* does not so much prescribe modes of reading as dramatize them. The poem embeds fifteen tales within a coherent narrative framework whose outcome depends on the delivery and reception of these stories. Chapter Three analyzes how Auchinleck's *Seven Sages* appraises modes of textual consumption through negotiations of its own multitextuality. *Seven Sages* frames tales in a forensic context—a trial of life or death for the poem's young hero, in which the hero's father sits in judgment. In doing so, the poem foregrounds a high stakes dialectic that juxtaposes conflicting narratives, each claiming veracity in the face of epistemological uncertainty. In Scribe 3's hands, *Seven Sages* materially and textually promotes a linear progression through the dialectic it embodies. Like the hero's father, the reader is guided—by the text and by Scribe 3's paratextual apparatus—through a multitude of narratives in order to enact a process of ethical reading.

As a text preoccupied not only with the stakes of reading well, but with the manner in which it itself is read, *Seven Sages* offers a particularly reflective mirror of its own reception. Extant offshoots of the *Seven Sages* tradition in Latin and many additional medieval vernaculars testify to its popularity in the Middle Ages and also to its plasticity. On a more local level, eight surviving manuscript copies of the Middle English metrical version—including Auchinleck—bear witness to

the popularity of *Seven Sages* in late medieval England and to the manifold ways in which this poem could be read.

Chapter Four contextualizes Hill's handling of the poem within an examination of the visual and textual framing of the Middle English *Seven Sages* in all of its manuscript witnesses. Hill placed *Seven Sages* alongside thirteen stories excerpted from John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, another poem that encompasses a collection of tales and that depends on its simultaneous narrative multiplicity and unity to create meaning. In compiling the *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet Hill has physically and textually downplayed the framing narratives of both poems; indeed, his interventions efface the frame of *Confessio* completely. Capitalizing on the potential for textual divisibility and mobility within frame narratives, Hill's booklet promotes a mode of reading predicated on textual excerptability and the non-linear experience of collection that it enables. In many ways Hill's evident embrace of reading out of sequence runs counter to the ethics of reading encountered in previous chapters, implying as it does an idea of collection as convenient repository rather than as a means of guiding reading. As Geoffrey Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* so vividly suggests, non-linear reading of collected texts would seem to obviate the possibility of reading collection as a meaningfully protracted or manifold process. That said, Hill's compilatory divisions and the textual reconfigurability that they promote also enable him to create new networks of meaning within the booklet, to forge new accord out of textual division.

The markedly different approaches Scribe 3 and Hill adopt in respect to representing and reading collected texts testify to a shared valuation of collection's inherent plasticity, its capacity to encode different readings—and attitudes towards reading—and to shift its boundaries to embrace

or exclude new material. Collection enables these readers to make what they read their own, and thus to leave a vestige of their identities as readers and shapers of texts bound in their books.

Here and in the chapters that follow I have adopted a consistent practice with regard to quotations of Middle English based on my own transcriptions and, in the case of six texts from Auchinleck, the partial editions included in Appendix B.⁴ Punctuation, capitalization, and word-division have been modernized and abbreviations have been silently expanded. In a limited number of instances I have included slight emendations to the texts edited in the appendix. Throughout all of these Middle English quotations I have preserved thorns and yoghs and maintained scribal distinctions of *u/v* and *i/j*, though I have adopted <s> where scribes employ tall *s*.

⁴ For a brief discussion of my editorial practices in these partial editions, see the introductory remarks at the opening of Appendix B.

CHAPTER ONE

FINDING WAYS THROUGH THE WOOD: READING AND COLLECTION IN MEDIEVAL DISCOURSES OF COMPILATION

Hic amor ecstasticus tam potenter nos rapuit ut, terrenis aliis abdicatis ab animo, acquirendorum librorum solummodo flagrarem affectu.

[This ecstatic love has carried us away so powerfully, that we have resigned all thoughts of other earthly things, and have given ourselves up to a passion for acquiring books.]

- Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*¹

When Richard de Bury, the fourteenth-century English bishop and bibliophile, justifies in the prologue of his *Philobiblon* the ends to which he has amassed his substantial private collection of books, his expressed intention to establish a library with them (for a college he meant to endow at Oxford) gives way to a rapturous expression of his book-collecting fervor. The treatise that follows strives as much to defend bibliophilic desire as to promote Richard's library project. Richard universalizes this desire, suggesting his love for, and enthusiastic collection of, books to be attitudes properly shared by all discerning people. As treasures in their own right (Richard likens them to pearls) and treasuries of wisdom, the value of books is superlative, all the more so when they are assembled together.

The *Philobiblon* is unique in its zeal and its ventriloquistic advocacy for the collection and respectful treatment of books—much of the treatise is written as a complaint mounted by books themselves—but in centralizing the value of collecting and collection, Richard articulates a widespread medieval attitude towards books. Collection (and, no doubt, collecting) permeated medieval book culture. The manuscript evidence that has come down to us bears witness to extensive medieval collections on personal and institutional scales, attested by library book lists and

¹ Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*, ed. Michael Maclagan, trans. E. C. Thomas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), 12-13.

catalogues, inventories, ownership inscriptions, and even, in some instances, written accounts like Richard's. The contents of manuscripts manifest similarly pervasive collecting tendencies. Medieval books frequently encompass many texts within their bindings and textual collections of many stripes circulated in these books.

This chapter investigates how medieval people conceived of text collections—in libraries, books, or textual frameworks—and the ways they read them. Compilations—deliberately structured text collections—provide a focal point for this inquiry, since the discourses surrounding their creation and use offer contemporary insights into the motivations and processes with which they were created. The first section of the chapter probes the challenges inherent in assessing the motives behind medieval collection and compilation. The proliferation of textual compilations—and an attendant discourse of *compilatio*—in thirteenth-century Europe has begotten a scholarly narrative positing corresponding changes in reading practice. This chapter complicates this narrative, examining the rhetoric of textual compilers in light of conceptual connections by which medieval writings on *lectio divina* (sacred reading) linked ideas of reading and collection. The second section of the chapter argues the centrality of collecting to practices of reading, thinking, and textual creation. Medieval discourses of meditative reading and composition (i.e. of *lectio divina*) cast collection and compilation as processes with significant ethical implications. Reading well thus depends on collecting well. Textual compilers self-consciously intervene in these processes, and the final section of the chapter traces their engagement with earlier discourses of reading and compilation. Self-described compilers like Vincent of Beauvais assume the roles of textual intermediaries, participating in some (but not all) aspects of the reading and composing

processes associated with collection. Through their compilatory and rhetorical framing strategies, these compilers condition reception of their assembled material, interposing their guiding visions between readers and a multitude of *auctoritates*.

Medieval Collecting in the Discourses of Compilation

When it came to texts, medieval readers seem to have been inveterate hoarders—but the motives driving their acquisition of books and assembly of textual collections are often harder to discern. When we refer to medieval manuscripts (or texts or libraries) as collections we may describe the apparent collectedness of the textual elements therein, but in most cases we can only speculate as to the nature of the collecting that took place to bring these books or libraries into being. Richard's treatment of collection in the *Philobiblon* offers a rare documentation of a medieval collector's practices, and even his account skews more toward praise and polemic than toward particulars. The contents and arrangement of a collection hinge on questions of the maker's textual knowledge and agenda, the availability of exemplars, and the maker's or potential owner's individual taste and preference, but many medieval textual collectors were disobligingly opaque in disclosing their materials, aims, and motivations.

Thus, many medieval collections do not necessarily leave accessible the collector's or contemporary audience's understanding of how or why—or even whether—their parts constitute a whole in any but a physical sense. Indeed, encounters with such opacity in medieval books may underpin modern scholars' reluctance to assign much, if any, deliberation to their production or unifying intention to their contents, hence the frequent deployment of such terms as 'miscellany' in reference to manuscripts containing assemblages of texts in which we struggle to determine an

underlying sense of belonging, coherence, or organizing intelligence.² Collection, denoting as it does both the process of gathering multiple things together and the assemblage of things that results from such a process, demands the presence of a driving force (or forces), of accretive agency, but such agency need not be subject to thoughtful regulation to drive collection. Medieval collectors of texts might proceed in a purposeful manner, choosing and excluding material, but the process of collection is not necessarily predicated on deliberation.³

Manuscripts do at times offer evidence of intention. If a manuscript's texts demonstrate an obvious affinity, we may readily posit a collection formed according to the tastes or interests of the collector, whether that be the manuscript's maker or intended owner or both. A volume whose contents are, for example, entirely derived from Augustine's oeuvre or wholly concerned with geometry, presents some accessible insight into a collector's intentions and desires. Still, collection is a potentially multifarious undertaking in which multiple agencies may shape the process of assembly and the form and content of its outcome. The next chapter explores the productive dynamics of such an undertaking in the Auchinleck manuscript, where the confluence of at least two scribes' agendas has generated the manuscript's eccentric, but meaningfully coherent third booklet. Even if a manuscript's contents display no clear coherence—thematic or authorial or otherwise—codicological evidence may point to a manuscript's intended or received identity as a

² The term 'miscellany' is rendered even more problematic by the fact that it is often employed as a catch-all or with a range of different, and even conflicting, connotations, including some in which it is synonymous with 'collection.' Thus, for example, the term is defined and deployed differently by each of its users in the recent edited collection on collection, *Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe*, ed. Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011).

³ As the example of Richard demonstrates, desire furnished then, as now, a powerful motivation to collect. The *Philobiblon's* justifications of Richard's acquisitions work to align his desire with a valid purpose, but preserve a tension between these two motivations. Even in cases where deliberation did drive collection, circumstances ranging from expense to the availability of exemplars would also have circumscribed some collectors' deliberative scope.

collection, dictated by the circumstances of its production—as in the case of a volume whose disparate contents are copied by a single scribe or by what are demonstrably the coordinated efforts of several—or by its contemporary reception—as in the case of a volume whose contents are listed on an opening folio in a single hand.⁴ The final chapter will focus on a manuscript, Oxford, Balliol MS 354, that exemplifies both the former and the latter, a manuscript whose diverse contents have been copied by a single scribe for his own use and have been identified in a table of contents executed by the same person.

Given their nature as structured collections predicated on deliberation—and on account of their contemporary discursive presence—compilations afford a readier means of interrogating medieval concepts of collecting. Within the broader scope of collection, compilation is a practice and product of collecting in which the person responsible for collecting and arranging texts articulates, or at least implies, an intelligible vision directing the choice and deployment of these materials. One of the distinctive qualities of medieval compilation—one that affords a clear means of distinguishing ‘compilation’ from the broader sense of ‘collection’—is thus the presence of an organizing principle governing its arrangement and dictating the selection and reception of its contents.⁵ The structured nature of a medieval compilation requires a deliberative and purposeful agency on the part of the compiler or compilers thereof. Scholars have made much of the thirteenth-century distinction between the activities of authorship and compilation drawn by

⁴ For examples of the latter, see Pamela Robinson’s discussion of the collecting activities behind Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Douce 137 and 132 and behind Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 176, Merton College MS M.1.2, and New College MS 92 in “The ‘Booklet,’” 56-57, 59, 61.

⁵ I am indebted in my thinking to the clarity afforded by Richard and Mary Rouse’s definition of compilation as “structured collection”; see Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, “*Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* Revisited,” in *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. Mark D. Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 116.

Bonaventure and rearticulated by Vincent of Beauvais, but regardless of the pervasiveness of this distinction in medieval thinking or the extent to which the concept of medieval authorship can be so restricted, medieval compilers were undeniably understood to be acting, thinking manipulators of text, and their compilations constitute textual creations in their own right—works whose collectedness can be penetrated and interrogated, whose coherence of composition offers literary and intellectual motivations for and insights into textual collection, and whose textual embeddedness reifies and scrutinizes the processes and purposes of reading itself.⁶

⁶ Bonaventure's quadripartite systematization of the mode of making books (*modus faciendi librum*) insists that the *compilator*, unlike the *auctor*, furnishes none of his own words:

Aliquis enim scribit aliena, nihil addendo vel mutando; et iste mere dicitur *scriptor*. Aliquis scribit aliena, addendo, sed non de suo; et iste *compilator* dicitur. Aliquis scribit et aliena et sua, sed aliena tamquam principalia, et sua tamquam annexa ad evidentiam; et iste dicitur *commentator*, non auctor. Aliquis scribit et sua et aliena, sed sua tanquam principalia, aliena tamquam annexa ad confirmationem; et talis debet dici *auctor*. (Prol. Q. 4, Res.)

[For someone writes out the words of other men without adding or changing anything, and he is called the scribe (*scriptor*) pure and simple. Someone else writes the words of other men, putting together material, but not his own, and he is called the compiler (*compilator*). Someone else writes the words of other men and also his own, but with those of other men comprising the principal part while his own are annexed merely to make clear the argument, and he is called the commentator (*commentator*), not the author. Someone else writes the words of other men and also of his own, but with his own forming the principal part and those of others annexed merely by way of confirmation, and such a person should be called the author (*auctor*).]

The Latin text is taken from *Commentaria in quatuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi*, in *Opera omnia*, vols. 1-4 (Quaracchi: Collegium Sancti Bonaventurae, 1882-1889), 1:14-15. The translation is from *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100-c. 1375*, ed. Alastair J. Minnis and A. B. Scott with David Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 229.

In the *apologia* for his *Speculum maius*, Vincent of Beauvais deprecates his own contribution to the work as its compiler: "... nam ex meo pauca uel quasi nulla; ipsorum igitur est auctoritate, nostrum autem sola partium ordinatione" [For [I added] few things or none, as it were, of my own. Therefore it is theirs by the authority, while only ours by organization of the parts] (*Libellus apologeticus*, cap. 3); this and all other references to the Latin text of the *Libellus apologeticus* are from Serge Lusignan, ed., "Édition du *Libellus totius operis apologeticus*," in *Préface au Speculum maius de Vincent de Beauvais: Réfraction et Diffraction*, by Serge Lusignan (Montreal: Éditions Bellarmin, 1979), 119. The English here is my translation.

For an extended discussion of the distinctions drawn by Bonaventure and Vincent, see Malcolm B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon, 1991) [originally printed in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M.

Historians of the book note in the medieval west a pronounced rise in the practice of compiling and a marked abundance and elaboration of compilations in the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and medievalists have made much of the thirteenth century's innovations and adaptations in partitioning, appropriating and rearranging new and pre-existing texts—in crafting, in other words, “a more precise method of dissecting and defining human knowledge.”⁷ Though thirteenth-century book-producers largely built on or repurposed pre-existing practices, the increasing sophistication with which they visually divided and subdivided texts, arranged collections of textual extracts for optimal searchability, implemented various reference systems, and articulated these projects bespeaks a changing attitude to books, to reading, and to knowledge itself.

According to a common narrative, the scholastic thirteenth century, with its new learning, new books, and new priorities left scholarly readers with little time or inclination to read as monks had for centuries—comprehensively, slowly, and contemplatively. Instead, the century's intellectual innovations necessitated that scholars have recourse to books that presented what they sought in compact, pre-digested, searchable form.⁸ This conventional narrative depends on major historical

T. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976)] and Alastair J. Minnis, “Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Rôle of the *Compiler*,” *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 101 (1979).

See Matthew Fisher's argument for the limited applicability of Bonaventure's distinctions in “Authority, Quotation, and English Historiography,” chap. 2 in *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012).

⁷ Parkes, “Influence,” 50.

⁸ Jacqueline Hamesse provides an explicit statement of this conventional narrative in “The Scholastic Model of Reading,” in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999):

An uninterrupted reading of an entire work, one that took time and permitted assimilation of the whole (or at least the whole gist), was gradually replaced by a more fragmented piecemeal reading style that had the advantage of providing a quick grasp of selections but no longer encouraged any deep contact with the text or any genuine assimilation of the doctrine it contained. Utility outstripped knowledge. (107)

shifts concurrent with the rise of compilations, shifts like the proliferation and rise of universities as places of learning and intellectual innovation and the increasing demand for preachers following the papal mandate, emanating from the Fourth Lateran Council convened in 1215, for more ministry to the layfolk. This narrative also draws heavily on the implications of the discourses of compilation that accompanied the thirteenth-century boom in their production. The increase in production and complexity of compilations took place alongside the development of what Alastair Minnis variously terms “the discourse of *compilatio*” or (in opposition to “*auctor*-discourse”) “*compiler*-discourse,” by means of which self-described compilers were conceiving and articulating their compiling activities with new self-consciousness and specificity.⁹ As Minnis and others have noted, this was also the time at which the words *compilare*, *compiler*, and *compilatio* came into wide use in reference to compiling activities as they have been defined here.¹⁰ Richard and Mary Rouse locate the wide application of the word *compilare* to compilation within a broader thirteenth-century trend marked by increasingly bellicose language of book-production; the original sense of the verb *compilare* was ‘to pillage’ and, in keeping with this earlier sense, its earliest sense with specific application to texts was ‘to plagiarize.’¹¹ The Rouses account for medieval appropriation (and amelioration) of such violent terminology by pointing to an increasingly utilitarian approach to books favored by preachers.¹²

⁹ Alastair J. Minnis, “*Nolens Auctor sed Compiler Reputari*: The Late-Medieval Discourse of Compilation,” in *La méthode critique au moyen âge*, ed. Mireille Chazan and Gilbert Dahan (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006).

¹⁰ For an account of the word’s usage from antiquity onward, see Neil Hathaway, “*Compilatio*: From Plagiarism to Compiling” *Viator* 20 (1988) and Minnis’s rejoinder in “*Nolens Auctor*.” Hathaway offers a tenth-century definition of *compilare* as the earliest ‘neutral’ usage of a term within the *compil*-lexeme (35).

¹¹ See Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia and Sermons: Studies on the Manipulus florum of Thomas of Ireland* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1979), 41.

¹² Rouse and Rouse, *Preachers, Florilegia*, 41.

By the thirteenth century *compilare* had demonstrably picked up senses that were oriented around the coherent product of compiling activities (and the *compilator's* role in managing this coherence) more than the 'pillaging' of sources necessary to produce such compilations, but an aura of violence continued to adhere to the term and to the practice it denotes. Writing much earlier in defense of his own textual borrowings and emendations, Jerome credited Vergil with the assertion that "magnarum esse virium, clavam Herculi extorquere de manu" [to wrench a club from the hand of Hercules is to be of great strength].¹³ Neil Hathaway and Minnis have both observed the staying power of this metaphor in the course of the Middle Ages; appropriately enough, it is itself often wrested from earlier contexts to defend literary appropriation.¹⁴ Rather than debate with Hathaway and Minnis what the metaphor may imply about the prestige and acceptability of *compilatio* over the centuries, I would emphasize that the exercise of violence, power, and control—whether laudably robust or shamelessly self-serving and dishonest—adhere to the terms *compilare*, *compilator*, and *compilatio* and to associated practices of extraction and reappropriation. This adherence promotes a tension between compilers and the Scriptural and patristic authorities (*auctoritates*) they compiled. While authority explicitly lies in appropriated *auctoritates*, the act of

¹³ Jerome, preface to *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos* (PL 23.935). My translation.

¹⁴ John Trevisa notably translates it into Middle English in his late fourteenth-century translation of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, as Minnis notes in "Nolens Auctor," 63. Writing of Higden's own appropriation of the assertion in "When Variants Aren't: Authors as Scribes in Some English Manuscripts," in *Probable Truth: Editing Medieval Texts from Britain in the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Anne Hudson and Vincent Gillespie (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), Matthew Fisher identifies this as "[a moment] of authorial invention for Higden" in which "[he] aligns himself with his intertextual predecessors" (217). Simultaneously incurring and acknowledging a textual debt, Higden uses the terms of this extracted metaphor to establish his own authority.

recognizing their value, and of wresting them from their earlier or original contexts, confers power, even authority, on the compiler as well.¹⁵

The foregoing narrative of the rise in compilation is in some respects morally-inflected, conditioned as it is by the violence (and violation) inherent in the language, and even the practice, of compilation, by the apparent triumph of a pragmatic outlook—as opposed to, say, one of reverence—towards text, and by implications of a growing scholarly or literary utilitarianism. It is also, as this chapter will demonstrate at length, an oversimplified account. The profusion of compiled reference works reliant on excerption, works like florilegia or concordances, did not rule out—and probably even encouraged—the reading of *originalia*, the whole works from which excerpts were being taken.¹⁶ As to the way in which such *originalia* would have been read, modes of reading may also have changed less than the conventional narrative suggests. Mary Carruthers has challenged this account insofar as it recounts a decline in meditative reading and memorization,

¹⁵ A similar tension exists between authoritative text and glossed commentary. Writing of this tension in “The Margin is the Message: Commentary’s Displacement of Canon,” *Literature & Theology* 13 (1999), Christopher Burdon notes the transference of authority from authoritative text to commentary:

... commentary should *logically* be clearly subordinate to the [authoritative] text, dedicated simply to enabling a more informed reading or a more fruitful encounter between the sacred text and reader, church or synagogue. *In practice* ... the inevitable effect of commentary when a reader approaches it with such desire for understanding or authoritative guidance is to wrest the authority to itself and away from the canon. So the text becomes pretext for the exercise of power by the official interpreter, scholar or magisterium—perhaps too by the reader if she is sufficiently identified with the interpreting authority. (222)

¹⁶ Writing of the thirteenth century, Parkes observes that “the new interest in the organization and procedure within an individual work ... stimulated a desire to see the *auctoritates*, the individual *sententiae*, in their full context,” and thus “new copies were made, fat volumes embracing as many as possible of the writings of a single *auctor*” (“Influence,” 54). This impulse is explained by the Rouses, who identify a concurrent terminological shift in reference to collected works of patristic *auctoritates*: “in the use of *originale* [first observed in the late twelfth century and quite prevalent by the mid thirteenth century] rather than *integrum* [an older term], there is the deliberate implication that the whole works possess an authority or authenticity lacking in mere excerpts” (*Preachers, Florilegia*, 37). They further remark that collections of patristic extracts (eg. florilegia) would thus have been approached as introductions to the *originalia* rather than works to be used in their stead.

asserting, “We ... should not assume that these multitudinous study aids replace memory as a fundamental tool; instead, they often were thought of as memory systems first and manuscript aids second” and concluding “the monastic understanding of what one does in reading ... not only persisted but became part of general culture in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and later centuries, for reasons that had as much to do with the moral value of *memoria* in meditation and prayer as with its utility.”¹⁷ While this was no doubt not always true of all such study aids and tools—some are too patently textual and technical to function as mnemonic instruments—Carruthers’ claim that many study aids were working in tandem with older modes of reading nuances the conventional narrative of the thirteenth century’s changing attitudes towards the reading and use of books.

The increasingly complex layout and tools of scholastic books may have been designed to supplant ruminative reading, to provide visual aids to stimulate flagging or learning memories, or to concretize practices that had heretofore been left chiefly to the reader’s discretion—or, more likely, for all of these reasons to varying extents. Still, the mnemonic value of the thirteenth century’s innovative textual divisions, layouts, and finding aids gestures towards intellectual and practical continuities not only in reading and internalizing text, but also in conceptualizing its production. A similar continuity marks discourses of compilation, the means by which compilation is variously described as an activity, a set of interrelated activities, and as the product of such activities. Distinct from Minnis’s “discourse of *compilatio*,” which is in many ways more concerned with the compiler’s sense of how his literary output differs from that of an *auctor* or *commentator* than with the compiler’s working procedure, the discourses of compilation central to this chapter

¹⁷ Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 129.

inhabit a rich range of metaphors (well beyond the club of Hercules) as well as constituting a kind of metaphorical language.

The next section probes compilation's manifestations as metaphor, contending that the language of collecting, extracting, and arranging—of compiling and the subprocesses it comprises, in other words—figures significantly in late antique and medieval explorations of meditation and composition. Grounded in medieval monastic practices of reading and internalization of sacred or theologically significant texts, most especially Scripture (*lectio divina*), such explorations articulate perspectives on reading and contemplative practices fundamental to western conceptualizations of the interface between text and the mind in the Middle Ages and beyond. These intersecting discourses of compilation and meditative reading furnish an intellectual framework in which the trained mind's engagement with read text could be examined or schematized. Such language—and particularly its crossover application to mental and textual collection and compilation—speaks to the centrality of collection and compilation not only to medieval textual culture but more fundamentally to medieval conceptions of cognition and morality.

Libraries of the Heart, Compilations of the Mind

In a eulogy for a young priest, Jerome wrote in praise of his scholarly attainment that “lectioneque assidua, et meditatione diuturna, pectus suum bibliothecam fecerat Christi” [by constant reading and long meditation his heart made a library for Christ].¹⁸ This remark, a compelling expression of what is to some extent a medieval commonplace, internalizes ideas of purposeful textual collection and arrangement inherent in the concept of a library (*bibliothecam*)

¹⁸ Jerome, *Epistola* LX.10, *Ad Heliodorum* (PL 22.595). My translation.

and, in doing so, localizes them within the heart (*pectus*), taken in the Middle Ages to be one of several metaphorical—even literal—seats of memory, to say nothing of vitality and volition.¹⁹

Jerome expresses, moreover, a teleology of reading and meditation—necessary, and even simultaneous, facets of a single approach to text and virtuous life. Jerome’s formulation renders the priest himself a collection—of texts and presumably of the knowledge and virtues engendered thereby—to be divinely perused. Here the reader’s internalization of text by dint of assiduous reading (*lectioneque*) and meditative memorizing (*meditatione*) makes it possible for him to refashion himself as a textual repository to be entered and inhabited by Christ and as text to be read; he makes of himself something useful and pleasing to God.²⁰ As Jerome traces a progression from devout and dedicated *lectio* to a divine *lectio* (and *collectio*), the concept of collection is crucial to his expression of the priest’s intellectual and spiritual achievement.

Jerome’s eulogy extols the constancy of the young priest’s *lectio* and *meditatio* and predicates his accomplishment on both, but however intertwined *lectio* and *meditatio* might be in practice, *meditatio* is essentially a middle term in the priest’s progression from *lectio* to *collectio*. In another letter, Jerome includes the proposition, which he attributes to the letter’s recipient Pope Damasus, that “lectionem sine stilo” [reading without a pen] amounts to “somnum” [sleep].²¹ By its very extremity, this formulation establishes the limitations of *lectio* as a stand-alone pursuit: without some sort of inscription, whether in the mind/heart or on the page/tablet, *lectio* leads nowhere, being so inactive an occupation as to merit the characterization of sleep. Reading is neither a

¹⁹ See Eric Jager, “The Book of the Heart: Reading and Writing the Medieval Subject,” *Speculum* 71 (1996).

²⁰ The Latin *bibliotheca* encompasses senses of both textual collection and the physical space in which such a collection might be housed. See “bibliōthēca” in Lewis and Short.

²¹ Jerome, *Epistola XXXVI.1, Ad Damasum* (PL 22.453). My translation.

monolithic process nor is it wholly identifiable with *lectio*. Jerome's invocation of writing as an activity on which the efficacy of *lectio* is somehow contingent, gestures toward a continuum spanning between the two, one in which there exists a wide spectrum of subprocesses essential to the internalization of text. The pairing of inwardly-directed *meditatio* with *lectio* is crucial to the priest's transformation of his heart into a library for Christ; as Jean Leclercq writes, "la *meditatio* ... c'est elle qui, pour ainsi dire, inscrit le texte sacré dans le corps et l'esprit" [*meditatio* ... is what inscribes, so to speak, the sacred text in the body and the soul].²² Leclercq and many others have observed the interconnection (and ideally the inseparability) of *lectio* and *meditatio* as components of *lectio divina*, inwardly and spiritually directed reading. Looking beyond or behind this pairing, however, the writings of such prominent practitioners as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Hugh of St Victor reveal a wide and complex range of mental activities underlying and constituting *lectio* and *meditatio*. They ground the myriad inner workings of reading and processing of Scripture (and other devotional material) in metaphorical processes of collection, extraction, and arrangement within the mind, and, in doing so, they envision reading as inextricable from, and inevitably shaped by, composition, whether in the sense of textual or rhetorical production or of writing inwardly upon one's heart.

The analysis, ordination, and evaluation of the constitutive processes of reading—along with the identification of what students ought to read in their studies—furnish the primary focus of Hugh of St Victor's twelfth-century *Didascalicon*. Weighing effective and ineffective approaches

²² Jean Leclercq, *Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du moyen age: l'amour des lettres & le désir de Dieu*, 2nd ed (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1957), 72. Translated by Catharine Misrahi, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (New York, 1974), 90.

to reading Scripture, Hugh frames reading as an ethically inflected journey whose success depends on one's wisdom and discernment:

Aspice duos pariter silvam transeuntes, et hunc quidem per devia laborantem, illum vero recti itineris compendia legentem, pari motu cursum tendunt, sed non aequè perveniunt. ... Qui ergo in tanta multitudine librorum legendi modum et ordinem non custodit, quasi in condensitate saltus oberrans, tramitem recti itineris perdit, et, ut dicitur, semper discentes, nunquam ad scientiam pervenientes.

[Consider two men both traveling through a wood, one of them struggling around in bypaths but the other picking the short cuts of a direct route: they move along their ways with the same amount of motion, but they do not reach the goal at the same time. ... Therefore, whoever does not keep to an order and a method in the reading of so great a collection of books wanders as it were into the very thick of the forest and loses the path of the direct route; he is, as it is said, 'always learning yet never reaching knowledge.']²³

Hugh's metaphor of two men's movements through a forest establishes a perspective on reading that is not only pedagogically prescriptive in urging a proper order and method of reading (*legendi modum et ordinem*), but emphatically concerned with the ethical implications of each man's choice. Earlier in the passage, he establishes the distinguishing qualities behind the divergent silvan trajectories of his metaphor: the unsuccessful reader may possess the cardinal virtue of strength (*fortitudo*), but the successful reader exercises wisdom (*prudentia*).²⁴ A reader lacking *prudentia* reads in vain: laboring along indirect routes (*per devia laborantem*), as if beating the air, he sheds his

²³ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 5.5, "Quid studium impediatur"; this and all other references to the Latin text of the *Didascalicon* are from *Didascalicon de Studio Legendi: A Critical Text*, ed. Charles Henry Buttimer, Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Latin 10 (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 1939). Jerome Taylor, trans., *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, Records of Civilization Sources and Studies 64 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 126-27. Unless otherwise noted, all other translations of the *Didascalicon* into English are from Taylor's translation.

²⁴ "Verumtamen melior, ut dicitur, prudentia est fortitudine [Still, as it is said, 'Wisdom is better than strength.]" (Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 5.5). The English here is my translation.

strength upon the wind (*quasi aerem verberans, vires in ventum fundit*).²⁵ Hugh imagines circumstances rendering reading an abortive process, much as Jerome does with his putative penless reader. In this case the reader without *prudencia* fails to derive benefit from the act of reading because he lacks the discernment to select and order his reading, to direct it properly; though perpetually learning, he never arrives *ad scientiam*.

For the wise and circumspect reader who chooses the short ways enabling a proper journey (*recti itineris compendia legentem*), the language of ethical choice shades into the language of reading practice. The dual senses of *legere* bind the act of reading to the act of selection, a semantic imbrication rendered all the more significant by Hugh's employment of the similarly loaded terms *recti* and *compendia*. Hugh's repeated characterization of the wise reader's journey as a *rectum iter* evokes the literally applicable sense of directness, while simultaneously suggesting the rightness, propriety, and virtuousness of the wise reader's path. By his reference to *compendia*, he yokes the choice of this direct and proper route to the idea of abridgement, of short-cuts. Literally this makes sense: the *rectum iter* through the forest of Scripture would necessarily comprise the shortest way from one point to the next.

An earlier passage in the *Didascalicon* suggests that Hugh's choice of the term *compendia* has implications extending beyond his metaphorical paths through the woods, and that while choice drives what one reads and colors the efficacy and propriety of that undertaking, selecting well carries over into the act of reading as well:

De memoria hoc maxime in praesenti praetermittendum non esse existimo, quod sicut ingenium dividendo investigat et invenit, ita memoria colligendo custodit.

²⁵ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 5.5.

Oportet ergo ut, quae discendo divisimus, commendanda memoriae colligamus. Colligere est ea de quibus prolixius vel scriptum vel disputatum est ad brevem quandam et compendiosam summam redigere, quae a maioribus epilogus, id est, brevis recapitulatio supradictorum appellata est. Habet namque omnis tractatio aliquod principium, cui tota rei veritas et vis sententiae innitur, et ad ipsum cuncta alia referuntur: hoc quaerere et considerare colligere est. ... Debemus ergo in omni doctrina breve aliquid et certum colligere, quod in arcula memoriae recondatur ...

[Concerning memory I do not think one should fail to say here that just as aptitude investigates and discovers through analysis, so memory retains through gathering. The things which we have analyzed in the course of learning and which we must commit to memory we ought, therefore, to gather. Now 'gathering' is reducing to a brief and compendious outline things which have been written or discussed at some length. The ancients called such an outline an 'epilogue,' that is, a short restatement, by headings, of things already said. Now every exposition has some principle upon which the entire truth of the matter and the force of its thought rest, and to this principle everything else is traced back. To look for and consider this principle is to 'gather.' ... We ought, therefore, in all that we learn, to gather brief and dependable abstracts to be stored in the little chest of the memory ...]²⁶

Hugh figures the memory as both agent of collection (*memoria colligendo custodit*) and repository of what has been collected (*quod in arcula memoriae recondatur*), and his overwhelming emphasis on the process of gathering in this passage supports an inextricable identification of collecting and memorizing. Indeed, the medieval memory arts taught by Hugh and others would have rendered the memory a nearly infinitely expandable repository in which words and images, concepts and things, might be gathered and retained. More specifically, however, Hugh identifies the act of gathering from reading with extraction: gathering (*colligere*), he writes, entails reducing (*redigere*) what has been written or disputed at length (*de quibus prolixius vel scriptum vel disputatum est*) to what is essential (*ad ... summam*) in the writing or disputation, briefly but comprehensively rendered. The process of gathering then depends upon the determination of the foundational

²⁶ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.11 "De memoria." Trans. Taylor, 93-94.

principle (*principium*) by which the truth of the matter and strength of its meaning (*sententiae*) are supported. From the hubbub of many words and many arguments the reader must determine and extract truth and deeper meaning (*sententiae*) for storage within the *arcula memoriae*.²⁷ Recalling Hugh's silvan metaphor, then, reading wisely and rightly depends not only on the ability to choose and order what is read, but also on the ability to extract well, to reach *scientia*, *sententia*, and *veritas* by choosing the *recti itineris compendia*, the route both profitable and short.

Hugh's anxieties over the ethical choices inherent in reading rest on his perception that reading transforms the reader. Memorative reading—the selection and commitment of what has been read to the *arcula memoriae*—shapes the memories of trained readers into collections of what they have read, from texts in their entirety to extracts distilling the essentials of other written works. Lest the *arcula memoriae* itself grow clamorous or confused, and its treasures be lost in chaos, Hugh advocates the orderly disposition of its contents. In his *Chronicle's* prologue, “De tribus maximis circumstantiis,” Hugh advises not only that individual units of memory be organized in relation to one another and within a system enabling their ready retrieval, but also

²⁷ The word with which Hugh designates meaning, *sententia*, is one he uses to designate the final aim of expounding a text:

Expositio tria continet, litteram, sensum, sententiam. Littera est congrua ordinatio dictionum, quod etiam constructionem vocamus. Sensus est facilis quaedam et aperta significatio, quam littera prima fronte praefert. Sententia est profundior intelligentia, quae nisi expositione vel interpretatione non invenitur. In his ordo est, ut primum littera, deinde sensus, deinde sententia inquiratur. Quo facto, perfecta est expositio. (*Didascalicon* 3.8, “De ordine legendi.”)

[Exposition includes three things: the letter, the sense, and the inner meaning. The letter is the fit arrangement of words, which we also call construction; the sense is a certain ready and obvious meaning which the letter presents on the surface; the inner meaning is the deeper understanding which can be found only through interpretation and commentary. Among these, the order of inquiry is first the letter, then the sense, and finally the inner meaning. And when this is done, the exposition is complete. (Trans. Taylor, 92.)]

that they be keyed to particular topics or keywords.²⁸ The product of this practice is, in effect, the mental equivalent of a florilegium; one who had adopted Hugh's prescribed approach to committing text to memory with specific respect to its topicality might, if possessed of a well-educated memory, assemble a mental compilation of Scriptural citations and patristic extracts addressing a specific subject.²⁹ For the possessor of a trained memory, compilation is then a mental process, as opposed to—or as well as—a physical one.

Hugh is concerned with an approach to reading in which the reader mentally extracts material from what is read and stores it strategically within the *arcula memoriae*, and it is evident how this sort of perspective anticipates the general (and specifically pedagogical) popularity of compilations in which selection, extraction, and arrangement have been performed by compilers on behalf of their readers. The next section will address compilations of this sort, but in the meantime I would note the resonance of Hugh's terms with those of the formation and structure of these physical compilations, as well as the relative lack of fixity inherent in Hugh's mental compilation. As a mental process, compilation renders its practitioners themselves into dynamic textual repositories, but, thus embodied, collections depend on perpetual maintenance. The mental processes whereby such collections might be maintained extend, amplify, and diversify the processes of memorative reading. These coming pages analyze the networks of figurative associations with which Hugh and others freight the mental activities of re-reading and re-collecting, of

²⁸ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 106.

²⁹ Speaking specifically of monastic attitudes towards scripture, the Rouses observe that a monastic reader practitioner of *lectio divina* would be, in effect, "a living concordance" (*Preachers, Florilegia*, 41). Here I venture the claim that such readers might effectively embody a variety of compilations beyond the concordance. The nature of the memory arts, as understood in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, imbues educated readers with a textual plasticity that enables them to construct different forms of mental arrangement and thus to embody many kinds of book.

ongoing textual consumption and ordination. From Augustine's conception of generative recollection to Hugh's and Bernard's metaphorical models of meditative reading and re-reading, these writers envision a range of internally-directed reading and collecting processes capable of expanding and transforming the mind and heart of the reader.

Hugh stakes the successful maintenance of things within the memory on their continued metaphorical movement and review. Specifying how texts might be maintained and (re)deployed within the *arcula memoriae*, he advises, "Debemus ergo in omni doctrina breve aliquid et certum colligere, quod in arcula memoriae recondatur, unde postmodum, cum res exigit aliqua deriventur. Hoc etiam saepe replicare et de ventre memoriae ad palatum revocare necesse est, ne longa intermissione obsoleat" [We ought, therefore, in all that we learn, to gather brief and dependable abstracts to be stored in the little chest of the memory, so that later on, when need arises, we can derive everything else from them. These one must often turn over in the mind and regurgitate from the stomach of one's memory to taste them, lest by long inattention to them, they disappear].³⁰ As Hugh counsels that the contents of the memory often be turned over and over (*saepe replicare... necesse est*) in the mind, his use of *replicare* enforces a sense of cyclical movement, of turning over and unrolling, and of repetition. If they are not to be forgotten or to decay through long disuse (*longa intermissione obsolescat*), remembered things must be revisited, even literally re-collected and put to use.

Valuable in their own right as internalized knowledge gleaned from reading, the contents of the memory also have potential productive value. Hugh sees in the short and reliable abstracts

³⁰ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.11. Trans. Taylor, 94.

stored within the *arcula memoriae* sources from which other things may be derived (*unde... aliqua deriventur*) in the course of recollection. To some extent, Hugh's formulation of this recollective derivation gestures toward recovery, toward the reconstruction of what has been distilled in these abstracts. In Augustine's discussion of the recollective process, however, he acknowledges the potentially generative and expansive capacities of recollecting and identifies these as dimensions of the dynamic and creative processes of thought (*cogitatio*):

Quocirca invenimus nihil esse aliud discere ista, quorum non per sensus haurimus imagines, sed sine imaginibus sicuti sunt per seipsa intus cernimus: nisi ea quae passim atque indisposite memoria continebat, cogitando quasi colligere, atque animadvertendo curare, ut tanquam ad manum posita in ipsa memoria, ubi sparsa prius et neglecta latitabant, iam familiari intentioni facile occurrant. Et quam multa huiusmodi gestat memoria mea quae iam inventa sunt, et sicut dixi, quasi ad manum posita, quae didicisse et nosse dicimur! Quae si modestis temporum intervallis recolere desivero, ita rursus demerguntur, et quasi in remotiora penetralia dilabuntur, ut denuo velut nova excogitanda sint indidem iterum (neque enim est alia regio eorum), et cogenda rursus ut sciri possint, id est velut ex quadam dispersione colligenda, unde dictum est cogitare. Nam cogo et cogito, sic est ut ago et agito, facio et factito. Verumtamen sibi animus hoc verbum proprie vindicavit, ut non quod alibi, sed quod in animo colligitur, id est cogitur, cogitari proprie iam dicatur.

[Thus we find that learning those things whose images we do not take in by our senses, but which we intuit within ourselves without images and as they actually are, is nothing else except the gathering together of those same things which the memory already contains—but in an indiscriminate and confused manner—and putting them together by careful observation as they are at hand in the memory; so that whereas they formerly lay hidden, scattered, or neglected, they now come easily to present themselves to the mind which is now familiar with them. And how many things of this sort my memory has stored up, which have already been discovered and, as I said, laid up for ready reference. These are the things we may be said to have learned and to know. Yet, if I cease to recall them even for short intervals of time, they are again so submerged—and slide back, as it were, into the further reaches of the memory—that they must be drawn out again as if new from the same

place (for there is nowhere else for them to have gone) and must be collected [*cogenda*] so that they can become known. In other words, they must be gathered up [*colligenda*] from their dispersion. This is where we get the word *cogitate* [*cogitare*]. For *cogo* [collect] and *cogito* [to go on collecting] have the same relation to each other as *ago* [do] and *agito* [do frequently], and *facio* [make] and *facito* [make frequently]. But the mind has properly laid claim to this word so that not everything that is gathered together anywhere, but only what is collected and gathered together in the mind, is properly said to be ‘cogitated’.]³¹

According to Augustine’s formulation, collection is intrinsic to thought. Learning, intuiting, discovery—mental activities that seek to uncover knowledge beyond the experience of the senses—all depend, by Augustine’s account, on a process in which thinking is concomitant with collecting. Reflective gathering (*cogitando quasi colligere*) and considered curation (*animadvertendo curare*) drive a perpetual tidying of a mental space whose remembered contents are confused and strewn about (*passim atque indisposite*) in order that they may be known (*cogenda rursus ut sciri possint*).

Augustine’s etymologizing identifies generative thought with these continual processes of recollection: he posits that the verbs *cogo* and *cogito* share the same semantic relationship as *ago* and *agito*, namely that *cogito* and *agito* are the frequentative forms of their counterparts. Just as Hugh insists that the contents of the *arcula memoriae* be turned over and over in the mind, so does Augustine stake the maintenance of his mental compilations on continuous or repeated cultivation (*recolere*) lest they sink back into the depths of his memory (*demerguntur*). Meditating in one of his sermons on *cogitatio*’s transformative potential, Augustine remarks that “*cogitatio facit nos extendi*” [cogitation makes us expand].³² Thought is not only frequentative, then, but also generative and

³¹ Augustine, *Confessiones* 10.11 (PL 32.787). Translated by Albert C. Outler, *Confessions and Enchiridion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

³² Augustine, *Sermo* 225 (PL 38.1097). Carruthers remarks upon the expansive nature of *cogitatio* in Augustine’s formulation, noting, “For Augustine, the pieces brought together in *cogitatio* make a sum greater than its parts.

expansive. The continual and constantly curatorial processes of thought—of perpetual collection and recollection—drive an ongoing compilation of remembered things, whose association and arrangement create expandable and productive mental structures. From these constantly curated collections, these compilations of the mind, proceed new ideas, new compositions, new knowledge.

The long-standing medieval metaphorical identification of processes of meditative reading with those of consumption and digestion invests processes of recollection and cogitation with a more explicitly moral dimension.³³ As Hugh deploys it, the metaphorical nexus of reading and consumption reinforces the frequentative nature of maintaining things in the memory, but also emphasizes the moral significance of memorative activity. As he writes in the passage above on memorial upkeep, the contents of the memory ought not only to be turned over in the mind, but they must be regurgitated from the stomach of the memory (*de ventre memoriae*) and tasted on the palate (*ad palatum*). This regurgitative image reinforces the repetitive nature of *replicare*, but reimagines the revisitation of what has been consumed in reading with reference to rumination (*ruminatio*). Bernard of Clairvaux, Hugh's contemporary and correspondent, articulates the salutary effects of rumination as part of the reading process in one of his sermons on the *Song of Songs*: “Cibus in ore, psalmus in corde sapit. Tantum ille terere non negligat fidelis et prudens anima quibusdam dentibus intelligentiae suae, ne si forte integrum glutiat et non mansum, frustretur palatum sapore desiderabili, et dulciori super mel et favum” [As food is sweet to the palate, so does a psalm delight the heart. But the soul that is sincere and wise will not fail to chew the psalm with

Knowledge extends understanding not by adding on more and more pieces, but because as we compose our design dilates to greater capacity and spaciousness” (*Book of Memory*, 246).

³³ For a fuller account of the pervasive medieval metaphor's history and significance, see Leclercq, *Initiation aux auteurs*, 72-73 and Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 202-12.

the teeth as it were of the mind, because if he swallows it in a lump, without proper mastication, the palate will be cheated of the delicious flavor, sweeter even than honey that drips from the comb].”³⁴ Bernard’s metaphorical mastication confers spiritual benefit on the wise practitioner thereof, and his formulation suggests that meditative reading yields delight as well as insight (or that the two are inseparable). Hugh’s reference to the palate evokes the same metaphorical sense of meditative savor, but identifies it with a sort of mental re-reading, rather than an initial encounter. He establishes rumination as a repetitive mental process necessary not only to the retention of what has been read but also to a continued meditative engagement with and internalization of one’s reading.

Hugh employs similar terms of metaphorical consumption in order to elaborate on the moral implications of selection and extraction as they pertain to the meditative internalization of reading. In the midst of his discussion of how to read Scripture, he builds on his figurative representation of reading as a journey through a forest (see above). Rendering the metaphorical wood a fruitful one, Hugh presents rumination as an essential constituent of wise reading: “Quid autem scripturam dixerim nisi silvam, cuius sententias quasi fructus quosdam dulcissimos legendo carpimus, tractando ruminamus?” [But what shall I call Scripture if not a wood? Its thoughts, like so many sweetest fruits, we pick as we read and chew as we consider them.]³⁵ Hugh’s language of *ruminatio* entwines collection and extraction, compilation and composition as dynamic meditative and creative processes taking place within the *arcula memoriae*. The wise reader of Scripture

³⁴ Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum: Sermo 7* (PL 183.809). Translated by Kilian Walsh, *Song of Songs I*, Cistercian Fathers Series 4 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971), 41-42.

³⁵ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 5.5. Trans. Taylor, 126-27.

internalizes its *sententiae* through selecting/reading (*legendo*) and pondering/(mentally) managing (*tractando*) them, just as one enjoys fruits by picking them (*carpimus*) and chewing them (*ruminamus*). Referring to the selection of some of the sweetest fruits (*fructus quosdam dulcissimos*), Hugh reinforces his earlier emphasis on choosing *recti itineris compendia*. Similarly, the chewing of these fruits, analogous to pondering scriptural *sententiae*, resonates with the memorative process in which Hugh encourages the reader to regurgitate, and more specifically to re-taste, remembered things.

Hugh's language of ingestion and digestion describes a meditative internalization and transformation that are fundamental, in his view, to the maintenance of the memory and its accumulated compilations of knowledge, but also to the deployment of memory as a productive space in which knowledge and actions are formed.³⁶ He renders physiologically concrete Gregory the Great's exhortation, "In nobismetipsis namque debemus transformare quod legimus; ut cum per auditum se animus excitat, ad operandum quod audierit vita concurrat" [We ought to transform what we read within our very selves, so that when our mind is stirred by what it hears, our life may concur by practicing what has been heard].³⁷ What is read and transformed—or, in Hugh's case, digested—within incites a concurrent transformation in outward life, in action.³⁸ By ruminatively processing and revisiting one's Scriptural readings, one internalizes their meaning and

³⁶ Carruthers notes that Hugh's use of *tractando* is quite similar to that of William of Ockham: "It is a scholastic use, 'tracting' for the process of making 'tracts' by mentally collating extracts during meditational composition..." (*Book of Memory*, 424, n. 33). In other words, Hugh analogously links the chewing of fruit to the pondering of *sententiae*, but also to the process of mental arrangement foundational to *cogitatio*, to derivation, and to composition.

³⁷ Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job* 1.33 (PL 75.542). Translated by Carruthers in *Book of Memory*, 205. I am indebted to Carruthers for the juxtaposition of this quotation with Hugh's digestive metaphors.

³⁸ Indeed, the remaining chapters in this book of *Didascalicon* are all concerned with identifying and ordering the chief ends of *lectio divina*, foremost of which is the inculcation of morality and action (*operatio*) in accordance therewith.

morality. Hugh expresses the ethical necessity of this internal transformation in terms of self-restraint and self-effacement, particularly essential when reading for the *sententia* of difficult or obscure text:

Item in rebus obscuris atque a nostris oculis remotissimis, si qua inde scripta etiam divina legerimus, quae possint salva fide aliis atque aliis parere sententiis, in nullam earum nos praecipiti affirmatione ita proiciamus, ut, si forte diligentius discussa veritas eam labefactaverit, corruamus, non pro sententia divinarum scripturarum, sed pro nostra ita dimicantes, ut eam velimus scripturarum esse quae nostra est, cum potius eam quae scripturarum nostram esse debeamus.

[So too, if regarding matters which are obscure and farthest removed from our comprehension, we read some of the Divine Writings and find them susceptible, in sound faith, to many different meanings, let us not plunge ourselves into headlong assertion of any one of these meanings, so that if the truth is perhaps more carefully opened up and destroys that meaning, we are overthrown; for we should be battling not for the thought of the Divine Scriptures but for our own thought, and this in such a way that we wished the thought of the Scriptures to be identical to our own, whereas we ought rather to wish our thought identical with that of the Scriptures.]³⁹

A wise reader might ideally extract and store *sententiae* early in the process of reading, but where Scripture offers up multiple meanings that are different but at least potentially sound, precipitous assertion (*praecipiti affirmatione*) of one meaning over the others threatens to eclipse truth with subjective interpretation. Beyond maintaining and internalizing what has been read, repeated rumination promotes an ongoing dynamic reception of one's reading and enables the suspension of premature assertions of truth.

The processes of ruminative reading and rereading described by Hugh and Bernard account for a kind of meditative engagement with reading bound to textual encounter. Beyond encounters

³⁹ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 6.11 "De sententia." Trans. Taylor, 150.

with the physical page, however, meditation offer a crucial means by which truth might be achieved through internalized processes of inquiry and correction. As Hugh observes, *meditatio*, the consummation of education (*doctrinae ... consummatio*), takes its beginning in reading (*principium sumit a lectione*).⁴⁰ Untethered from the actual or recollected page, however, meditation, he writes, enjoys a free and broad range of motion: “delectatur ... quodam aperto decurrere spatio, ubi liberam contemplandae veritati aciem affigat, et nunc has, nunc illas rerum causas perstringere, nunc autem profunda quaeque penetrare, nihil anceps, nihil obscurum relinquere” [it delights to range along open ground, where it fixes its free gaze upon the contemplation of truth, drawing together now these, now those causes of things, or now penetrating into profundities, leaving nothing doubtful, nothing obscure].⁴¹ Notable in Hugh’s description of *meditatio* are its multifarious ranges of action—it runs, gazes, draws together, penetrates—and the broad scope with or within which these activities are said to take place.

Bernard’s description of *consideratio*—a meditative act that he defines as “intensa ad investigandum cogitatio, vel intentio animi vestigantis verum” [thought earnestly directed to research, or the application of the mind to the search for truth]⁴²—identifies meditation with inwardly directed exploration, but also with mental activities of collecting, organizing, and correcting things scattered about the memory:

Et primum quidem ipsum fontem suum, id est mentem, de qua oritur, purificat
consideratio. Deinde regit affectus, dirigit actus, corrigit excessus, componit mores,

⁴⁰ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.10 “De meditatione.”

⁴¹ Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.10. Trans. Taylor, 92.

⁴² Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Consideratione* 2.2 (PL 182.745). Translated by John D. Anderson and Elizabeth Kennan in *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*, Cistercian Fathers Series 37 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1976), 52.

vitam honestat et ordinat, postremo divinarum pariter et humanarum rerum scientiam confert. Haec est quae confusa disternat, hiantia cogit, sparsa colligit, secreta rimatur, vera vestigat, verisimilia examinat, ficta et fucata explorat. Haec est quae agenda praeordinat, acta recogitat, ut nihil in mente resideat aut incorrectum, aut correctione egens.

[Now, of primary importance is the fact that consideration purifies its source, that is, the mind. Notice also that it controls the emotions, guides actions, corrects excesses, improves behavior, confers dignity and order on life, and even imparts knowledge of divine and human affairs. It puts an end to confusion, closes gaps, gathers up what has been scattered, roots out secrets, hunts down truth, scrutinizes what seems to be true, and explores lies and deceit. It decides what is to be done and reviews what has been done in order to eliminate from the mind anything deficient or in need of correction.]⁴³

Inward seeking and inward organization share a common cleansing end in Bernard's formulation, which identifies *consideratio* with a range of internal gathering (*confert, cogit, colligit*), organizing (*componit, ordinat, disternat, praeordinat*), investigating (*rimatur, vestigat, examinat, explorat, recogitat*), and regulating (*regit, dirigit, corrigit*) activities. Bernard figures these ongoing processes of mental purification in language particularly evocative of careful manuscript production, of checking and correcting exemplars (*fontem*) and organizing and collating texts. He addresses the means by which things gathered within the mind may be corrected or purged or internalized and redeployed in a mental striving towards clarity and truth. From Bernard's vantage point, *consideratio's* cleansing effects inextricably link the ordering of life and knowledge. The purifying of the mind, the fount of *consideratio* itself, depends on mental processes of gathering—whereby scattered things (*sparsa*) and gaps (*hiantia*) are brought together and made whole—and evaluation—whereby truths (*vera*), things appearing to be true (*verisimilia*), and things feigned and counterfeited (*ficta et fucata*) are

⁴³ Bernard of Clairvaux, *De Consideratione* 1.7 (PL 182.737). Trans. Anderson and Kennan, 38.

probed and identified. These multifarious actions of *consideratio* aim thereby to render the mind not only a dynamic compilation, but a harmonious and pristine one, a library fit for Christ.

Bernard's formulation of *consideratio*—like Augustine's formulation of *cogitatio* and Hugh's discussions of reading, memory, and meditation—reveals the centrality of the collection and discerning arrangement of knowledge within the mind to *cogitatio*, *meditatio*, and the pursuit of truth. All three evoke by their writing the complexity, vitality, and moral import of collection and compilation as mental processes. These mental activities may manifest externally in oral or written compositions or in the action of life itself, but to the extent that these processes collection and compilation produce something within the mind, their product is never static. Notable in the writing of Augustine and Hugh is the lack of fixity of things stored within the memory. *Cogitatio* and *ruminatio*, figured respectively as processes of unearthing and curating and of chewing and tasting—and even regurgitating and retasting—not only maintain what is in the memory, but embody ongoing and alterable reflective and productive processes. These perpetual moral and intellectual activities, these mental practices of collection and compilation, generate dynamic and infinitely expandable entities—compilations of the mind—whose form and content can no more be rendered static than the living minds—or hearts—in which they reside.

Compiling the *Corpus*: From Mind to Material Matrix

The growing identification of text-based knowledge with textual divisibility, mobility, and searchability seen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries might not mark a break with a primarily mental processing of knowledge, but material compilations—sites at which physical compilatory processes concretized the mental compilatory activities discussed in the previous section—

prompted a visual processing of knowledge and perhaps even promoted it. As Carruthers has suggested, the mental scaffolding of the memory and its compositions must have conditioned ways in which text was organized and structured on the page. Libraries in which books are collected, books in which texts are collected, and texts in which the *sententiae* of many writers and thinkers are collected all reproduce the kind of organized disposition of knowledge that was supposed to take place within the trained minds of the educated.⁴⁴ Just as mnemonic techniques geared the mental storage of knowledge towards its ready retrieval and deployment, so did textual compilations increasingly present material arranged in such ways—and with such apparatus—as to enable and encourage the recovery and scrutiny of their contents.

As textual compilations placed a growing emphasis on the visual processing of knowledge, a rhetoric of fixity and solidity was emerging within the self-reflexive writings of textual compilers. In their figurations of their textual acts and creations, compilers redirect earlier discourses of mental compilation to justify and to delineate (and even, at times, to obfuscate) their intermediary interventions in the activities of reading and interpretation. In doing so, they recall Hugh's anxieties over the ethical stakes of these transformative processes. Compilers assume the morally-inflected responsibilities of selecting, arranging, and otherwise framing texts for the consumption of their readers, but they interpose their intermediary textual presence between these texts and other readers. These interventions—whether textual or conceptual—create an ambivalent space in

⁴⁴ Carruthers sums up the mental analogue: “Memory without conscious design is like an uncatalogued library, a useless contradiction in terms. For human memory should be most like a library of texts, made accessible and useful through various consciously applied heuristic schemes” (*Book of Memory*, 39).

which both compiler and reader, as in Hugh's metaphorical wood, must successively negotiate the abundance and contradiction inherent in reading.

A tacit or explicit justification of the concretizing and stabilizing characteristics of textual compilation runs through the discourse of compilation gaining ground in the later Middle Ages. Paul the Deacon—himself a *de facto* compiler, though he does not identify himself as such—supplies a tenth-century definition of the term: “*compilare cogere est et in unum condere*” [*compilare* is to gather together and put together into one].⁴⁵ This definition shares one crucial verb with Augustine's description of mental compilation, *cogere*; its sense of ‘bringing together’ is reinforced by Paul's *in unum*. Compilation, by Paul's account, entails gathering materials and rendering them into one thing, one singular product. The method of this transformation lies in the other action included within the scope of Paul's definition, *condere*, which maintains a sense of physicality and permanence across its range of denotations: it is a verb of foundation, construction, preservation, and written production.⁴⁶ While Augustine describes a kind of mental compilation whose cohesion could be maintained through constant assembly and curation, a dynamic matrix both expandable and generative, Paul the Deacon characterizes textual compilation as a stable edifice, a unification of gathered materials into one fixed and finite product. With the singularity and finitude of the compiler's product come attendant implications of vision and decision; just as a building articulates the plan of its builder, though its constituent parts be not of his or her making, so do the unifying and integrating aspects of the textual process of compilation necessitate that the

⁴⁵ My translation. Hathaway cites Paul the Deacon's definition from his epitome of Sextus Pompeius Festus's *De verborum significatu* as the earliest ‘neutral’ definition of *compilare* (“*Compilatio*,” 35).

⁴⁶ See “condo” in Lewis and Short.

compiler's textual product bear his or her mark, or, in other words, reflect his or her reading process. A similar language of coherence, permanence, and singularity characterizes other early usages of the term *compilare* in relation to compilatory textual production.⁴⁷ This language is suggestive: while mental compilation, as a meditative process, depends on mental vigilance, on an ongoing gathering and curating of knowledge, physical compilations offered a surer guarantee of a permanent compiled product, a means by which thought and composition might be fixed, saved, and shared, and rendered into coherent textual edifices through the agency of a compiler.

Vincent of Beauvais, a self-identified *compilator*, addressed these ideas head-on in the thirteenth century. In describing the project of his prodigious compilation, *Speculum maius*, he positions the undertaking as a solution to the mental and mortal limitations of readers aspiring to increase and retain their knowledge:

Quoniam multitudo librorum et temporis breuitas memorie quoque labilitas non patiuntur cuncta que scripta sunt, pariter animo comprehendi, mihi omnium fratrum minimo plurimorum libros assidue ex longo tempore reuoluenti ac studiose legenti uisum est tandem ... quosdam flores pro modulo ingenii mei electos ex omnibus fere quos legere potui ... in unum corpus uoluminis quodam compendio et ordine summatim redigere.

[The multitude of books, the brevity of time, and the slipperiness of the memory do not permit all things that have been written to be comprehended by the mind at one time. Therefore, as I, least of my brothers, long and assiduously read and

⁴⁷ For example, in another early use of the term (also cited in Hathaway, "*Compilatio*") Wolfherius, an eleventh-century canon of Hildesheim, wrote of a *vita* of St Godehard that he was able to compile (*compilare quiverim*), "simplicem veritatis sententiam construxerim [I built a simple *sententia* of the truth]" (*PL* 141.1163). (The translation here is from Hathaway, "*Compilatio*," 37.) Here again, the verb associated with compilation denotes building and reinforces a sense of compilation as a construction process with a durable and architectural result. The singularity of the compiler's product, the *simplicem sententiam*, comes through in the singular grammatical object, but even more so in the sense of the phrase: the compiler has produced a distillation of meaning (*sententiam*) that is simple, straightforward, and, as *simplicem* also connotes, single (*simplex* is, in fact, etymologically related to the adverb *semel* 'once, a single time').

reflected, I had the idea of bringing together into one whole, by means of a kind of abbreviation and superficial ordering, certain flowers that I had carefully chosen from among nearly all the books which I was able to read.]⁴⁸

Vincent's rhetoric of textual compilation resembles that of mental compilation discussed above, particularly Hugh's discussion of the *arcula memoriae* and its maintenance. Like Hugh, Vincent expresses anxiety over the multitude of books in circulation and, like Hugh, he thus concerns himself with the choice and maintenance of worthy extracts derived from reading. Vincent, however, envisions—and supplies—a different repository for them—not Hugh's infinitely expandable *arcula memoriae*, but the single body of a book (*unum corpus uoluminis*).

It is clear from the trajectory of this passage that Vincent regards the book, or at least *his* book, as a repository of knowledge preferable to the memory. Memory is slippery (*memorie ... labilitas*), he writes. In one sense this is not a new anxiety, hence Augustine's and Hugh's solicitude regarding the maintenance of remembered things in the mind. Vincent does not necessarily deny the efficacy of memory, but its slippery, transient nature and its consequent need for ongoing upkeep threaten to inundate the mind, much as the ever-growing multitude of books (*multitudo librorum*) and the scantness of time in which to read them (*temporis breuitas*) threaten to overwhelm it. Memory's lack of fixity poses a mental hurdle to the mind's simultaneous comprehension (*pariter animo comprehendendi*) of all that has been written. Vincent describes such a simultaneous and comprehensive vision in his own contemplation of the world:

Ipsa namque mens plerumque paululum a prefatis cogitationum et affectionum fecibus se erigens, et in specula rationis ut potest assurgens, quasi de quodam eminenti loco, totius mundi magnitudinem uno ictu considerat, infinita loca

⁴⁸ Vincent of Beauvais, *Libellus apologeticus*, cap. 1. Slightly adapted from the translation of Mary Franklin-Brown in *Reading the World: Encyclopedic Writing in the Scholastic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 65.

diuersis creature generibus repleta intra se continentem, eum quoque totius mundi uidelicet a principio usque nunc uno quodam aspectu nihilominus conspicit, ibique tempora omnia diuersas per generationum successiones rerumque mutationes continentia quasi sub quadam linea comprehendit, et inde saltem intuitu fidei ad cogitandum utcumque creatoris ipsius magnitudinem, pulchritudinem atque perpetuitatem ascendit.

[Often my mind, raising itself a little from the dregs of worldly thoughts and affections, and climbing as well as it can to the look-out posts of reason, surveys at a single go as if from a high place the greatness of the whole world, containing infinite places filled with various types of creatures, and it also sees the ages of the whole world, from the beginning until now, in one look, and there it comprehends all times, containing the sequence of generations and the changes of things as if in a line, and then by the intuition of faith it rises somehow to think of the greatness, beauty and perpetuity of the creator himself.]⁴⁹

The totality of vision that Vincent describes here—spanning all times and all places and ascending by the intuition of faith to thinking on the magnitude, beauty, and endlessness of the creator—comes to his mind in one blow (*uno ictu*), in one look (*uno ... aspectu*); he describes a kind of mental transcendence occasioned by his mind's ascent to a high place—a watch tower, as it were, of reason (*in specula rationis*). Though this experience bears a marked resemblance to the unfettered meditative explorations described above—meditative movements that, as Hugh expresses it, begin in reading and even constitute its apotheosis—Vincent identifies the generalized processes of memorative reading as potentially inhibitive, rather than contributive, to comprehensive insight. Instead, Vincent presents his book as a stimulus to this sort of contemplation; he offers his *Speculum* as an alternative, or as a shortcut, to the *specula rationis*. In lieu, or in aid, of an ascent to

⁴⁹ Vincent of Beauvais, *Libellus apologeticus*, cap. 5. Translated by Peter Binkley in “Preachers’ Responses to Thirteenth-Century Encyclopaedism,” in *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts: Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress, Groningen, 1-4 July 1996*, ed. Peter Binkley (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 80.

mental eminence, above the noise of the world and its clamorous books, Vincent's book offers a reflection, an image, of what he sees from his own vantage point.

Vincent offers his own compiled volume not only to remedy the labor of acquiring knowledge the old-fashioned way, rendered more daunting by the increasing abundance of books and the finite span of time in which they may be read, but, also as a physical alternative to, or supplement for, the memory, whose shifting permutations presumably inhibit the holistic vision to which Vincent's work aspires. Yet, as Vincent's narration of his conception and production of the work illustrates, his own efforts are firmly grounded in these trenches of medieval scholarship. His labor of reading (*legenti*) and pondering (*reoluenti*)—presumably a process at least partially memorial—over a long period of time (*ex longo tempore*) provides both the inspiration and the foundation for his undertaking.⁵⁰ Vincent's prefatory remarks invalidate neither memory nor the lavishing of time on reading many books; instead, they rhetorically position these approaches to reading as burdens assumed by the compiler, whose work offers readers a means of circumventing, or at least supplementing, these problematic conduits toward simultaneous, comprehensive mental insight. In externalizing his accumulated knowledge, Vincent renders it and the processes by which it is amassed and organized into a static and finite product, which is a kind of freeze frame—or an image, as his titular use of *speculum* implies—of his own mental compilation and, it is implied, his

⁵⁰ Vincent articulates the circumstances of his own comprehension ambiguously. In describing the period of reading and thought essential to his encyclopedic undertaking, his use of the term *reoluenti* denotes a broad sense of turning over, unrolling, and unwinding that supports more specific denotations of both rereading and reflection. While the word recalls Hugh's ruminative term *replicare*, Vincent's revisitation of his reading is not so clearly marked as a wholly mental or physical act, perhaps deliberately so; it straddles both physical and mental processes of reading.

mental insight.⁵¹ In the single body of his book (*unum corpus voluminis*) Vincent proposes to furnish a mirror in which the reader may divine the universe and even its creator.

Vincent's valorization of his compiling project and its presentation of collected (and collective) learning within *unum corpus voluminis* raises questions regarding how textual extraction and arrangement differently condition knowledge when encountered as a *fait accompli* on the page rather than as processes carried out in the mind. The organizing principles of textual compilations like Vincent's increase the accessibility of a wide range of *auctoritates*—or at least of their *flores*, their greatest hits—and the ease with which they may be found and appropriated, while at the same time preserving distinctions of source and authority. But the imposition of selection, order, and form upon a considerable body of knowledge by a compiler must inevitably shape readers' perceptions of that body of knowledge and guide the use they make of it. Not only is such knowledge in a sense pre-digested or regurgitated (recalling the ruminative metaphors of Hugh and others), but it is also re-authorized (recalling the metaphor of Hercules' club); in the process of compiling, the compiler reconfers and reorders authority, and through the processes of extraction and arrangement, repurposes authority, promoting new dialogues (or disputes) or reorienting their terms and contexts. The compiler's intervention—duplicating some authorial actions and some readerly ones—produces an intermediary matrix between reader and *auctoritates*.

⁵¹For all its fixity on the page, however, the various kinds of compilatory apparatus discussed in the first section of this chapter would have endowed the text with a different, if limited, plasticity. Finding aids open up the possibilities of different kinds of reading, some of which might allow a reader to acknowledge a compiler's framing interventions without fully experiencing or exploring them.

One area of future inquiry within this project will involve investigating the extent to which compilers like Vincent acknowledge the dynamic between their compiling projects and the multiple modes of reading enabled by manuscript finding aids.

Though textual compilations present a fixed selection of authorities arranged within a stable structure, they remain dynamic entities in another sense: the heterovocality of these works establishes a dissonance within the compiler's framework, an interrogative tension that drives the reader's engagement with authority. Recall that in Hugh's account of reading and extraction, he urges the reader to confront textual disputation as well as textual prolixity, distilling (when possible) what is lengthy or contentious down to its essentials in the process of committing it to memory (*colligere est ea de quibus prolixius vel scriptum vel disputatum est ad brevem quamdam et compendiosam summam redigere*). The reader Hugh describes is essentially 'tracting,' that is engaging in a process of weighing, reconciling, and assimilating information, of forging coherence.⁵² Though textual compilations result from a superficially similar process of extraction, many compilers—and notably Vincent and his encyclopedist peers—explicitly distance their compiling practice from the process of 'tracting' Hugh describes.⁵³

This detachment emerges in the metaphorical language with which self-acknowledged compilers articulated their projects. Compilers like Brunetto Latini, the earliest vernacular encyclopedist, employ the commonplace of bees' industrious collection of nectar and production of honey both to acknowledge their textual interventions and to obscure their extent. The *topos* goes back at least as far as Seneca, who used it as a metaphor for the creative process (i.e. for the assembly of ideas and the genesis of new compositions from this assembly). Adapting Seneca's metaphor, Macrobius writes in support of textual appropriation, "apes enim quodammodo debemus

⁵² Hugh associates tracting (*tractando*) with rumination (specifically, chewing) in his fruit metaphor (see above). The connection between ruminative meditation and forging coherence is even clearer in Bernard (see above).

⁵³ This distancing constitutes a crucial strand of *compiler*-discourse, as expounded by Minnis.

imitari, quae...flores carpunt, deinde quicquid attulere disponunt ac per favos dividunt, et succum varium in unum saporem mixtura quadam...mutant” [we should in a way imitate the bees which...pluck the flowers, and then whatever they are wont to bring back they divide up into the honeycomb, changing the varied liquor into one flavor by a certain mixture].⁵⁴ Macrobius describes the process of compilation—though, it should be noted, this is not the word he employs—as one of transformation: the various nectars (*succum varium*) harvested by the bees transform by a kind of mixture (*mixtura quadam...mutant*) into a single flavor.⁵⁵

In distinguishing between his authorities and his own labors as a compiler, Brunetto Latini avoids the transformational part of the metaphor altogether in his preface to the thirteenth-century *Livres dou Trésor*:

& si ne di je pas que li livres soit estrait de mon propre sens ne de ma nue escience, mes il ert ausi come une bresche de mel coilie de divers flors, car ceste livre est compilés seulement des mervilleus dit des autors qui devant nostre tens ont traité de philoçofie, chascun selonc ce qui en savoit parties; car toute ne la puet savoir home terreine ...

[I do not say that the book is based on my own wisdom, which is indeed meager, but rather it is like a honeycomb collected from different flowers, for this book is compiled exclusively from the marvellous sayings of the authors who before our

⁵⁴ *Saturnalia* 1.praef.4f (qtd. in Hathaway, “*Compilatio*,” 25). Translated by Hathaway in “*Compilatio*,” 25.

⁵⁵ Macrobius’s emphasis on the homogeneity of the compiled product anticipates such articulations as Isidore of Seville’s: “compiler,” he writes, is “qui aliena dicta suis praemiscet, sicut solet pigmentarii in pila mixta contundere [a *compilator* is someone who mixes the sayings of others with his own, as paint sellers are wont to grind different combinations [of pigments] in a mortar]” (*Etymologiae* 10.44). (The translation here is from Hathaway, “*Compilatio*,” 28.) Isidore’s definition not only places the compiler’s own words on the same footing as those of others (in contrast to the definition offered by Bonaventure and espoused by encyclopedists like Vincent), but decidedly confounds identification and partitioning of *dicta* in their commingling (*praemiscet*). Indeed, by his description, the compiler’s labor is analogous not to mere mastication, but to pulverization (*contundere*).

time have dealt with philosophy, each one in accordance with his own particular knowledge, for no earthly man can know everything.]⁵⁶

Brunetto likens his book to a honeycomb (*une bresche de mel*) whose contents, the marvellous sayings of authors (*des merueilleus dit des autors*), have been collected from many flowers (*coilie de divers flors*). In keeping with the passage's overall focus, this analogy focuses on sources, the *divers flors*, and the repository that has been furnished for them, namely the matrix of the *bresche de mel*. Here, though, the action linking *mel* and *flors* involves no transformation, only collection (*coilie*). The apian intermediaries between flowers and honey are notably absent in this analogy as well, an omission that further obscures agency.

This omission of firmly assigned agency contributes to a sense of detachment between the compiler and his gathered *dicta* or *dit*; a compilation may yield a honey derived from the flowers of the *autours*, but the locus of transformation is diffused, spread between the compiler and the reader. According to claims like Brunetto's, compilers figuratively harvest the nectar of the choicest flowers and place the fruit of their harvest within the ordained matrix of the honeycomb. Foregrounding the honeycomb makes sense in this context; Brunetto's interventions depend on the choice and storage of valuable *dis*, on their arrangement within the framing matrix so clearly evoked by the metaphor of the *bresche de miel*, but these interventions offer no promise of predigestion, of interpretive transformation. His insistence that his compilation offers

⁵⁶ *Li Livres dou Trésor* 1.1; this reference and other references to *Li Livres* are from Brunetto Latini, *Li Livres dou Trésor*, ed. Spurgeon Baldwin and Paul Barrette, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 257 (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2003). This and other translations of *Li Livres* are from the translation by Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin, *Brunetto Latini: The Book of the Treasure (Li livres dou Trésor)*, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 90 (New York: Garland, 1993), 1.

unadulterated, unmasticated, unchanged *dit* places the burden of ruminative transformation, digestion, and resolution on the reader.

Similarly, Vincent expresses his detachment from his *auctoritates* and his work's eschewal of coherence as a relinquishment of judgment to his readers:

Et ego quidem non ignoro philosophos inter se multa dixisse contraria, maximeque de rerum natura... . Sed quoniam in istis...pars utralibet contradictionis absque periculo nostre fidei potest credi vel discredi, lectorem admoneo, ne forsan abhorreat, si quas huiusmodi contrariedades sub diuersorum actorum nominibus in plerisque locis huius operis insertas inueniat, presertim cum ego iam professus sim, in hoc opere me non tractatoris sed excerptoris morem gerere, ideoque non magno opere laborasse dicta philosophorum ad concordiam redigere, sed tantum quid de unaquaque re quilibet eorum senserit aut scripserit recitare, lectoris arbitrio relinquendo cuius sententie potius deberat adherere.

[I am not unaware that the philosophers made among themselves many contradictory statements, especially concerning the nature of things... . But since in these matters either side may be believed or not without danger for our faith, I advise the reader especially—lest he be deterred, coming upon contradictions of this kind under the names of diverse authors inserted in multiple places in this work—that I do not claim to have proceeded as a treatise-writer (*tractator*), but rather as an excerptor (*excerptor*). Therefore I have not undertaken the huge task of bringing the statements of the philosophers into concord with each other, but rather I repeat whatever any one of them thought or wrote concerning any given thing, leaving it to the judgment of the reader which opinion he should accept.]⁵⁷

Vincent justifies the presence of contradictions (*contrariedades*) in his work by his assertion that he is not 'tracting,' not distilling *auctoritates* into a treatise, but working as an excerptor (*non tractoris sed excerptoris*). Vincent is observing a distinction analogous to that between picking (*carpimus - legendo*) and chewing (*ruminamus - tractando*), recalling Hugh's fructuous metaphor. Not only are the compiled *dicta* inserted *sub diuersorum actorum nominibus*—Vincent being at great pains to

⁵⁷ Vincent of Beauvais, *Libellus apologeticus*, cap. 7. Trans. in Franklin-Brown, *Reading the World*, 67.

maintain clarity of attribution—but they have gone through the compiling process thoroughly unmasticated by him, he claims: he only repeats thoughts or writings attributable to his sources. Vincent’s use of *recitare* here conveys a sense of potential superficiality or detachment; to memorize or recite *verbatim* need involve no engagement with what the words actually mean, much less with any deeper meaning (*sententia*) to which they point.⁵⁸ Vincent’s formulation draws a distinction not only between his words and others’, but also between *verba* and *res*, words and their *sententiae*. His language suggests a very restricted contact with his compiled *dicta*, one in which he has read and reproduced without the internalization or deeper understanding that characterizes ruminative reading.

In offering his readers *contrarietates* and leaving them to judge among conflicting *sententiae*, Vincent undertakes a different approach to the ethical problems of choice Hugh had identified with reading, an approach in which his vision as a compiler offers guidance to his readers, but demands that they make their own determinations as to what to believe and internalize. The heterovocality Vincent avows offers a potential means to the reconciliation of *contrarietates* and reasoning towards truth. Abelard’s twelfth-century *Sic et Non* argues the interpretive potential of such heterovocality. *Sic et Non* is itself a compilation of *contrarietates*. Abelard discusses the various causes underlying such apparent opposition, many of which derive, he contends, from failures of the reader’s understanding. In doing so, he provides various avenues by which readers might resolve

⁵⁸ Minnis has noted Vincent’s distinction between assertion (*asserendo*), for which the writer must claim responsibility, and repetition (*recitando*), for which the writer may disclaim responsibility, and traced the conceptual contrast to the twelfth-century schools and specifically to Peter Abelard’s *Sic et Non*, though, as he notes, these are not the terms employed by Abelard (“Late-Medieval Discussions,” 409). As Carruthers has observed, however, *recitare* is a verb associated with rote, word-for-word memorization (*Book of Memory*, 115).

apparent contradictions through rational inquiry.⁵⁹ The *dicta* he has compiled are to function as goads to such rational inquiry and to the pursuit of truth:

... placet, ut instituimus, diversa sanctorum patrum dicta colligere, quae nostrae occurrerint memoriae aliquam ex dissonantia quam habere videntur quaestionem contrahentia, quae teneros lectores ad maximum inquirendae veritatis exercitium provocent et acutiores ex inquisitione reddant. Haec quippe prima sapientiae clavis definitur assidua scilicet seu frequens interrogatio; ad quam quidem toto desiderio arripiendam philosophus ille omnium perspicacissimus Aristoteles in praedicamento *Ad Aliquid* studiosos adhortatur dicens, “Fortasse autem difficile est de huiusmodi rebus confidenter declarare nisi saepe pertractata sint. Dubitare autem de singulis non erit inutile.” Dubitando quippe ad inquisitionem venimus; inquirendo veritatem percipimus.

[It is my purpose, according to my original intention, to gather together various sayings of the holy Fathers which have occurred to me as being surrounded by some degree of uncertainty because of their seeming incompatibility. These may encourage inexperienced readers to engage in that most important exercise, enquiry into truth, and as a result of that enquiry give an edge to their critical faculty. For consistent or frequent questioning is defined as the first key to wisdom. Aristotle, the most clear-sighted of all philosophers, urges us to grasp this wholeheartedly. For he exhorts the studiosus in the prologue *Ad aliquid* in the words: ‘Perhaps it is difficult to make a confident pronouncement on matters of this sort unless they have been thoroughly gone over many times. Likewise, it will not be amiss to have doubts about individual points.’ For by doubting we come to enquiry, and by enquiry we perceive the truth.]⁶⁰

Abelard formulates his project as a pedagogical mission; his choices and groupings of auctoritates are calculated to appear unreconcilable so as to pose an intellectual challenge to inexperienced

⁵⁹ Failing that, of course, one must weigh one authority against another: “Quod si forte adeo manifesta sit controversia ut nulla possit absolvi ratione, conferendae sunt auctoritates, et quae potioris est testimonii et maioris confirmationis potissimum retinenda [But if the dispute is so obvious that it cannot be resolved by having recourse to reasoning [i.e. rational argument], then authorities must be compared, and that authority retained which has more value as evidence and greater weight]” (Abelard, prologue of *Sic et Non*); this and all other references to the Latin text of *Sic et Non* are from *Sic et Non: A Critical Edition*, ed. Blanche Boyer and Richard McKeon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). The translation here is from Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, 94.

⁶⁰ Abelard, prologue of *Sic et Non*. Trans. in Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, 99.

readers (*teneros lectores*). His ability to construct this pedagogically profitable *exercitium* implies his contrasting experience and knowledge and identifies him as a figure of guidance and of authority, albeit one whose role in *Sic et Non* is not assertive—he offers no answers to the *quaestiones* that he poses—but largely passive, exerted through his acts of compiling and framing *auctoritates*. Vincent’s readers can choose to come to grips with his *contrarietates* (or not), but, like his *compilator* predecessor Abelard, Vincent rhetorically restricts his role to that of selection and arrangement. It is implicit in both compilers’ prefaces, however, that such selection and arrangement amount to crucial acts of framing.

These acts of framing signal a departure—explicit on Abelard’s part and implicit, possibly even unconscious, on Vincent’s part—from the means by which thinkers like Bernard articulate the pursuit of truth. Recalling Bernard’s account of *consideratio*, his dominant metaphor for the processing of knowledge intertwines the idea of mental purification with the language of manuscript correction. If the mind is a text, Bernard elevates the achievement of a coherent, even a perfectable, collection predicated on strict regulation and even erasure of that which is deficient (*incorrectum*). Ruminative reading and ongoing meditation offer a means to that end. Vincent’s and, to an even greater extent, Abelard’s *contrarietates* defy this particular vision of coherence, embracing conflict and even doubt within the bounds of collection. Abelard makes a virtue of apparent incoherence, deploying it as a pedagogical tool that enshrines dialectic upon the page. In the process, his compilation prompts his readers to grapple with uncertainty—the ‘yes’ and the ‘no’ of his title—and, in the process, to learn to read with recourse to logic and, more broadly, reason. Indeed, the polyvocal collectedness of *Sic et Non*, framed within a coherently pedagogical

framework, prompts readers not only to learn to read in new ways, but to read self-consciously, to scrutinize their own learning.

Compilatory frameworks like this one establish particular terms in which readers initially approach the embedded texts and particular ends to which they read and reread them. A reader may still read in the meditative, replicative manner encouraged by Hugh, incorporating selected contents of the physical compilation into an expansive compilation of the mind. Furthermore, manuscript copies of textual compilations like Vincent's *Speculum maius* were often searchable, opened up to different readings—and new kinds of choice—by the presence of indices and other finding aids; one's readings within Vincent's *Speculum* need not be conditioned entirely or to any great extent by his framing interventions. Yet a compiler's imposition of selection, order, and form upon a considerable body of knowledge must inevitably shape readers' perceptions of that body of knowledge and guide the use they make of it; compilatory choices and arrangements necessarily circumscribe readers' choices and judgments.

For all that compilers deprecate their roles as mere excerptors and re-presenters of old *auctoritates*, they are builders (recalling the language of Peter the Deacon) of new literary edifices, erecting frameworks within which polyvocal *auctoritates* are placed in productive, if sometimes contentious, juxtaposition. They are also guides. Vincent's and Abelard's frames plot out trajectories, offering readers itineraries that are informed by their own readings and geared to the achievement of particular ends—encyclopedic knowledge, say, or a honed intellect—even as they ultimately leave readers' choices, their routes, to their own will and judgment. While they prompt their readers to craft their own readings and form their own ethical determinations, both

compilers' framing interventions condition the scope and direction of their readers' paths through the tangled wood of Scripture and a multitude of books.

Whether in the ruminative metaphors of Hugh of St Victor or the prefatory demurrals of Vincent of Beauvais, thinking about reading means thinking about collection, about the ethics of choice and consumption, extraction and arrangement, dynamism and fixity. The discourses of compilation that give expression to these the ideas supply a means of probing modes of ethical reading, different ways of traversing Hugh's wood. At the same time, relying as they do on the language of manuscript production, they also gesture towards the ways in which the page—or the codex—itsself can shape and direct a reader's ethical trajectory. Compilers' negotiations of *auctoritates* and their own framing authority testify to the multiple agencies that potentially drive the creation and consumption of collections and to their own anxieties over their intermediary status as both consumers and producers of text. As the coming chapters will attest, medieval scribes occupied a similarly intermediary position and could exercise a similar framing agency in their inscription of collections, both textual and codicological. Focusing on two quite different manuscripts produced in late medieval England, the rest of this dissertation will argue the productive interventions of these manuscripts' scribes in reframing vernacular texts, conditioning readers' experiences of them, and, ultimately, probing means of reading them well.

CHAPTER TWO

BOOKLET THREE AND ITS READERS: CONSTRUING COLLECTION AND ECLECTICISM IN THE AUCHINLECK MANUSCRIPT

As modern readers, we look—even long—for coherence in medieval manuscripts, for framing purposes and meaningful paths through the wilderness of their assembled texts. As scholars of bibliography and history, we must often acknowledge that such coherence is elusive and, where we see it, often the manifestation of our wishes rather than the revelation of our studies. Contingency, even chaos, has shaped many medieval books. This chapter centers on a manuscript whose visual and textual unities have enabled scholars to take make some compelling claims for its coherence—namely, the well-known, well-studied Auchinleck manuscript. That said, the chapter adopts a seemingly counterintuitive approach, examining the moments of disruption, the outbreaks of contingency and chaos that work against this coherence within the book. In other words, I address what does not fit our prevailing picture of the manuscript and its project. In dwelling on what diverges from expectation, my purpose is not to challenge the view that Auchinleck is largely a planned and even somewhat coherent book, but to interrogate how its disruptions may ultimately enrich and nuance this view. Coherence and meaning on smaller scales and of different orders emerge from the manuscript's moments of divergence.

Scholars' views of Auchinleck's coherence derive chiefly from some clear linguistic and generic predilections behind the selection and arrangement of its contents—namely the predominance of English poems and, specifically, of Middle English verse romances—and from the harmonies of visual presentation tying its contents together. The now widely accepted theory, advanced by Timothy Shonk, that Scribe 1 planned and oversaw many aspects of Auchinleck's

production at the behest of the manuscript's commissioning patron has strengthened arguments for purposeful planning in the manuscript.¹ Turning my attention in the first section of this chapter to the evident disruptions and inconsistencies in this planning, I probe the moments of contact between the scribes who contributed to this manuscript, with particular attention to the dynamics of power and temporality that shaped their collaborations. These points of contact—where organization and deliberation is most powerfully contested and scholars have struggled hardest to reconcile divergences in scribal practice—provide a necessary context for understanding the unique position of Booklet 3 (long a thorn in the side of proponents of Auchinleck's coherence) in this manuscript and for appreciating the understudied contributions of Scribe 3 to this booklet. A closer examination of Scribe 3's work alongside that of Scribe 2 reveals in their stints points of productive rupture or redirection within the manuscript. The second section of this chapter clarifies and, where necessary, rehabilitates Scribe 3's capacities to comprehend and shape the material within his stint. Focusing on Scribe 3's abilities and agency, I trace his shifting engagement with Scribe 1's visual and textual program and propose that Booklet 3 be read as the product of a meaningful convergence of multiple scribal intelligences. The third and final section scrutinizes the booklet's opening—and least-studied—texts, *On the Seven Deadly Sins* and *The Paternoster*, and argues that they ground Scribe 3's literary project, a project fundamentally concerned with modes and modalities of reading. These two brief works, both collections in their

¹ See Shonk, "A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century," *Speculum* 60 (1985). Matthew Fisher's recent book pushes Scribe 1's role a significant step further, advancing the argument that Scribe 1's shaping of the manuscript extended to authorship of what he terms "derivative texts," which "translate or assemble the words of numerous source texts, typically without acknowledging their textual indebtedness" (*Scribal Authorship*, 60); see Fisher, "The Auchinleck Manuscript and the Writing of History," chap. 4 in *Scribal Authorship*.

own right, deploy pedagogical frameworks to prompt their audiences to read self-consciously and in increasingly hermeneutically advanced ways. Seen liberated from considerations of the manuscript's overall coherence, Booklet 3 promotes a sophisticated and inwardly-directed project distinct from, but potentially informing, that of Auchinleck as a whole.

Reframing Booklet 3: Collaborations and Divergences among Auchinleck's 'Troublesome' Scribes

The third extant booklet in Auchinleck is in many ways the hardest to reconcile with prevailing scholarly insights into the probable means by which the manuscript was produced in early fourteenth-century London. Scholars of Auchinleck frequently turn to the comfortingly authorial figure of Scribe 1 as a way into understanding the manuscript's construction and its purpose as a kind of authored book. He is presumed to have made many of the decisions that shaped the manuscript as we now encounter it, and his own scribal contributions to the book dwarf those of the other five scribes who penned Auchinleck's contents.² Commenting on the probable circumstances of the manuscript's production, Ralph Hanna has remarked that "it's difficult to see Auchinleck as anything other than scribe 1's book."³ Even when we talk about these other scribes, Scribe 1 is always the implied, if not explicit, foil to their practices and the presumed manager of their activities. As one of few booklets in which Scribe 1 did no copying—and the only

² Some scholars hold that the hands attributed to Scribes 1 and 6 are actually the work of a single scribe, though Alison Wiggins has made a compelling argument for six scribes in "Are Auchinleck Manuscript Scribes 1 and 6 the Same Scribe? The Advantages of Whole-Data Analysis and Electronic Texts," *Medium Aevum* 73 (2004). By my own assessment there were six scribes collaborating on this manuscript, and the codicological analysis in this section bears me out.

³ Hanna, "Reconsidering the Auchinleck Manuscript," in *New Directions in Later Medieval Manuscript Studies: Essays from the 1998 Harvard Conference*, ed. Derek Pearsall (York: York Medieval Press, 2000), 93.

booklet among these few to which multiple scribes definitely contributed—Booklet 3 exhibits a fascinating tension with the manuscript’s mastermind.⁴ It appears at times to elude Scribe 1’s project—and thus affords an opportunity to complicate our notions of what that might be.

Booklet 3 contrasts with other parts of Auchinleck structurally and visually, and these and other eccentricities have made it both a mine of information and a bit of a scholarly bugbear. On the one hand, Scribe 1’s interventions in this booklet (where we can identify them) tell us a great deal about his role in ‘finishing’ the manuscript, in imposing order on its many parts and shaping the final form of the book. Shonk’s influential study of the manuscript extrapolates much of its sequence of production from the evidence of this booklet.⁵ At the same time, the scribes of this booklet and the texts they copied invariably come up as the exceptions to the uniformity of plan and production observed elsewhere. Perhaps moved to empathize with his scribal subject, Scribe 1, Shonk eventually acknowledges Scribe 2 to be “troublesome” and appears to find Scribe 3, the primary contributor to Booklet 3, only marginally less so.⁶ Finding Scribe 3’s handiwork similarly troublesome, other scholars have espoused the possibility that the booklet initially existed on its own as a fascicle before its incorporation into Auchinleck.⁷ Bucking the trend observed elsewhere

⁴ For an overview of Auchinleck’s booklets and their constituent quires, texts, and scribal stints, see the table in Appendix A.

⁵ See Shonk, “Bookmen,” 74 for a discussion of the blank leaves framing this booklet and what they might indicate; 79-80, for a discussion of the telling shift in paraph patterns in this booklet; 85, for a discussion of the gap in the numeration of texts between booklets 2 and 3 and for an assessment of who added titles to works in the manuscript; 82, for an initial discussion of the “troublesome miniature inserted on fol. 72r, in the work of Scribe III”; and 85, for a discussion of how the page’s numeration adds to our understanding of Scribe 1’s practice.

⁶ Shonk, “Bookmen” 78. Shonk enlists the scribal behavior of both as illustrations of “the medieval tolerance for diversity.”

⁷ Ian Cunningham and Judith Crouse Mordkoff embrace a view of the manuscript as a wholly fascicular production in “New Light on the Signatures in the Auchinleck Manuscript (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 19.2.1),” *Scriptorium* 36 (1982). Drawing on an extremely close scrutiny of heretofore undiscussed or

in the manuscript, this booklet begins not with a substantial romance but with two brief religious texts, the sorts of texts that more frequently appear elsewhere in the manuscript at the ends of booklets, where scholars can more readily dismiss them as ‘filler.’⁸ The booklet’s atypical structure

unnoticed markings in the margins of Auchinleck, Cunningham and Mordkoff propose that Scribe 3 (or someone else handling the quires in his stint) numbered his quires without regard to the rest of Auchinleck. They make this claim on the basis of a single mark surviving in the lower margin of f. 84v under the left column of text. This “extremely clear sawtooth line in almost black ink, quite different from and more carefully formed than those accompanying signatures on Scribe 1’s work, [represents] the number three,” they claim (“New Light,” 292). Noting that this mark survives on the second quire of Booklet 3 (their Fascicle C), rather than the third (and observing a gap in item numerations between Booklets 2 and 3) they suggest that this mark furnishes further evidence supporting the suggestion that a quire has been lost from the beginning of Booklet 3, an assertion advanced by Pamela Robinson in “A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Medieval Manuscripts” (B Litt. thesis, Oxford University, 1972), 121. It should be noted, however, that no marks survive in corresponding places among Scribe 3’s other quires. Furthermore, even if a quire were lost between Booklets 2 and 3, it could not strictly be said to belong to Booklet 3, because the intact beginning of *On the Seven Deadly Sins* at the beginning of Quire 11 renders this quire the incontrovertible beginning of a new booklet. This putative lost quire would have been a figurative free agent.

Furthermore, Shonk’s account of the manuscript’s decoration rather challenges this theory:

... scribes must have been aware of the intent to add all of these types of decoration [paraphs, initial capitals, and miniatures], for they had to leave marks for the paraphs and had to both leave space and designate the letter for each capital. ... since these decorations are consistent in color and design ... it appears that the volume was decorated as a unit after the completion of the writing, and no segment of it appears to have been designed for independent circulation. It is highly unlikely that such intricate planning and consistency in style and format would occur within twelve ‘booklets,’ to use Robinson’s term, which were not originally intended to be bound together. (“Bookmen,” 78)

⁸ Derek Pearsall makes note of concerted scribal efforts to begin new texts on new gatherings within Auchinleck in his essay on “Literary and Historical Significance of the Manuscript” within the introduction to the print facsimile, *The Auchinleck Manuscript: National Library of Scotland, Advocates’ MS. 19.2.1* (London: Scolar Press, 1977), vii-xi: ix. Shonk builds on these and his own observations to suggest that “the organizer of the manuscript preferred to begin major items, romances in particular, on a new gathering” (“Bookmen,” 75). Hanna has suggested that these “topheavy booklets” might reflect the manuscript’s “bespoke” status, “a client’s special order ... that, in some sense, got out of hand” and necessitated the inception of a number of booklets containing the client’s specific requests (“Reconsidering,” 94).

Pearsall observes the frequency “of occasions where short poems are used to fill up blank pages at the end of a gathering” and refers to these in his overview of the manuscript as “fillers” (“Literary and Historical Significance,” ix). Shonk elaborates on what constitutes a so-called filler text: “... Scribe I completed gathering 36 with three filler poems (short pieces – less than three full folios – following major works) ...” (“Bookmen,” 76). In his book-length analysis of Middle English romance manuscripts, *Rereading Middle English Romance: Manuscript Layout, Decoration, and the Rhetoric of Composite Structure* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), Murray J. Evans follows Pearsall in dismissing *The Sayings of the Four Philosophers* and the list of Norman barons, the two final works in Booklet 3, as “final fillers in the *Degaré* booklet” (*Rereading*, 96), thereby relieving himself of the obligation to account for these texts’ inclusion in the booklet or the manuscript at large. Hanna is similarly dismissive: “... the booklets conclude with fairly blatant filler ... [an] effort at finishing the book, making it look like a unit ...” (“Reconsidering,” 94).

has occasioned comment from and, even perplexity among, scholars. Hanna, for example, remarks upon the exceptional nature of “scribe 3’s Booklet 3 ... [in which] the big items are buried.”⁹ Murray Evans observes that Booklet 3’s assortment of texts “may well puzzle the reader” within a discussion of these texts that suggests that he succumbed to this puzzlement himself.¹⁰ Derek Pearsall’s summation of Scribe 3’s contribution appears to indicate that he despaired of discerning any purpose behind—or any “big items” central to—its design: it is the only stint for which he resorts to the catch-all “miscellaneous.”¹¹ Arthur Bahr’s recent study of Booklet 3 evinces a more sanguine response to the booklet, celebrating its exceptional structure and probing its meaning.¹² Still, in light of his observations of the booklet’s unusual character, it is hard to account for his conclusion that Scribe 1 is the only possible shaper of this booklet.¹³ In the end, the booklet baffles his attempts to make sense of its production.¹⁴

Booklet 3’s particular contents confound expectations based on the predominance of Middle English narrative—and specifically hagiographical, historiographical, and romance—texts elsewhere in Auchinleck. If anything, the strangeness of Booklet 3’s texts has been insufficiently

⁹ Hanna, “Reconsidering,” 94.

¹⁰ Evans, *Rereading*, 86. Evans further cites the arguments by Robinson and Cunningham and Mordkoff for a missing quire at the beginning of the booklet (see note 7 above) in his attempts to account for the booklet’s strangeness and divergence from practices elsewhere in Auchinleck (*Rereading*, 95).

¹¹ Pearsall, “Literary and Historical Significance,” ix.

¹² Bahr suggests that Booklet 3’s range and arrangement of contents render it a microcosm of Auchinleck. See “Fragmentary Forms of Imitative Fantasy: Booklet 3 of the Auchinleck Manuscript,” chap. 2 in *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

¹³ Having ruled out Scribes 3 and 4 (and made no mention of Scribe 2), Bahr concludes Scribe 1 must have been calling the shots in this booklet: “Scribe 1 ... hangs over the booklet like a ghostly not-quite-author whose presence can be inferred but not proved” (*Fragments and Assemblages*, 111).

¹⁴ Bahr addresses the problem of reconciling the booklet’s strangeness with Scribe 1’s oversight obliquely, suggesting that “the many ways in which booklet 3 seems at odds with the rest of the manuscript ... press us to look more deeply into what, coining Strohm, we might call its *codicological unconscious*” (*Fragments and Assemblages*, 111). The booklet may indeed reward inquiries launched from positions outside or independent of its codicological system, but Bahr’s assessments of the booklet’s production arise from faulty assumptions working within this system.

appreciated. Not only do the first two poems of the booklet, *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*, defy scholarly expectations in their brevity and religious focus, but they differ from the bulk of the religious material within the manuscript insofar as they are non-narrative in structure. These are no renegades from the first two booklets; they take an emphatically different form—both are collections and clearly marked as such on the page—and they serve a different function, one on which I will elaborate in the final section of this chapter. The two final items in the booklet are even more idiosyncratic. The political bent of *The Sayings of the Four Philosophers* anticipates that of some of the poems appearing in the later booklets, but its linguistic features are unique in the manuscript; Latin makes occasional appearances in several texts, but this is the only Anglo-Norman/Middle English macaronic poem—or, indeed, Anglo-Norman verse of any sort—within the voluminous book. The list of names of Norman barons stands out even more starkly as the manuscript's only list and the only one of its texts to be ruled in four columns. Some scholars have taken these two texts for random (and therefore inexplicable) fillers on the basis of their location in the booklet and their brevity, but their very strangeness—of content, of format, even of scribal contributors (these texts having been supplied by Scribes 2 and 4 following a long stint by Scribe 3)—argues against such a summary dismissal, as does the simple fact that they fail to fulfill the essential function of 'filler,' that of filling out the end of the booklet.¹⁵

¹⁵ This is in spite of the fact that both scribes practice different economies of space. Scribe 2 copied the first twenty lines of *Four Philosophers* with two verse lines to a ruled line, presumably in an effort to fit the poem within the single recto of f. 105. Scribe 4's ruling of four columns per page allows more than adequate space for the names of the Norman barons and makes more economical use of the parchment than double column ruling would have (double column ruling would also have necessitated shortening the list or continuing it in a new quire), but Scribe 4 could readily have accommodated this list with a three-column ruling while also coming closer to achieving Scribe 1's end-of-booklet aesthetic. Scribe 1's end-filled booklets always have some text on the final verso and in all cases but one (the end of Booklet 2) he fills at least one verso column (for particulars see note 48 below). Scribe 4's ruling anticipated

In placing these texts and others within the booklet, Scribes 2, 3, and 4 resist to varying extents the predominant organization and aesthetic of the manuscript. Their divergences and those of the other ancillary scribes—Scribes 5 and 6—throw some light on the variety of scribal interactions over time that resulted in Auchinleck. While these divergences have never been ignored by scholars, they have at times been overshadowed by the tendencies toward coherence in Scribe 1’s contributions to the manuscript. Thus, for example, Shonk stakes much of his case for Scribe 1’s editorial and managerial role in the book’s production on the visual and organizational unities among the booklets and even among the stints of different contributing scribes. Arguing against the fascicular theories of Pamela Robinson and Pearsall, he insists, “Auchinleck shows evidence of unity beyond what one would expect from a compilation of independent booklets. The six scribes followed the same general format, which gives the book the appearance of unity and raises the possibility of predetermined design.”¹⁶

While the manuscript does exhibit a noteworthy degree of visual consistency throughout its booklets, scholars have lately remarked upon the insights the manuscript’s inconsistencies may yield into its circumstances of production.¹⁷ In a recent article distinguishing Scribe 6’s practice

almost exactly the length of his list (see f. 107r), suggesting that he had calculated how many lines he needed to complete his stint. In other words, he could have seen that a three-column ruling would accommodate the entire list; his choice to rule for four columns per page could indicate that he did not see the filling of the end of the quire as a priority.

¹⁶ Shonk, “Bookmen,” 77.

¹⁷ See, for example, Wiggins, “Scribes 1 and 6” and Helen Marshall, “What’s in a Paraph? New Methodology and Its Implications for the Auchinleck Manuscript,” *Journal of the Early Book Society* 13 (2010). Tricia Kelly George has taken a similar line in “The Auchinleck Manuscript: A Study in Manuscript Production, Scribal Innovation, and Literary Value in the Early 14th Century” (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 2014), http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_graddiss/2823, which appeared too recently for me to consider it fully. Some missteps in George’s arguments may point to larger issues within her project, as when she asserts on the basis of some inconsistencies of textual numeration that Booklet 3 actually comprised two separate booklets, divided by the missing

from Scribe 1's, Alison Wiggins not only argues for the existence of Scribe 6, but posits that he worked with little or no supervision from Scribe 1. Instead, she suggests that Scribes 2 and 6 might have had a professional relationship and that Scribe 2, rather than Scribe 1, might have facilitated Scribe 6's contribution to Auchinleck.¹⁸ Wiggins's reasons for distancing Scribe 6 from Scribe 1 are instructive, though somewhat problematic:

Otuel [i.e. Scribe 6's stint] is notable for its disunity and independence from the rest of the manuscript. It is unusual because it is headed by an enlarged capital. It is written on a quire constructed of ten folios whereas the other forty-six quires in the manuscript are of eight folios. There is also no catchword on the final folio of this quire whereas throughout most of the rest of the manuscript the editor Scribe 1 supplied catchwords consistently. That he did not add a catchword implies that Scribe 1 received the *Otuel* booklet pre-assembled and this, along with the visual differences and disunities, indicates that *Otuel* was copied independently. That is, it was copied without the direct supervision of the editor Scribe 1 and at an earlier stage, before Auchinleck and its design plan were conceived of.¹⁹

The ten-folio quire appears to be a distinguishing feature of Scribe 6's work, but the other characteristics Wiggins points to are far from unique. In contextualizing the characteristics she identifies as distinctive, I mean to situate Scribe 6's practices within those of Auchinleck's other scribes and thus build a fuller picture of the temporal conditions and scribal dealings driving divergences from the manuscript's dominant codicological and decorative program.

Quire 15 (see George, "Auchinleck," 82-85). This theory demonstrates George's laudible, if overzealous, determination to challenge prevailing assumptions regarding Auchinleck's production and to expose scholars' blind spots, but it also speaks to the blind spots that crop up within her own arguments. In pursuing her claim about Booklet 3, she completely disregards certain textual and codicological ramifications of her theory, most notably the substantial inconsistencies in quire structure that such an arrangement would entail, inconsistencies that George fails to address within her own reconstruction of Booklet 3's quires, missing and intact (see "Auchinleck," 281).

¹⁸ Wiggins, "Scribes 1 and 6," 20.

¹⁹ Wiggins, "Scribes 1 and 6," 19-20.

Turning to the absence of a catchword at the end of Scribe 6's quire, then, this omission is hardly remarkable within Auchinleck. Scribe 1 did have a consistent practice in regard to catchwords, as Wiggins suggests, but only within his own stints and at booklet boundaries. In only five observable instances did Scribe 1 add catchwords in the midst of another scribe's stint: four surviving catchwords written in Scribe 1's hand link quires copied within Scribe 5's stint and one catchword in Scribe 1's hand links a quire copied by Scribe 3 to what was probably another quire copied by Scribe 3, though it has since been lost.²⁰ Only Scribe 5 seems to have been working closely enough with Scribe 1 that Scribe 1 was in a position to join all of Scribe 5's quires with catchwords. Within longer stints by Scribes 2 and 3 Scribe 1 only provided the one extant catchword already mentioned above.²¹ Returning to Scribe 6, his stint almost certainly extended beyond the single surviving quire in his hand. Texts in Auchinleck are consistently copied by single scribes. Given that the text Scribe 6 copied, *Otuel a Knight*, lacks an ending, having broken off at the end of the surviving quire, it is probable that Scribe 6 copied at least one other quire, now missing, in which he completed *Otuel*. Indeed, the gap in textual numeration between *Otuel* (numbered "xxxvij" in the upper margin) and *Kyng Alisaunder* (numbered "xliij" in the upper

²⁰ None of these five catchwords occur at a booklet boundary. Scribe 1's catchwords within Scribe 5's stint (ff. 167rb-201ra) survive on ff. 168v, 183v, 190v, and 198v. A leaf lacking after f. 175 would have been the final folio of the first complete quire copied in Scribe 5's hand. As this leaf would have marked the conclusion of a booklet as well as a quire, it is highly probable that it would have had a catchword in Scribe 1's hand as well. Scribe 1's catchword within Scribe 3's stint (ff. 70ra-14vb) is on f. 99v.

At least a quire has been lost between ff. 99 and 100 and all considerations point to the near certainty that Scribe 3 copied this lost quire. Scribe 3 was responsible for the preceding quire and for the beginning of the quire starting with f. 100 and he has demonstrably copied part of *The Seven Sages of Rome* and *Floris and Blancheflour*, the two texts that would each have partially occupied this missing quire.

²¹ Within Scribe 2's *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* stint in Booklet 2, no catchword survives at the sole quire boundary within the stint, on f. 46v. Scribe 2's *Simonie* only survives within a single quire in which the final folio is lacking. Within Scribe 3's stint, there are four surviving quire boundaries where the quire-final verso is intact (at ff. 76v-77r, 84v-84^ar, 91v-92r, and 99v), and only the last of these has a surviving catchword (see note 20).

margin) suggests that Scribe 6 could also have copied further items in one or more quires that have since been lost. In light of these considerations, the absence of a catchword at the end of Scribe 6's surviving quire suggests that he was copying all or part of a booklet of at least two quires that came into Scribe 1's hands as a unit. This level of preassembly is the rule rather than the exception when it comes to the scribes collaborating with Scribe 1; only Scribe 5 (and, as I will discuss in the next section, possibly Scribe 3) appears to have received further oversight.

Similarly, most of the Auchinleck scribes left space for enlarged initials at the beginning of one or more texts they copied. A closer examination of this practice reveals some telling patterns. The typical format of the opening of a text in Auchinleck consists of a miniature placed somewhere beneath a red title (itself placed late in the process wherever space allowed) and a two-line initial identical to those placed periodically within texts. The miniatures presumably obviated the need in these cases for a large initial signalling a new text. Scribe 2, who never once left room to accommodate a miniature, left room at the openings of two of his three texts for larger initials.²² In the three instances where it is possible to examine Scribe 3's practice, he twice left space for a larger initial and once left space for a two-line initial.²³ Scribe 5 consistently left room for a larger initial, once preceded by space for a miniature and once to stand alone.²⁴ In two instances, Scribe 1

²² Scribe 2 left room for larger initials preceding *Speculum Gy* and *Simonie*. In the third instance, where he copied *Four Philosophers* in Booklet 3, Scribe 2 left almost no room for an initial. That said, as I have noted in note 15 above, Scribe 2 was working with tight space constraints here.

²³ Scribe 3 left room for larger initials preceding *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Sir Degare*. The two-line initial opens *Paternoster*. This is an interesting case, though, because Scribe 3 actually left more space for the initial beginning the prayer proper, and this is the only initial within the text that is not two lines tall. Given the preeminence of this prayer, Scribe 3's emphasis on its beginning rather than the text's makes a certain kind of sense. I discuss this at greater length in the chapter's final section.

²⁴ The former for *Reinbrun*, the latter for *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*.

also left space for a larger initial, and in one of these he did not leave space for a miniature.²⁵ What stands out in this catalogue of larger initials is the fact that, with the exception of the two that accompany miniatures, all of them occur at the beginning of a booklet. There could be several reasons for this. An auxiliary scribe like Scribe 2 might have undertaken one or both of his larger stints before entering into collaboration on Auchinleck with Scribe 1.²⁶ In the case of the scribes copying a relatively small number of texts, it has also been suggested that we might blame scribal negligence: an ancillary scribe pitching in to copy a text or two might forget or ignore some of Scribe 1's instructions or standard practices.²⁷ Or Scribe 1 might not have provided very specific instructions.

Another possibility, though, is that these booklet-initial divergences from the manuscript plan represent some of the earliest stints in its production. In regard to this hypothesis, Scribe 1's departures from his decorative program are particularly telling. Shonk and Hanna have suggested that Auchinleck's "topheavy" booklets probably derive their structure from the exigencies of bespoke manuscript production in the face of the patron's demands and the availability of exemplars.²⁸ Highly prioritized texts would thus be copied at the heads of new booklets as their exemplars became available, with Scribe 1 farming some of this copying out to his scribal colleagues when he was inundated with demands or exemplars or both. This scenario may have held true in some cases, though it ought to be complicated by considerations of how Scribe 1 in particular was arranging texts to shape meaning in the manuscript; many of the manuscript's textual

²⁵ Preceding the *Short Chronicle* (without miniature) and *Sir Tristrem* (with miniature).

²⁶ For further discussion of this possibility, see the chapter's next section.

²⁷ Shonk, "Bookmen," 82.

²⁸ Hanna, "Reconsidering," 94 and Shonk, "Bookmen," 89-90.

constellations are clearly anything but haphazard products of exemplar availability.²⁹ What does emerge in Shonk's and Hanna's scenarios, however, is a sense of the expanse of time—and potentially, in the case of Scribe 1's collaborators, space—over which Auchinleck's twelve surviving booklets would have been initiated and completed.

Seen in this light, the consistently unusual decorations at the openings of booklets—large initials and no miniatures in five of the nine booklets whose opening pages survive and large initials with miniatures in two more of these nine—might expose stages of the booklets' production that preceded Scribe 1's implementation of Auchinleck's dominant decorative program. Taking booklets that Scribe 1 initiated himself, for example, he must have begun work on Booklets 6 and 9 with the final decorative program in mind.³⁰ In the case of the beginning of Booklet 10, where he has left space for a large initial but no miniature, Scribe 1 appears to have begun copying the *Short Chronicle* either prior to devising this decorative program or with a different final destination for it in mind. By the time it was handed off to an illuminator, however, it would certainly have been Auchinleck-bound. The large initial at the beginning of the *Short Chronicle* was painted by the same artist responsible for the initial at the beginning of *Sir Beves of Hamtoun* (and Booklet 5). Details within this historiated initial confirm its production by the same artist that executed

²⁹ I am disinclined to apply this scenario to the stints of Scribes 2 and 3 because both scribes appear to work with a degree of independence from Scribe 1's program (see below). I do think that Shonk and Hanna's theories could account for the ancillary scribal stints at the openings of booklets completed by Scribes 5 and 6; their surviving contributions fit their manuscript surroundings rather neatly (see below). It is also worth noting that Shonk's and Hanna's scenario would not necessarily militate against the copying of specially requested texts in the middles of booklets, though this is not something they discuss to my knowledge.

³⁰ This may also be true of Booklet 7, where the first text, *Tristrem*, begins with a rather large, if conventionally decorated, 11-line initial accompanying a miniature at the head of the text, though this does represent a case in which Scribe 1 has not employed the visual program elsewhere evident in the manuscript. The reasons for this decorative choice by Scribe 1 are far from clear: it might represent a slightly earlier conception of his decorative program, or, alternatively, an amplification of it for purposes of emphasis.

Auchinleck's miniatures.³¹ Indeed, the similarities between these two initials—and their execution by the same artist—reinforce the codicological evidence (see above) that Scribes 1 and 5 (the latter of whom was responsible for *Beves*) worked particularly closely. That these initials are placed at the openings of booklets without accompanying miniatures further suggests that they may have been working together at a relatively early stage in the manuscript's production.

Returning to the opening of *Otuel*, then, its large opening puzzle initial, stylistically unusual in the manuscript, testifies that Scribe 6, like Scribe 2, had access to an artist other than the ones in the atelier executing Auchinleck's overall program of decoration and illumination.³² That said, the presence of an unusually large initial at the opening of the text does not in itself argue for an absence of any oversight from Scribe 1 or for the intermediary role Wiggins suggests we ascribe to Scribe 2. For one thing, the nine-line excision preceding the opening lines of *Otuel* almost certainly indicates that Scribe 6 left room for an opening miniature. As Shonk has noted, it is highly unlikely that a scribe producing speculative piecework would have anticipated a buyer who could afford significant decoration.³³ Scribe 6's allowances for a miniature strongly suggest he was copying *Otuel* for this manuscript and was aware, however distantly, of Scribe 1's overall decorative

³¹ Robinson shares J. J. G. Alexander's assessment of Auchinleck's illustrations as the product of the Queen Mary Psalter atelier in her thesis ("Study," 135), and since then a number of Auchinleck scholars have taken up this view; see Judith Crouse Mordkoff, "The Making of the Auchinleck Manuscript: The Scribes at Work" (PhD diss., University of Connecticut, 1981), 247-49 and Shonk, "Bookmen," 81-82 for two such instances. Lynda Dennison has since effectively challenged this attribution, arguing for a distinction between the atelier's general style—the style in which Auchinleck's illuminations have been executed—and the work of its central workshop; see "An Illuminator of the Queen Mary Psalter Group: The Ancient 6 Master," *The Antiquaries Journal* 66 (1986) and "'Liber Horn', 'Liber Custumarum' and Other Manuscripts of the Queen Mary Psalter Workshops," *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London*, ed. Lindy Grant (British Archaeological Association, 1990), 118-34.

³² Wiggins remarks that Scribe 2's *Speculum Gy* also begins with a puzzle initial ("Scribes 1 and 6," 20), though differences in pigment and pen decoration militate against their execution by the same artist, at least not at the same time.

³³ Shonk, "Bookmen," 78.

plan, more so, it is worth noting, than Scribe 2. It is possible that Scribe 1 enlisted Scribe 6's aid before he had finalized his decorative program, hence the large initial, but just as probable that his instructions focused primarily on leaving space for a miniature and made no specifications as to the size of the opening initial. This latter explanation could account for Scribe 5's allowance of space for a larger initial at the beginning of *Reinbrun*, despite the abundance of codicological evidence for his having worked closely with Scribe 1. Scribe 6 was clearly not working as closely with Scribe 1 as Scribe 5 was—hence, perhaps, his resort to an artist outside Auchinleck's atelier to paint the opening initial—but, on the whole, Scribe 6 worked closer to Scribe 1's program than Scribe 2 did. This conclusion does not absolutely rule out the possibility, espoused by Wiggins, that Scribe 2 worked as an intermediary between Scribes 1 and 6. That said, it does disallow Scribe 2's having done so before contributing his own stints to Auchinleck. If Scribe 2 were conveying Scribe 1's instructions to Scribe 6, Scribe 6's accommodation of a miniature must have been the result of stipulations to which Scribe 2 became privy after copying his own miniature-less stints. Why else would Scribe 2, working in his capacity as collaborate, convey Scribe 1's instructions regarding miniatures to Scribe 6 only to ignore them in his capacity as scribe?

Before I address the work of Scribe 3 in depth, I need to make several claims about some striking similarities between his work and that of Scribe 2. To that end, I turn now to scrutinize Scribe 2's work in greater detail and to argue his relatively divergent, rather than intermediary, role in Auchinleck's production. Scribe 2 is an intriguing contributor to the manuscript. As the only scribe other than Scribe 1 whose stints are scattered across several booklets, he seems to have been involved in the project of producing the manuscript over a longer period. According to Wiggins,

Scribe 2 also worked in more varied capacities than Scribe 1's other scribal colleagues. Dubbing him a "professional shape-changer" on this account,³⁴ Wiggins identifies Scribe 2 as the locus for (or force behind) the visually divergent parts of Auchinleck, which she identifies as follows:

1. *The Speculum Gy* (at the start of booklet 2), copied by Scribe 2.
2. *De Simonie* (booklet 12), copied by Scribe 2.
3. *Otuel* (at the start of booklet 7), copied by Scribe 6.
4. Booklet 3, mainly copied by Scribe 3 with *The Sayings of the Four Philosophers* added by Scribe 2 in ruling provided by the editor Scribe 1.³⁵

There are some problems with this picture of Scribe 2's involvement in Auchinleck's production. As I have argued above, Scribe 2's connection with Scribe 6 (Wiggins's third item on this list) is tenuous at best and he could only have served as intermediary between Scribes 1 and 6 in temporally limited circumstances. Furthermore, Wiggins's argument for direct contact between Scribes 1 and 2 in Booklet 3 (item four on the list) rests on an erroneous assumption, namely that Scribe 1 provided the ruling for *Four Philosophers*. The ruling of the page is patently not Scribe 2's; he must compress his script to fit it within the ruled lines. It was almost certainly provided by Scribe 3, not Scribe 1.³⁶ If Scribe 2 worked directly with Scribe 1 and in the process served as intermediary between the manuscript's divergent scribal contributors and its editor, there is no manuscript evidence of this contact.

³⁴ Wiggins, "Scribes 1 and 6," 21.

³⁵ Wiggins, "Scribes 1 and 6," 20.

³⁶ Here I am in agreement with Shonk's assessment in "A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Investigations into the Processes of Book Making in the Fourteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1981), 61. Marshall concurs with this assessment in her discussion of the booklet ("What's in a Paraph?," 44). Judging by the fluctuations across his stint in lines per page, Scribe 3 appears to have ruled by openings except across quire boundaries (see Shonk, "Investigations," 66). Scribe 3 did his own ruling, and it is highly improbable that Scribe 1 would have intervened at the conclusion of Scribe 3's stint to rule a single page of the booklet for Scribe 2.

The texts, decoration, and layout of Scribe 2's own scribal stints reflect the likelihood that he worked with a greater measure of independence from the predominant aesthetics of Auchinleck than did the other scribes. Two of the three extant texts he copied for Auchinleck are multilingual: *Speculum Gy* incorporates Latin *sententiae* and *Four Philosophers* is an Anglo-Norman/English macaronic poem. These works account for two of five surviving multilingual texts in the manuscript at large and incorporate more non-English material than the other three.³⁷ All three of Scribe 2's texts tend towards didacticism, employing minimal narrative as a means to that end. I will address the atypicality of the texts Scribe 2 copied in the next section, but for now it suffices to observe that these texts contrast linguistically and generically from the bulk of Auchinleck's texts. Diverging visually from standard Auchinleck practice, Scribe 2 copied two of his three texts—*Speculum Gy* and *Simonie*—within page layouts accommodating fewer lines per page/column and with a larger script than elsewhere found in the manuscript. In Booklet 3, Scribe 2's *Four Philosophers* submits to some of the strictures of Scribe 1's visual program, but even here he leaves minimal space for decoration.³⁸

Scribe 2's marked visual and textual divergences in his two booklet-initial stints may indicate that these booklet parts were preassembled outside of Scribe 1's planning. Helen Marshall has built on Ian Cunningham's codicological analysis of the manuscript and Shonk's taxonomizing

³⁷ Among the other three, *The Harrowing of Hell* employs Latin dialogue tags and *David the King* (i.e. Psalm 50) and *Paternoster* interlineate Latin lines with their English translations/paraphrases.

³⁸ As Marshall notes, Scribe 2 does not provide his own paraphs in Booklet 3; his guide marks are visible and the paraphs have been painted by the same paraphers working throughout the rest of the quire ("What's in a Paraph?," 44). He also reduces the size of his script to fit it within Scribe 3's ruling.

There is, of course, no room available for a miniature at the beginning of *Four Philosophers*. Additionally, however, Scribe 2 leaves almost no space for the opening initial, which must extend upward and outward into the margin, even though he appears to have anticipated its inclusion, having not copied the first letter of the text himself.

of its paraphs to advance a compelling argument that Scribe 2 contributed the paraphs for *Speculum Gy* and *Simonie* himself and even painted one of the initials in *Speculum Gy*.³⁹ On these grounds, she suggests that these two stints were probably completed before Scribe 2 began working with Scribe 1 on Auchinleck and that, as such, they testify to an “improvisational” dimension of Auchinleck’s production.⁴⁰ Scribe 2’s paraphs, along with his other divergent production decisions, suggest that these two texts were truly preassembled—that is, copied and even partially decorated before their final destination was determined or fully conceived. As such, they stand at a greater distance from Scribe 1’s agency. Marshall has suggested that Scribe 1 had little or no hand in the manner of their copying and that he may even have selected them for inclusion in Auchinleck after they had been copied.⁴¹ Certainly, Scribe 2 took a far greater measure of responsibility upon himself in producing these stints than Scribe 1’s auxiliary scribes typically did—with the possible exception of Scribe 3.

I would propose that Scribe 2’s work merits closer examination in conjunction with that of Scribe 3. Between them, Scribes 2 and 3 share responsibility for having copied the bulk of the multilingual and non- or minimally narrative works within the manuscript.⁴² In the rare instances in which Scribe 1 has copied such texts, they almost invariably occupy ‘filler’ positions in their

³⁹ Marshall, “What’s in a Paraph?,” 44.

⁴⁰ Marshall, “What’s in a Paraph?,” 45.

⁴¹ Marshall, “What’s in a Paraph?,” 45.

⁴² These include *Speculum Gy* (Latin/English, minimal narrative), *Seven Deadly Sins* (non-narrative), *Paternoster* (Latin/English, non-narrative), *Four Philosophers* (Anglo-Norman/English, minimal narrative), and *Simonie* (minimal narrative).

Scribe 4’s sole contribution (the list of names of Norman barons) is also non-narrative (and a list, rather than running text), but it is worth noting that Scribe 1’s other two scribal auxiliaries copy texts that fit much more comfortably within the manuscript’s most obvious preoccupations: Scribe 5’s *Reinbrun* and *Beves* fit in with Scribe 1’s Guy of Warwick material (*Reinbrun* being adapted/extracted from this tradition itself and *Beves* being an oft-associated tradition) and Scribe 6’s *Otuel* fits in with Scribe 1’s Charlemagne material, which it also follows in the manuscript.

respective booklets.⁴³ Scribes 2 and 3, on the other hand, typically give such works pride of place at the beginnings of fresh quires (and hence booklets).⁴⁴ These two scribes were not necessarily collaborating—though it is certainly possible that they came into contact, given that Quire 16 passed from Scribe 3 to Scribe 2 (whether it passed through Scribe 1’s intermediary hands is impossible to know)—but they do evince a common (and heretofore overlooked) distance from the overall plan of Auchinleck in the texts they chose to copy and privilege. These two scribes also share the distinction of having strayed the most blatantly from Scribe 1’s program of layout and decoration. Both ruled folios with variability unusual in the manuscript and both declined on more than one occasion to leave room for miniatures preceding texts they copied.⁴⁵ And just as Scribe 2 appears to have provided his own rubrication in two of the texts he copied (see my discussion of his paraphs above), Scribe 3 stands out in the manuscript as the only scribe other than Scribe 1 to have supplied his own title rubrications.⁴⁶

Scribes 2 and 3 exhibit adaptability as well as variability in their copying. They are the only two scribes whose surviving stints testify to definite changes in copying practice over time or potentially in response to other variables. I will discuss Scribe 3’s adaptability in greater depth in the next section; for now it suffices to remark that the end of his stint shows a markedly closer

⁴³ A generous round-up of these texts includes *The Desputisoun bitven the Bodi and the Soule* (minimal narrative), *Harrowing of Hell* (Latin/English), *The Thrush and the Nightingale* (minimal narrative), *The Sayings of Saint Bernard* (non-narrative), *David the King* (Latin/English, non-narrative), *The Four Foes of Mankind* (non-narrative), and *Alphabetical Praise of Women* (non-narrative).

⁴⁴ The only possible exception is Scribe 2’s *Four Philosophers*, but see my discussion above questioning the validity of identifying it (and the list of Norman barons) as such.

⁴⁵ Scribe 2 never left once room for a miniature. Scribe 3 left no space for a miniature in two of the three texts he copied whose beginnings are intact; of these three texts, only *Degare* appears to have once followed a miniature.

⁴⁶ He did so for the first two texts he copied, at least. The rest of the texts have suffered losses at their beginnings, either of one or more folios (*The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, *Seven Sages*, *Floris*) or of the opening matter (miniature?, title?) preceding the text proper (*Degare*).

resemblance to the stints of Scribes 1 and 5 than does the beginning. Scribe 2's three stints, all visually distinct, appear to adjust to the exigencies of textual form and ruling, as can be construed in the single-column ruling of *Simonie* and Scribe 2's adjustments in *Four Philosophers* to the ruling provided by Scribe 3. Taken as a whole, the scribal contributions of Scribes 2 and 3 stand out visually from their surroundings. Furthermore, they generate points of rupture or redirection within the manuscript, points at which the narratives for which the manuscript is so famous give way to texts making demands upon the reader's consciousness of inner spiritual state or outer socio-political context.

Booklet 3 registers as a similarly disruptive site within the manuscript. Even for its earliest readers, this booklet must have stood out from its surroundings. For one thing, it is framed by an unusual quantity of empty space. Among the seven booklets whose ends are intact, all but Booklets 2 and 3 conclude with less than a column of empty space remaining on the final verso.⁴⁷ The final text of Booklet 3, as I have mentioned briefly above, betrays no effort on the part of Scribe 4 to fill out the end of the final quire.⁴⁸ Instead, the visually remarkable text—remarkable both for being a list and for being ruled in four columns rather than the usual two—concludes at the top of f. 107r, leaving most of that recto and all of the verso blank. It is quite probable that the final verso of Booklet 2 was intended to have looked more like the other five booklets finished by Scribe 1 (see above); though Scribe 1 copied only six lines onto the first column of the verso, the text breaks off

⁴⁷ These include Booklets 1 (ends on f. 38), 2 (ends on f. 69), 3 (ends on f. 107), 5 (ends on f. 260), 8 (ends on f. 280), 9 (ends on f. 303), and 10 (ends on f. 325). Booklets 1, 5, 8, 9, and 10—those with less than a column of empty space on the final verso—have all been finished by Scribe 1. Scribe 1 also copied the final text within Booklet 2, but it cannot strictly be said to be finished; he has broken off in the middle of the *The Nativity and the Early Life of Mary* (though he does break off at the conclusion of a couplet) on f. 69va, only six ruled lines into the page.

⁴⁸ See note 15 above on Scribe 4's economies of space.

rather mysteriously in the midst of the narrative, perhaps for the lack of a complete exemplar or because Scribe 1 was called away and left the poem without a conclusion.⁴⁹ It is also possible that Scribe 1 abandoned this text fairly late in Auchinleck's production because completing it would have required the addition of another quire to the end of the booklet.⁵⁰

As it stands, however, the unusual abundance of blank space preceding and following the texts of Booklet 3 sets the booklet apart from the rest of Auchinleck and would have done so even for the manuscript's earliest audience. This would not necessarily have been the case with Auchinleck's other booklets, many of which were so carefully 'finished' by Scribe 1 as to create visual continuity across booklet boundaries; their bounds are visually identifiable if one is looking for them, but they do not draw attention to themselves.⁵¹ By contrast, Booklet 3's visual distinctness underscores the distinctive qualities of its contents. Though Bahr has championed the idea of viewing this booklet, and booklets more generally, not only as codicological but also as "aesthetic and literary entities," he stops short of allowing that early readers would have

⁴⁹ These are the two possibilities suggested in the online facsimile edition of Auchinleck; see specifically "The Nativity and Early Life of Mary," *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/heads/nativity_head.html. What is certain is that this ought not to be considered a concluded text. Even if Scribe 1 had chosen to follow the narrative of Christ's conception and Mary's pregnancy no further, he was more than capable of furnishing concluding verses (probably in the form of a brief prayer, especially given the religious nature of the poem).

⁵⁰ The Auchinleck *Nativity* is unique, but the online edition identifies the *South English Nativity of Mary and Christ* as a related text. If Auchinleck's text were to cover the narrative expanse of the *South English Nativity* it would need to at least double in length; the point at which the Auchinleck text breaks off corresponds to line 274 (out of 814 lines) in the *South English Nativity* as edited by O. S. Pickering in *The South English Nativity of Mary and Christ*, Middle English Texts 1 (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1975).

⁵¹ It should be noted, however, that the booklets could have circulated between the manuscript's producers and its patron before Auchinleck was bound in its final form. Generally speaking, booklets were definitely part of medieval readers' experience.

apprehended them as such—or perhaps at all.⁵² Certainly, it is difficult to ascertain whether Auchinleck's earliest readers would have conceived of Booklet 3 as a literary entity; it contains almost no marginal annotation remotely contemporary with its production to offer us any such sense of their response. That said, early readers must have perceived this booklet as both different and distinct from its surroundings. Not only does it diverge visually from the predominant aesthetic of Auchinleck in several important respects (particularly at its beginning and end, as noted above), but it is framed on both ends by a similarly divergent profusion of empty space. In accentuating the booklet's boundaries, these empty (or nearly empty) pages promote a sense of the booklet's separateness within the larger manuscript and enhance its visibility therein. Encountered in the course of reading, they also effect pauses, prompting the reader to stop and/or shift gears. Even if the booklet as a whole were not apprehended as a literary unit, its emphatic boundaries would have conditioned readers to experience it as discontinuous with the narratives of Booklets 2 and 4.

Faced with the eccentricities and discontinuities of Booklet 3, scholars have tended to adopt two means of accounting for them: they have either set the booklet aside as the exception to the rule imposed/upheld by Scribe 1, an eruption of scribal incompetence or randomness in an otherwise explicable manuscript, or attempted to make sense of it within Scribe 1's program, with some even going so far as to attribute its design to Auchinleck's master planner. Both perspectives slight the contributions of the booklet's scribes, and particularly those of Scribe 3, whose single

⁵² Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 107. Speculating about the manuscript's early reception, Bahr cautions, "there is ... no reason to suppose that Auchinleck's third or any other booklet would have been perceptible as such to its medieval readers or meaningful as a literary unity even if it were" (*Fragments and Assemblages*, 107).

Auchinleck stint fills most of the booklet. The former perspective shies away from allotting intelligent agency to these scribes on the implied or stated grounds that of Auchinleck's scribes only Scribe 1 has a knowable project. The latter perspective insists—in spite of the booklet's many divergences from Auchinleck's textual, decorative, and codicological program—that these scribes were literally working as helping hands, skilled laborers filling the function of tools to carry out Scribe 1's will and vision. In the next section, I lay out a third way of accounting for Booklet 3's strangeness, one predicated on the notion that Auchinleck was shaped by multiple scribal intelligences. To that end I argue the agency and ability of the oft-underestimated Scribe 3 and explore the possibility that he undertook a partially independent program of copying that drives the booklet's unique literary undertaking.

Reassessing the 'Very Interesting' Scribe 3, His Potential, and His Project in Booklet 3

Scribe 3 has not received much focused scrutiny in earlier studies of Auchinleck; typically his work has been treated alongside that of the other Auchinleck scribes, despite the fact that his contribution to the manuscript is more substantial than that of any of Scribe 1's other auxiliaries. Where he has excited scholarly attention, it stems chiefly from A.J. Bliss's assertion that his "cursive hand ... shows the influence of chancery hand."⁵³ Bliss's paleographic assessment has prompted other scholars to speculate regarding Scribe 3's possible Chancery affiliations and what these would imply about Auchinleck's circumstances of production. Thus, for example, Wiggins's summation in the introduction to the digital facsimile surmises both that "Scribe 3 worked within Chancery and would supplement his regular work with freelance copying, such as his stint on the

⁵³ A. J. Bliss, "Notes on the Auchinleck Manuscript," *Speculum* 26 (1951), 653.

Auchinleck Manuscript” and that “the appearance of [Scribe 3’s] hand argues ... the likelihood that [Auchinleck] represents an enterprise that was lay and commercial.”⁵⁴ Scholars, then, have tended to view his scribal contributions in light of what they may tell us about the manuscript and its production as a whole, rather than probing what they might tell us about his particular scribal agency. To my knowledge, only Hanna has remarked upon the exceptional status of “the very interesting scribe 3,” on the grounds that he is the only scribe other than Scribe 1 to have copied multiple texts in a single stint.⁵⁵ This section explores the assessments that are implicit in Hanna’s further assertion that Scribe 3 is “the closest thing Auchinleck scribe 1 has to a legitimate collaborator.”⁵⁶ If we grant that Scribe 3’s stint manifests sufficient capacity and self-direction to warrant this appraisal of his agency in the manuscript we can approach Booklet 3 from a new vantage point, as a site of meaningful confluence rather than impenetrable incoherence.

One major stumbling block to our acceptance of Scribe 3 as an independent and sophisticated literary agent, a potential equal to Scribe 1 in ability rather than a subordinate in proficiency as well as page count, is the outmoded assumption of his linguistic incompetence. In one of the most recent treatments of Auchinleck’s third booklet, Scribe 3’s eccentric orthography has been adduced to exclude the possibility that he shaped his own stint and the booklet in which it survives: following Karl Brunner’s early twentieth-century assessment of the scribe, Bahr cites Scribe 3’s spelling habits as evidence that he could barely comprehend the Middle English texts he

⁵⁴ See Wiggins, “Physical make-up,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/editorial/physical.html>.

⁵⁵ Hanna, “Reconsidering,” 94.

⁵⁶ Hanna, “Reconsidering,” 95.

copied.⁵⁷ From this stance, he extrapolates that Scribe 3 could not have exercised any agency in choosing or arranging texts for inclusion within Booklet 3, observing that “the fact that Scribe 3 seems to have been uncomfortable or unfamiliar with texts in English makes it quite unlikely that he orchestrated a booklet of texts in that language for inclusion in a manuscript whose resolute Englishness is so remarkable.”⁵⁸ There are some fundamental problems with this assertion. Bahr not only bypasses the fact that this booklet is less resolutely English than the rest of the manuscript, but, more importantly, he fails to consider why—if it were true that Scribe 3 struggled with English—Scribe 1 should have allotted so substantial a stint to such a scribe when more fluent scribes were known to him. Even more problematic is Bahr’s unquestioning embrace of Brunner’s conjecture, which reflects a formerly widespread set of assumptions that have since been debunked.

Identifying this long-standing article of scholarly belief as “the myth of the ‘Anglo-Norman scribe,’” Cecily Clark demonstrated in the early nineties that it is an untenable hypothesis.⁵⁹

Scholarly adherence to this ‘myth,’ as Clark sums it up, has hampered our understanding of

⁵⁷ “Scribe 3 appears not to have consistently understood what he was copying, for he frequently substitutes yogh for thorn, even where the sense clearly requires the latter” (Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 109–10).

Brunner asserts in his edition of *Seven Sages of Rome* that Scribe 3 “was obviously a French Norman. He is not sure of the value of some peculiar English characters, frequently uses *ʒ* instead of *þ*, as *wiʒ* for *wiþ*, ll. 22, 44, 61, etc., *-eʒ* for *eþ* (third pers. sing. and plur., pres.) 25, 94, 115, etc., *ferʒe* for *ferþe* 60, *wroʒ* for *wroþ*, 388, etc. ... Cp. similar peculiarities in MS. B. I.4.39 [*sic*], Trinity College, Cambridge (thirteenth century) in W. W. Skeat’s *Proverbs of Alfred*, Clarendon Press, p. 14, in MS. Cambr. Univ. Libr. Gg I. I (1300–1330), ed. E.E.T.S. 5.183, and in MS. Harley 525 (fifteenth century) in Leo Hibler, *The Seege of Troye*, Graz 1928, I, pp. 142 and 156 f.”; see Brunner, ed., *The Seven Sages of Rome (Southern Version)*, EETS, o.s. 191 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), ix–x.

⁵⁸ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 110. Bahr also cites Bliss’s script-based speculation that Scribe 3 had Chancery training as grounds for assuming Scribe 3’s relative unfamiliarity with English.

⁵⁹ See Clark’s full repudiation of this misconception in “The myth of ‘the Anglo-Norman scribe,’” *History of Englishes: New Methods and Interpretations in Historical Linguistics*, ed. Matti Rissanen, Ossi Ihalainen, Terttu Nevalainen, and Irma Taavitsainen (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992). Reprinted in *Words, Names and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark*, ed. Peter Jackson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995). Page references are to the 1992 edition.

unexpected scribal usages: “in some quarters ... the intervention of a ‘Norman’ or ‘Anglo-Norman’ scribe, even of a ‘French’ one, has come to be ritually invoked whenever any seemingly unEnglish usage, whether orthographical or lexical, appears in a post-Conquest English document of any date up to and including the mid fourteenth century.”⁶⁰ Writing nearly ten years later of the same phenomenon, Margaret Laing wryly observes the anachronistic projection involved in such assumptions: “perfectly reasonable spellings such as these that have frequently thrown editors and scholars of these texts into the sort of confusion which they attribute to the scribes themselves.”⁶¹ Such confusion was common when Scribe 3’s orthographic practice initially came under scrutiny, but, as Clark has shown, our current knowledge of post-Conquest linguistic practices and developments in England indicates that Francophone monolingualism was never pervasive in England and that even among the higher classes, where it can be assumed for the first few generations after the Conquest, it would not have persisted much, if at all, beyond the twelfth century.⁶² Michael Benskin offers a more reasonable explanation for so-called unEnglish spellings: “We should think not of monoglot AN scribes making a mess of English, but rather of native English speakers whose written competence in the vernacular had been so far restricted to AN, and who were beginning to extend their written competence into English.”⁶³ Such scribes may have been prodigal in their orthographic practices, thereby upsetting the decidedly modern expectation that scribal competence be predicated on extremely economic orthographic practice, but the

⁶⁰ Clark, “Myth,” 118-19.

⁶¹ Margaret Laing, “Confusion *wrs* Confounded: Litteral Substitution Sets in Early Middle English Writing Systems,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 100 (1999): 259.

⁶² Clark, “Myth,” 120-21.

⁶³ Michael Benskin, “On the ignorance of Anglo-Norman scribes,” presented at Conference on Multilingualism in Late Medieval Britain, Aberystwyth 1997 and quoted by Laing in “Confusion *wrs* Confounded,” 261.

systematic nature of their copying practices argue powerfully for their fluency in English. There is no evidence, orthographic or otherwise, within Scribe 3's stint in Auchinleck to suggest that his command of English fell short of Scribe 1's, whose fluency is so beyond question that he has been posited as author—as well as scribe—of at least one Auchinleck text.⁶⁴

On the contrary, Scribe 3 demonstrates comfort with his English texts at the level of individual words and at the level of overall sense. The feature of his orthography that excites the most consternation in Brunner's and Bahr's accounts—the use of yogh where we would expect a thorn, eg. *wiz* ('with') or *-e3* ('-eth', *present 3rd pers. sing.*)—occurs within a consistent pattern of usage: Scribe 3 only uses the yogh in [θ/ð] contexts when the [θ/ð] is syllable- or word-final. The coexistence of thorn and yogh in litteral substitution sets is not unique to Scribe 3 either. Margaret Laing notes, for example, that the writing system of the *Owl and the Nightingale* exemplar from which both surviving copies derive “[allows] occasional substitution of <3> for <þ/p>” and that this practice can be observed in other Southwest Midland writing systems (notably that of Scribe D of Cambridge, Trinity College, MS B.14.39, whose orthographic similarities to Scribe 3 Brunner also noted).⁶⁵ Unless Scribe 3 was copying his entire stint from a single orthographically consistent

⁶⁴ Fisher argues convincingly that “Auchinleck Scribe 1 was responsible for composing the Auchinleck *Short Chronicle*” in “an act of scribal authorship” (*Scribal Authorship*, 150).

⁶⁵ Laing, “*The Owl and the Nightingale*: Five New Readings and Further Notes,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 108 (2007): 465, 465 n. 43. Laing undertakes a rehabilitation of the Trinity College manuscript's Scribe D, whom, she notes “has for many years been placed in the ‘confused Norman’ category” (“Confusion *wrs* Confounded,” 254).

It is possible that the more localizable practice Laing identifies derives from a more widespread association of these graphs and their associated phonetic range. In “A Middle English mess of fricative spellings: Reflections on thorn, yogh and their rivals,” in *To Make his Englishh Sweete upon his Tonge*, ed. Marcin Krygier and Liliana Sikorska (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), Merja Stenroos has observed in her study of the gradual loss of the graphs <þ> and <3> that “thorns and yoghs in Late Middle English texts seem to relate to each other in some kind of systematic way” (“Middle English mess,” 11) and that “<þ> and <3> belong to particularly large and complex substitution sets” (“Middle English mess,” 14). Examining the extremely various Middle English spellings of the word *through* in

exemplar, he could not have been a literatim copyist; all six of the texts he copied share a consistent orthography.⁶⁶ It is much more probable that Scribe 3 translated what he copied according to his own orthographic system. Far from indicating any linguistic difficulties on the part of Scribe 3, the internal consistencies of this system (like the yogh where we expect a thorn within a strictly circumscribed set of environments) suggest that he understood and attended to the words he was copying sufficiently to replace spellings outside his repertoire with those within it. This is further substantiated by the evidence that Scribe 3 corrected occasional mistakes in spelling and syntax. His stint contains multiple identifiable instances in which individual letters have been corrected, as well as an insertion of a skipped word at the end of a line.⁶⁷

In his strategies of visual presentation, Scribe 3 exhibits alertness to the big picture—to the structure and content of the texts he copies—as well as to the aforementioned details. As I noted above, Scribe 3 is the only scribe aside from Scribe 1 to supply titles for the texts he copied; the two texts whose beginnings have suffered no excisions have both been titled in red. Scribe 3's rubricating habits are consistent with his general scrupulousness in marking the bounds of texts he copied. Where space permits, Scribe 3 has marked the endings of texts as well.⁶⁸ He also adopts a

LALME, Stenroos further observes that there is considerable overlap between the substitution sets for (th) and (gh): “most notably, the spellings <3>, <t> and <th> form part of both the (th) and (gh) sets” (“Middle English mess,” 14).

⁶⁶ For an examination of Scribe 3's orthographic practices across his stint within Auchinleck, see *LALME* (Scribe 3's linguistic profile is designated LP 6500) and my article, “Reexamining Orthographic Practice in the Auchinleck Manuscript Through Study of Complete Scribal Corpora,” in *Variation and Change in English Grammar and Lexicon: Contemporary Approaches*, ed. Robert Cloutier, Anne Marie Hamilton-Brehm, and William Kretzschmar, Jr. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2010).

⁶⁷ Individual letters have been corrected in *Degare* (f. 82va, line 702), *Seven Sages* (f. 87vb, line 527 and f. 93vb, line 1575), and *Floris* (f. 103ra, line 546) and a word has been inserted at the end of a line in *Seven Sages* (f. 70rb, line 67); see the partial editions of these three texts in Appendix B (items 4, 5, and 6).

⁶⁸ Whether Scribe 3 concludes texts with ‘Amen’ or ‘Explicit’ appears to depend on content: the former marks the conclusion of *Seven Deadly Sins* and the latter marks the end of *Floris*. The ending of *Assumption* survives as well, but in

series of systematic approaches to marking internal divisions within the first three texts of the six he copied. The first two texts—the two non-narrative texts in Scribe 3's stint—show a clear hierarchy of initials and paraphs. The divisions they effect emphasize the structures of these two texts and particularly accentuate the collectedness of these two poems, as I will discuss in greater depth in the next section. In the third of these three, *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, Scribe 3 uses paraphs as formal devices to mark stanzaic divisions throughout. The other three texts within Scribe 3's stint—*Sir Degare*, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, and *Floris and Blancheflour*—share a narrative structure and a couplet form, allowing Scribe 3 the liberty to subdivide these texts interpretively (as opposed to formally). He has adopted slightly different tactics of subdivision in each: in *Degare* he initially relies on paraphs to mark narrative transitions, but abruptly switches to relying on initials to mark these transitions shortly after having employed a number of paraphs to mark a significant dialogue rather than narrative transition; in *Seven Sages* he continues his use of initials to mark narrative transitions as well as embedded narratives and other structurally significant elements; in *Floris* he returns to a technique closer to that of the opening of *Degare*, in which frequent paraphs and relatively rare initials mark different levels of subdivision within the poem's narrative.

Scribe 3's competency and comprehension can be seen at both the linguistic and the literary level. A skeptic could argue that these textual divisions are faithful duplications of whatever divisions Scribe 3 encountered in his exemplars or additions he made with no regard to the text.

order to finish it in f. 78ra rather than ending it at the top of f. 78rb, it has been copied so as to exceed the ruled lineation by two lines. This seems to have been a problem moment for Scribe 3, who appears to have only initially copied as much of the final stanza as would fit within the bounds of the page's ruling. The two final lines appear to have been added later, for they are copied in a different ink and in a hand that may or may not be Scribe 3's (some features are similar, while others are different, whether because they belong to a more formal script within Scribe 3's repertoire or to a different Scribe entirely is difficult to say). In any event, these measures taken to fit the text's ending within the first column probably account for the absence of any concluding marks/words.

The latter possibility can be ruled out immediately. Though Scribe 3 is not always consistent in his marking practices—particularly where the couplet verse narratives are concerned—his textual divisions nearly always accord with textual form and content. With only one exception, he marks only couplet- (or stanza-) initial lines.⁶⁹ Within the couplet verse narratives, he employs initials to indicate significant transitions in speech or narrative action, even if they are not always consistent in signposting the *same* elements of the poem's structure throughout. Either Scribe 3 made these divisions himself based on his own sense of the texts he was copying or he copied his visual layouts of these poems from exemplars whose scribes had been attending—with differing marking strategies—to the texts' contents. And if one were inclined to believe that Scribe 3 copied all of these texts from different exemplars or the stints of different scribes, hence the varied strategies of visual presentation in the couplet verse narratives, one would have to concede that the internally consistent orthographic system evident in Scribe 3's stint has to have been self-imposed by Scribe 3. The combination of Scribe 3's generally systematic orthography and textually systematic subdivisions argues his intelligent scribal intervention as either a 'translating' copyist or a textually sensitive reader—and most probably as both at once.

I make this point so strenuously because the question of Scribe 3's agency in Booklet 3 depends on his capacity to understand English and attend to the texts he was copying. Bahr, having wrongly dismissed Scribe 3's capabilities, concludes that the only scribe who could possibly have overseen compilation of Booklet 3 was Scribe 1, his ability having already been demonstrated elsewhere. Bahr comes to this conclusion by a kind of lazy process of elimination:

⁶⁹ See *Floris* (f. 100vb, line 176).

The fact that Scribe 3 seems to have been uncomfortable or unfamiliar with texts in English makes it quite unlikely that he orchestrated a booklet of texts in that language for inclusion in a manuscript whose resolute Englishness is so remarkable. Scribe 4, too, is hardly likely to have gone rogue by copying so odd a text as the ‘Battle Abbey Roll’—quite the opposite of the anodyne filler that frequently concludes booklets, in Auchinleck and elsewhere—without receiving definite instruction from somebody; and it is hard to come up with another source of such a directive than Scribe 1 (possibly transmitting some set of desires from the patron).⁷⁰

Aside from the problematic assumptions regarding Scribe 3 (as discussed above) and the glaring omission of Scribe 2’s involvement in the booklet’s production, Bahr’s account presumes a temporally and qualitatively fixed relationship between Auchinleck’s scribes. A careful study of the booklet itself suggests that Scribe 1 did intervene in its production, but not in the straightforward managerial role Bahr envisions. Rather, the evidence of the booklet attests to fluctuating levels of oversight on the part of Scribe 1 and a significant degree of independence enjoyed by Scribe 3.

Scribe 3’s stint shows evidence of engagements with Scribe 1’s practice and aesthetic that changed over time. It also bears witness to interventions by Scribe 1 that are far more sporadic than those in other scribes’ stints. Both of these tendencies bespeak a shifting—rather than static—interaction between Scribes 1 and 3. Early in his stint, Scribe 3 appears to have worked with a great deal of independence, fashioning a contribution to Auchinleck that stands apart in its appearance and content. Eventually, however, Scribe 1 may have communicated new stipulations regarding format or have begun to exercise greater oversight. Whatever the particular reason, the temporally changing character of the scribes’ collaborations may have determined not only the booklet’s appearance, but its textual configurations and meaningful trajectory. As the final section will discuss in greater detail, this booklet bears witness to a literary project shaped primarily by Scribe 3

⁷⁰ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 111.

in its initial, atypical texts. Though the booklet's later quires exhibit more evidence of Scribe 1's influence, these opening texts effectively enact an interpretive intervention on the part of Scribe 3; they frame what is to come within the mediating guidance of their own literary preoccupations.

In general, the earlier quires of Scribe 3's stint conform less to Scribe 1's visual program than do the later ones. Quires 13, 14, and 16 (and presumably 15, if it had survived) are uniformly ruled for 44 lines per page, Scribe 1's own preferred line-count.⁷¹ Quires 11 and 12, the first two quires of the booklet, are not: Quire 12 has consistently been ruled for two columns of 40 lines per page and the openings within Quire 11 range from two columns of 33 to 38 lines per page.⁷² The fluctuations within Quire 11 appear to be at least partially keyed to texts; *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* have been copied in the range of 36 to 38 lines per page and the lowest line-counts are all employed in ruling for *Assumption*. It is in the first intact opening of *Assumption* that the line-count dips down to 34 lines per page and until the final page of Quire 11 it stays in the range of 33 to 34 lines per page. It is possible that Scribe 3 judged the wider spacing appropriate to the poem's content or stanzaic form, but what is abundantly clear in Scribe 3's ruling of this quire is that he did not aspire here to the uniformity of Scribe 1's line-count. Seen in this light, his adoption in his later quires of Scribe 1's preferred line-count might suggest that Scribe 1 had stepped up his involvement.

Changes in decoration within Scribe 3's stint support this supposition. To the extent that losses within the booklet permit an assessment of decorative program, Scribe 3's policy of allowing

⁷¹ The only surviving exceptions to this ruling occur on ff. 90v-91v, where Scribe 3 has ruled for 45 lines per page instead of 44, perhaps to facilitate fitting *Seven Sages* within the space he had or anticipated having.

⁷² As Shonk has observed, Scribe 3 appears to have ruled by openings within quires ("Investigations," 66); where openings within Quire 11 are intact, the line-count is always consistent within an opening.

space for an opening miniature appears to have shifted over the course of his stint. As noted above, *Seven Deadly Sins* begins with a large initial but without any space for a miniature. Though *Paternoster* does have a framed miniature on its first folio, Scribe 3 does not appear to have planned for its inclusion and his page layout limited its size and prevented its placement at the beginning of the new poem. As I will discuss in the next section, its atypical dimensions and location are in some senses quite appropriate to the text, itself atypical within Auchinleck. Still, the miniature was almost certainly squeezed into the upper margin of the page and not anticipated by Scribe 3. The other four texts copied by Scribe 3 have all suffered some measure of loss at their openings and *Degare* is the only poem of the four that has not lost any lines of text at its beginning. The text commences on the eighth ruled line of f. 78rb and a rough excision has cut into this first line and removed all of the column above this line. Such excisions elsewhere in the manuscript indicate the removal of framed single-column miniatures, and a miniature-hunter was probably the culprit here as well. The loss of whole leaves (or more) at the openings of the other three poems may also be the result of a miniature-hunter's zeal (again, this is a pattern observable elsewhere in Auchinleck), but, in any case, the small-scale excision at the opening of *Degare* establishes that by the time Scribe 3 had begun to copy this poem he had almost certainly received instructions from Scribe 1 to leave space for a miniature at the opening of a new poem.

We know that Scribe 3's quires, like those of the other Auchinleck scribes, would eventually have passed through Scribe 1's hands, probably for conveyance to the rubricators and illuminators and certainly for ordering, for which Scribe 1 would have added numbering and

booklet-final catchwords.⁷³ In some cases, though not in Booklet 3, Scribe 1 also added text titles to other scribes' submitted quires. Scribe 1 has left a couple of traces in Booklet 3 beyond the text numbers and the booklet-final catchword. The first of these is difficult to account for: the only paraph in *Seven Sages* has been painted over a single slash, the paraph cue employed by Scribe 1.⁷⁴ (See figure 1.) It is hard to imagine that this mark originated with anyone other than Scribe 1; none of the other scribes employs a mark that could be mistaken for this one.⁷⁵ To my knowledge, Scribe 1 has not added cues for paraps in other scribes' stints and it is strange that he should do so here, particularly since the outcome is a single paraph in an otherwise unparaphed poem.⁷⁶ His having added this paraph cue to *Seven Sages* does suggest that Scribe 1 had access of some duration to this quire (i.e. Quire 13), if not to a greater portion of Scribe 3's stint, *before* as well as after its rubrication. A catchword in Scribe 1's hand on f. 99v, at the end of Quire 14, is also suggestive. As I have noted above, Scribe 1 did not provide catchwords within the stints of Scribes 2 or 6 and, as a rule, he did not do so within Scribe 3's stint either.⁷⁷ Only in his own stints and in the stint of Scribe 5 did he add them consistently throughout. Scribe 1's catchwords in Scribe 5's stint fit with

⁷³ Shonk provides an overview of this process in "Bookmen," 84-85.

⁷⁴ Scribe 3 uses a markedly different cue-mark, one shaped like a paraph, with a bow on the left. Shonk provides an overview of the scribes' different cue-marks in "Bookmen," 79.

⁷⁵ The most similar mark consists of double slashed lines used by Scribe 6, but these tend to be less assertive and on f. 88ra it is clear that there is no second slash-mark.

⁷⁶ The paraph does mark a significant passage in the text, insofar as it expresses one of the central questions of the text, directed at the emperor Diocletian:

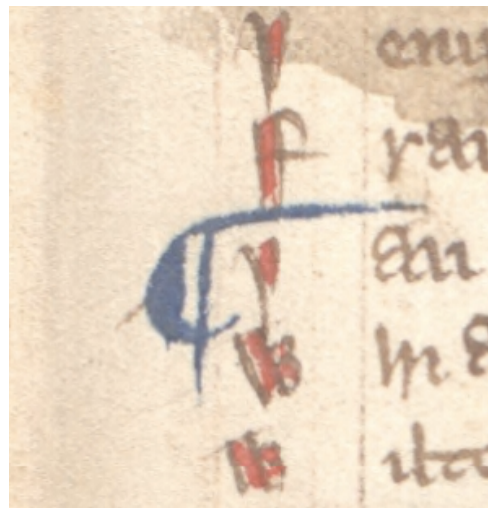
¶ Þan seide maister Bancillas,
 "Whi artou wroht and for what cas?
 Wiltou sle þin owen child?
 Ne were þou wone be god and mild?" (lines 535-8)

This reference to the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* is from the partial edition in Appendix B (item 5).

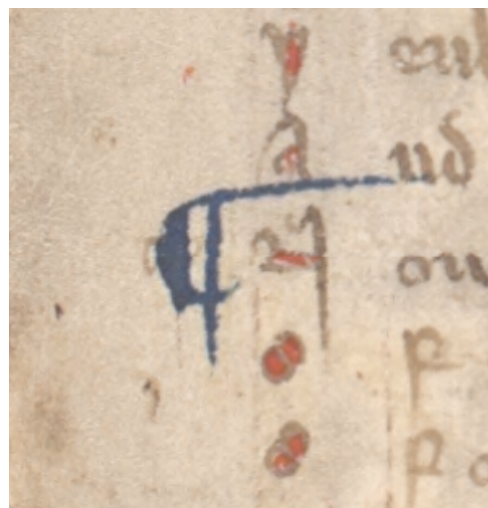
⁷⁷ Although it is possible that the quire-ends within these scribes' stints did initially contain catchwords that have since been cropped off, Scribe 1's catchwords are spaced so uniformly in relation to the lower page ruling that it seems unlikely that such hypothetically cropped catchwords would have been his additions.



Paraph with Scribe 1's paraph guide-mark visible
(f. 66rb)



Sole paraph within *The Seven Sages of Rome*
(f. 88ra)



Paraph with Scribe 3's paraph guide-mark visible
(f. 78ra)

Figure 1. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, f. 66rb (detail), f. 88ra (detail), and f. 78ra (detail). By permission of the National Library of Scotland.

other evidence for his greater oversight of, and earlier access to, Scribe 5's work. Like the solitary paraph cue, this solitary catchword may point to Scribe 1's involvement at a relatively early stage of production; rather than receiving and circulating Booklet 3 *en bloc*, individual quires or a partial booklet may have passed through his hands before the entire booklet was complete.

There are some interesting correlations among these observations that, when taken together, shed some light on the circumstances in which Scribe 3 might have copied his stint. Scribe 1's presence, both in his tangible interventions and in the execution of his aesthetic, is felt most powerfully in the final three extant quires of the booklet—and might have been felt in the missing Quire 15 as well. Here, Scribe 3 has adhered closely to Scribe 1's preferred ruling format and to his visual program, and here Scribe 1 may even have handled the quires before they were either completed or rubricated. Here also, Scribe 3 has copied texts whose length and content resemble those selected and privileged elsewhere by Scribe 1: *Degare* and *Floris* clearly align with the book's general tendency towards narrative, and specifically romance narrative. Likewise, *Seven Sages* fulfills a taste for romance-tinged narrative, regardless of its (oft-debated) generic identity.⁷⁸ Recalling the bafflement of scholars faced with this booklet, the challenge, as most articulate it, is not accounting for the booklet's contents as a whole, but for the fact that contents of the booklet most closely aligned with the manuscript's dominant program are in the center rather than at the beginning of the booklet. The confluence of codicological and textual shifts within the booklet suggests a means of accounting for the booklet's unusual structure: I would submit that Scribe 1 was exerting greater oversight over Scribe 3's stint by the time he was working on Quires 13-16.

⁷⁸ Jill Whitelock provides a useful overview of this debate in the introduction to her edition of *Seven Sages of Rome (Midland Version)*, EETS, o.s. 324 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), xiii-lxxi: xv-xviii.

Whether Scribe 3 was actually working in closer proximity to Scribe 1 at this point or was merely the recipient of more specific directives regarding page layout and text choice, his work in these later quires fits Auchinleck's visual and textual project nearly as seamlessly as Scribe 5's.

How, then, do we account for Scribe 3's divergent practices in the beginning of his stint? I would submit that Scribe 2's contributions to Auchinleck provide a key to understanding how Scribe 3 was working when he began work on Booklet 3. Particularly in Quire 11, the texts Scribe 3 copied and the layout of the pages in which he copied them are, as I have already asserted above, far more reminiscent of Scribe 2's stints than of Scribe 1's. Scribe 3's early stint—most particularly that encompassing *Seven Deadly Sins*, *Paternoster*, and the beginning of *Assumption*—shares Scribe 2's propensities for largely non-narrative, didactic texts, and here Scribe 3, like Scribe 2, leaves no room for miniatures, undertakes some of his own rubrication, and rules openings for far fewer lines per page than Scribe 1's line-count. Again, I do not necessarily suggest a collaboration between Scribes 2 and 3, but, recalling my earlier suggestion that both scribes worked with greater independence from or disregard for Scribe 1's visual and textual program, I do propose that Scribe 3 specifically executed most or all of his first quire under circumstances similar to those in which Scribe 2 copied *Speculum Gy* and *Simonie*, with relatively minimal direction from Scribe 1. It is even conceivable, as Marshall has suggested in respect to Scribe 2, that both scribes provided Scribe 1 with material that they had copied in advance of his planning or direction.⁷⁹ If Scribes 2 and 3 were copying at Scribe 1's behest, he might have briefed them on rough page dimension and layout

⁷⁹ Marshall has proposed a production model for Auchinleck that occupies a position between the fascicular model proposed by Pearsall and Robinson and the bespoke, Scribe 1-directed model proposed by Shonk and Hanna, "an intermediary model in which some booklets were "bespoke" while others—created in advance or, at least, created outside Scribe 1's planning—were incorporated into the codex as whole units or as the basis for booklets in which further scribal stints were added" ("What's in a Paraph?," 45).

(or provided materials), but, in that case, the two scribes' *mises-en-page* express their own takes on what Scribe 1 had in mind—and in Scribe 3's case his take was eventually altered in the direction of Scribe 1's process.

Given that Scribes 2 and 3 copied texts atypical of Auchinleck's program, the question of who selected these texts for inclusion remains open and compelling. Scribe 1 could have deputized both scribes to copy the bulk of the manuscript's overtly didactic material because they had access to the appropriate exemplars or, again, it is conceivable that he provided less specific instruction, perhaps enjoining his scribal colleagues to provide some devotional texts—whether previously copied by them or available in exemplar—for inclusion within the manuscript. Scholars have tended to view Scribe 2's *Speculum Gy* as a more likely candidate for bespoke production than *Simonie*. The latter is the sole (fragmentary) survival in the manuscript's final booklet and its ruling in a single column is a relative rarity in the manuscript. As for *Speculum*, Guy of Warwick is undoubtedly a central figure in the manuscript (perhaps at the behest of the manuscript's patron) and his possible occasion-specific insertion into this text argues for its deliberate inclusion in the manuscript.⁸⁰

Turning to Scribe 3's early stint, one can only speculate as to whether Scribe 1 (or the patron) might have requested *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*. If they were included in response to the patron's wishes, the demand was probably couched in general rather than specific terms ("Give me what the family and I need to prepare for confession" or "Give me the 'Ave,' Creed, and

⁸⁰ This possibility is suggested by Jean Harpham Burrows in "The Auchinleck Manuscript: Contexts, Texts and Audience" (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 1984). She suggests that Scribe 2 emended Alcuin's *De Virtutibus et Vitiis Liber*, or a translation thereof, so as to incorporate Guy of Warwick in place of Guido of Tours, for whom Alcuin's text was written (Burrows, "Auchinleck Manuscript," 23).

‘Pater noster’); the texts themselves are unique, but similar clusters of the fundamentals of lay piety survive in similarly mixed collections (eg. CUL MS Ff.2.38). *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* are early attestations of this kind of text rendered into English, and this earliness, along with their brevity and singularity, argues for their having potentially been translated or adapted specifically for inclusion in Auchinleck or—if Scribe 3 had produced them earlier—for some other purpose. It is even possible that Scribe 3 translated or adapted them himself, a possibility I address in the chapter’s final section. In any event, the specific form that these texts take most probably reflects the agency of Scribe 3—whether we go so far as to dub it authorial or confine it to the realm of selection, execution, and (probable) emendation—rather than the plan of Scribe 1.

I have taken pains to make this distinction for several reasons. Auchinleck has inspired a significant body of research on its circumstances of production and, as my closer look at scribes’ work suggests, more remains to be analyzed and understood, particularly in the scribal practices that diverge from Scribe 1’s planning. I stress the potential range of Scribe 3’s agency for a more particular reason, though. In the next section, I argue for the importance of the two texts Scribe 3 has copied entirely under relatively independent circumstances, *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*. In his recent work asserting Booklet 3’s formal coherence, Bahr has also remarked upon the significance of these texts. Linking them with the *Assumption*, he argues that all three pick up “the leitmotif of spiritual imitation that runs through what we might call Auchinleck’s ‘religious overture,’ texts 1-16.”⁸¹ In other words, Bahr sees these three texts participating in the same spiritual project initiated by the texts of Booklets 1 and 2. I would by no means gainsay this point,

⁸¹ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 115. This view is very much in keeping with his conviction that Scribe 1 assumed primary responsibility for planning Booklet 3.

but it is so general as to forestall contradiction. Any devotional text can be said to encourage spiritual imitation and Bahr's point elides the differences of these texts and the potential significance of their more particular arrangements.⁸² I wish to complicate Bahr's assessment of the texts opening Booklet 3. Rather than reading with an eye to Booklet 3's structural and generic integration into the manuscript's overall patterns of arrangement, I have undertaken a reading that takes the booklet on its terms. In the process, I probe the potential medieval reception of this particular node of texts and of their particular virtues.

I think it highly likely that Scribe 3, as the scribe copying and even potentially authoring these texts, was alert to their particular engagements with the spiritually beneficial material collected within them. As the next section reveals, Scribe 3's own intervention in Auchinleck's third booklet, whereby he directs readers down new spiritual and intellectual avenues, finds a literary parallel in the textual workings of the two poems in the vanguard of his stint and, thus, of Booklet 3. These texts awaken a readerly self-consciousness that is at once moral and inwardly-directed, literary and imaginative. Such self-consciousness might likewise have characterized Scribe 3's reception of his own contributions to the Auchinleck manuscript, his scribal mediations between text and reader and his almost authorial mediations between Scribe 1's project and his own.

⁸² This elision enables Bahr's identification of Booklet 3 with Auchinleck as a whole: "Booklet 3 and Auchinleck both open with religious texts that dramatize the imitation of spiritually wholesome figures and practices, setting up the question of whether this imitative model can be effectively transferred into the secular context that the following romance materials include" (*Fragments and Assemblages*, 113). Seen in this light, Bahr's statements are true enough, but their lack of specificity works against the commendable manuscript- and booklet-specific analysis he has undertaken.

On the Seven Deadly Sins, The Paternoster, and the Self-Conscious Reader

The rest of this chapter turns from the material interventions of Scribe 3 to the framing interventions enacted within the texts he copied. Several of these texts represent and deploy collection as a goad to different kinds of reading. Reading—understood as a rich variety of processes including study, interpretation, and the perusal of text (and image)—extends as a throughline within this booklet, and the texts organized as collections—most notably *Seven Deadly Sins*, *Paternoster*, and *Seven Sages*—use their structures to scrutinize reading’s multifarious practices and ends. *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* engage with each other—and, by virtue of their location in the opening of the booklet, with the texts that follow—in a sophisticated project that stands in interesting contrast to the manuscript’s predominant literary focus. As the initial texts in Booklet 3, these two poems effectively condition the reception of the texts that follow. Encouraging their readers to recognize and think about the many ways they read, and to read in ever more sophisticated ways, *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* ask their audiences to scrutinize themselves both as moral agents and as readers—and they imply an imbrication of these roles. They present the practice of reading—and specifically the practice of reading the material that they circumscribe—as morally freighted and spiritually significant. In keeping with the moral seriousness of these poems’ contents, framing devices work within both texts as textual intermediaries, offering forms of pedagogical guidance as they stand in for spiritual advisors. These ventriloquistic mediations cultivate and direct multifarious reading practices and, in so doing, promote readerly deliberation and self-consciousness.

This structural aspect, shared by both poems, has gone largely unremarked. In the case of *Seven Deadly Sins*, this seems to arise at least in part from the way it has been handled in Auchinleck scholarship. Scholars have gravitated to the poem's edges—particularly to its title and its conclusion—when considering its place in the manuscript.⁸³ In his pioneering description of Auchinleck, published in 1884, Eugen Kölbing was the first to identify the poem by the title now commonly applied to it: “On þe seuen dedly sinnes.”⁸⁴ Only the word “sinnes” remains unscathed by the depredations of cropping on Scribe 3's title and we cannot know whether this was the title originally provided.⁸⁵ Kölbing himself noted the limitations of his postulated reconstruction, observing that “[d]ieses ... gedicht bietet viel mehr, als der titel verspricht [this poem offers much more than the title promises].”⁸⁶ Indeed, the title gives away relatively little of the poem's content or organization. The 308-line poem dispatches with the Seven Deadly Sins in about fourteen lines and does little more than list them and identify the spiritual harm that they do. This text comprises an assortment of short lists, prayers, and meditations geared to cultivating “þe soules

⁸³ Philippa Hardman proves a notable exception in “Domestic Learning and Teaching: Investigating Evidence for the Role of ‘Household miscellanies’ in Late-Medieval England,” *Women and Writing, c. 1340-c. 1650: The Domestication of Print Culture*, ed. Anne Lawrence-Mathers and Philippa Hardman (York: York Medieval Press, 2010), 15-33. Drawing on a holistic consideration of the text and its particular contents alongside those of *Paternoster*, she suggests on the basis of their foundational content and resonant “penitential themes” that “a case can be made for reading these elementary texts ... as the first stage in a larger educational programme within the manuscript as a whole” (“Domestic Learning,” 21).

⁸⁴ Eugen Kölbing, “Vier Romanzen-Handschriften,” *Englische Studien* 7 (1884): 185. Kölbing's description of Auchinleck occupies 178-91 in this article.

⁸⁵ Kölbing makes note of this loss himself in his discussions of the text in “Vier Romanzen-Handschriften” (185) and in his description and edition of “Ueber die sieben todsünden” in “Kleine Publicationen aus der Auchinleck-hs, V-VII,” *Englische Studien* 9 (1886): 43. In the earliest edition of this poem, David Laing refrained from offering a title of any kind, beyond a description of its contents, specifically “The Dedli Sinnes, the Hestes, the Crede, etc.” (81); see *A Penni Worth of Witte: Florice and Blancheflour: and Other Pieces of Ancient English Poetry Selected from the Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: Abbotsford Club, 1857), especially 81-91. In other words, there is no compelling evidence that this was the title provided prior to the cropping of the page. It is possible that the title could have more inclusively addressed the confession or expiation of sins, for example.

⁸⁶ Kölbing, “Kleine Publicationen” 42.

biheue,” and it quickly proceeds from listing the Seven Deadly Sins to expanding on the means by which readers may shore up their defenses against them. Subsequent scholars have not always observed the incongruity between Kölbing’s title and the poem’s content.⁸⁷ Bahr’s recent treatment of the poem is a case in point; his identification of the poem as “an antimodel ... for a good Christian” depends upon a view of the text that focuses on the titular sins and excludes the rest of its contents.⁸⁸ Scholarly treatments of the poem’s conclusion have been similarly selective. The poem’s closing prayer expresses the wish that Christians regain the Holy Land, and several critics have pinpointed this brief passage as a continuation of Auchinleck’s attention to the Crusades.⁸⁹ In doing so, they have given little or no attention to the bulk of the text preceding these lines. Here I scrutinize the poem’s central aims and contents and contend that the poem’s explanatory framework and collected texts work in concert to direct readers’ mental and moral transformations.

⁸⁷ *Seven Deadly Sins*, line 21. For this and all other references to the Auchinleck *Seven Deadly Sins* see the partial edition in Appendix B (item 1). See also “On the Seven Deadly Sins,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/sins.html>.

⁸⁸ Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 119.

⁸⁹ The relevant lines occur within the final prayer in the poem, which then goes on to address eschatological concerns:

Sende pees þere is werre,
 And ʒiue Criftenemen grace,
 Into þe holi lond to pace
 And fle Saraxins þat bez fo riue,
 And lete be Criftenemen on liue,
 And faue þe pes of holi cherche... (lines 288-93)

For a critical response to these lines, see, for example, Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). Responding to this passage within *Seven Deadly Sins*, which he otherwise dismisses as “a particularly artless work,” Turville-Petre asserts that it reflects a larger preoccupation with crusading within the manuscript: “It would be a mistake to regard this call for a crusade as no more than conventional piety. It is a call that runs right through the manuscript, appearing in a variety of guises—romance, chronicle, saint’s legend, and political poem ...” (*England the Nation*, 121-22). This formulation reduces the interest of *Seven Deadly Sins* to its participation within this larger trend.

The various contents collected within *Seven Deadly Sins* were often featured—individually or integrated into a cohesive structure—in longer verse or prose treatises in English and other vernaculars.⁹⁰ Their assembly here in a single, short collection with relatively little accompanying explication serves a different purpose, one intimated by the poem’s prescriptive framework. This poem effectively teaches its audiences how they ought to read by embedding doctrinally central material within a framework that directs the manner of its reception and internalization. To this end, the poem opens by announcing its structure and providing a substantial overview of its embedded contents and their intended audiences, elaborating on why these contents are necessary to these audiences and how they ought to be received. The preface thereby establishes a tripartite structure organizing its embedded material: the first section comprises a brief confessional prayer and a catalogue of mortal sins making up the Seven Deadly Sins and violations of the Ten Commandments, the second section supplies English translations of the three prayers best known to the medieval laity—the ‘Pater noster,’ Creed, and ‘Ave Maria’—and the third section follows the seven-part structure of the Short Office of the Cross as it recounts Christ’s Passion with interpolated prayers.

These contents and the simplicity and specificity with which the poem presents them all argue for its use as a foundational text, a pithy guide to some essential Christian texts and how to use them. With its sustained emphasis on how its contents are to be read, the poem fosters an air

⁹⁰ Auchinleck’s *Paternoster* is a shorter example of the type. According to Robert Raymo, “Works of Religious and Philosophical Instruction,” in vol. 7 of *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 1050-1500*, ed. Albert E. Hartung (New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1986), most Middle English treatises survive in later manuscripts, chiefly from the fifteenth century. In manuscripts predating or contemporary with Auchinleck, the more common occurrence is the conjunction of various elements of the faith—lists, prayers, etc.—in Middle English without the framing element present in *Seven Deadly Sins*.

of practical didacticism. Kölbinger has suggested, presumably on the basis of the poem's devotional contents, that this text was intended "für den gottesdienstlichen gebrauch in der kirche [for liturgical use in church]," but the breadth of the poem's contents—to say nothing of its manuscript context and the manuscript's size—militates against actual use in church or chapel.⁹¹ Rather, this text would most likely have been used as an instrument of lay instruction, informing readers' behavior in church and their experience of mass, but aiming more generally to direct them spiritually. Canon 21 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, *Omnis utriusque sexus*, stipulated that lay people confess annually once they reach the age of seven.⁹² The promulgation of this canon acted as an impetus to basic lay religious instruction in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It also prompted further canons aiming to facilitate such instruction. Efforts to improve ministry to the laity in England received support and direction from Archbishop John Pecham of Canterbury in the canons of the Lambeth Council of 1281. In Canon 9, *Ignorantia sacerdotum*, Pecham sought to ensure certain standards of lay instruction by requiring that parish priests in England preach on six basic catechetical topics, including the Seven Deadly Sins, the Ten Commandments, and the Creed.⁹³ By the middle of the fourteenth century, the *Lay Folks' Catechism*—composed by John Gaytryge at the commission of Archbishop John Thoresby of York—was listing and elaborating on these required elements of the faith in the vernacular, insuring, as Hanna observes, that the "list of basics that every layperson should know was available

⁹¹ Kölbinger, "Kleine Publicationen," 42.

⁹² See *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, 3rd ed., ed. Josepho Alberigo, Josepho A. Dossetti, Perikle - P. Joannou, Claudio Leonardi, and Paulo Prodi (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 1973), 245. Seven was the age of discretion, the age at which a child can be expected to act according to his or her own free will, take moral responsibility for his or her acts, and thus be guilty of sins committed.

⁹³ See *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Part II: A.D. 1205-1313*, ed. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 900-5.

to the audience [the archbishop] intended to educate—and not just, as in Peckham’s canon, to the priests who might instruct the laity.”⁹⁴ These broad trends in lay religious instruction suggest a growing appreciation of lay people’s capacity—and perhaps also motivation—to learn the elements of faith directly from their own reading as well as through the mediation of their parish priests or spiritual advisors.

Seven Deadly Sins participates in this project and it anticipates the mid-fourteenth-century efforts to translate elements of the faith into the vernacular for a lay audience. In fact, it addresses a lay audience directly. The opening lines of the poem—those following the four-line prayer with which it begins—take a didactic tone. Taken with the prayer, these lines work ventriloquistically, adopting the voice of a spiritual advisor:

Ihesu, þat for vs wold die
 And was boren of maiden Marie,
 Forziue vs, louerd, our misdede
 And help vs ate oure moste nede.
 To þo þat habben laiser to dwelle,
 Of holi writ ich wole 3ou telle,
 And alle þat taken þerto hede,

⁹⁴ “Introduction,” *The Index of Middle English Prose, XII: Manuscripts in Smaller Bodleian Collections*, ed. Ralph Hanna (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1997), xx. According to the Lay Folks’ Catechism, lay people needed to know:

The lawe and the lore to knawe god all-mighten,
 That principali may be shewed in this sex thinges:
 In the fourtene poyntes that falles to the trouthe,
 In the ten comandementez that god has gyven us,
 In the seuen Sacramentz that er in hali kirke,
 In seuen dedis of merci until oure euen-cristen,
 In the seuen vertues that ilk man sal use,
 And in the seuen dedely sinnes that man sal refuse. (lines 51-58)

See Thomas F. Simmons and Henry E. Nolloth, ed., *The Lay Folks’ Catechism; or The English and Latin Versions of Archbishop Thoresby’s Instruction for the People*, EETS, o.s. 118 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1901), even pages only.

God wille quiten al here mede.⁹⁵

Here text itself takes on the role of teacher. The *us* of the prayer—acknowledgment of a shared humanity and human fallibility—gives way in the following lines to the articulation of a didactic relationship between the text (*ich*) and reading audience (*you*), or, alternatively, between an oral reader and listening audience. The textual frame takes up the mantle of a clerical instructor, expounding basic elements of the faith and the reasons lay people ought to learn them.

The community of pupils who would have stood to benefit at some time or another from such instruction would have been a large one. The prefatory overview of the first section imagines a nearly universal audience for its penitentially necessary contents:

Þer bez dedli sinnes seuene,
Þat lettez man to come to heuene,
And Ihesu Cristes hestes ten,
Þat children and wimmen and men
Of twelue winter elde and more,
After holi cherche lore,
Euerichone þai sscholden knowe,
But to lerne þai bez to slowe.⁹⁶

Such comprehensive awareness of the mortal sins would have abetted a lay person's examination of conscience, a necessary preparation for confession, which was now required of all lay people—including children who had reached the age of seven.⁹⁷ These lines of the poem delineate an audience in no uncertain terms, identifying a community of learners limited only by intellectual capacity. At the same time, however, the terms of this passage suggest that it ought to be

⁹⁵ *Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 5-8.

⁹⁶ *Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 9-16.

⁹⁷ This poem specifies twelve as the age at which children should have learned the sins and commandments for reasons I have not been able to determine.

superfluous for most of Auchinleck's readers; as it states itself, they should already know their Seven Sins and Ten Commandments.

This section's preface calls attention to the possibility—greatly to be desired—that its contents are already widely known and, in doing so, it calls its stated project into question. Why, we might ask, have these materials been included? The poem's lists offer its audiences a goad to learn something they ought already to have known, to reinforce this knowledge within their memories, or to examine their conscience with the aid of both mental and visual inventories. Younger audiences—specifically those just reaching the age of discretion—could also have benefited from this text's lists and prayers, whether the poem were employed as a reference for teaching them or furnished for their own reading. Some scholars, seizing onto the poem's mention of children (see passage above) have suggested that the poem may have been intended—or at least used to a large extent—for children's education in reading and religion, but these arguments follow in the vein of other scholarly assertions regarding *Seven Deadly Sins*: they fail to consider the context beyond their particular fixations, the poem as a whole.⁹⁸ The poem does share some contents in common with primers (notably the prayers of its second section), but to view it

⁹⁸ Turville-Petre, homing in on lines 12-13 of the poem, asserts the likelihood of youthful readers for this poem and other Auchinleck texts: "[*Seven Deadly Sins*] also includes children among the intended recipients of its very basic religious instruction, and many of the contents, such as *De King of Tars*, *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, and *Roland and Vernagu* offer along the way doctrinal instruction basic enough for any child 'of twelue winter elde'" (*England the Nation*, 135). English verse renditions of this and related catechetical material have elsewhere been linked to a younger readership. In *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-c. 1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Eamon Duffy describes a similar assortment of list-oriented texts—including rhymed presentations of the ten commandments, seven corporal and seven spiritual works of mercy, the five bodily and five spiritual wits, the seven deadly sins, the seven virtues, the twelve articles of the Creed, and the seven sacraments—found in CUL MS Ff.2.38 as "a series of much simpler and more accessible texts probably aimed at children and young people" (*Stripping of the Altars*, 70). That said, Turville-Petre and Duffy offer no proof that these texts were used by children. They base their assertions on the fundamental nature of the materials and their shared assessment of the respective manuscripts as books that served the needs of an entire household.

primarily in this light would be much the same as viewing Books of Hours chiefly as tools of children's education. This comparison is instructive: like the Hours, *Seven Deadly Sins* contains some very elementary religious material, but embeds it within a context that imbues it and its consumption with greater complexity. The poem's vernacularity, collectedness, and didacticism would have encouraged comprehension and internalization of its contents, but also reflection and meditation on their spiritual implications.

Making use of these qualities, the poem's textual frame offers what is at once a more pragmatic and more spiritually beneficial form of guidance to its readers, guidance in reading itself. In addition to directing its readers in what to read, *Seven Deadly Sins* teaches its audience to read strategically. The section featuring Sins and Commandments encourages their thorough extraction and mastery (*Euerichone þai sscholden knowe*) and they are presented accordingly. The poem covers both lists with a terse economy, and this section's brevity and rhyme would both have promoted easy memorization. In contrast to his practice in the latter two sections of this poem, moreover, Scribe 3 did not subdivide this section at all. It is set off from the poem's introductory preface insofar as the catalogue of Seven Deadly Sins begins at the top of f. 70rb, but no painted initials or paraps mark its beginning or any of its spiritually significant contents. The preface and the first section must be navigated in their entirety, whether being read through for the first time or revisited. As the poem's introduction concludes, "Þat ich habbe here isaid, / Let hit in 3oure hertes be leid"; the object of readers encountering these early parts of the poem is to take in their pith, to store it within their hearts (and, thus, their memories), and move on.⁹⁹ This is not so in the

⁹⁹ *Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 29-30.

second and third sections, whose marking and subdividing—both are initiated with a painted initial and subject to further textual subdivisions with initials or paraphs—carry on the project of the poem’s preface, delineating the boundaries and uses of its collected materials. Thus marked, these sections are at once more navigable and more insistent in framing the textuality of their embedded contents.

This is nowhere so visible as in the second section of the poem, which visually and textually distinguishes its collected prayers from their frame with the aid of painted initials, recurring formulaic addresses to readers, and shifts in meter. Readers could easily seek out these embedded prayers for recitation as well as contemplation; they function within this poetic grid as sites not only of spiritual formation but of devotional performance. English translations of the ‘Pater noster’ and Creed make up the bulk of the section, which is rounded out with an English translation of the ‘Ave Maria’ and a brief gloss of the word ‘Amen.’ All three of the embedded prayers differ metrically from their framing text, which is written in Auchinleck’s standard octosyllabic couplets.¹⁰⁰ These metrical distinctions produce visual distinctions on the page: particularly in the case of ‘Ave Maria,’ whose beginning is unmarked, the boundary between it and the preceding Creed is rendered visible in the four noticeably longer octosyllabic lines framing the prayers and announcing the transition between them.¹⁰¹ (See figure 2.) Both the ‘Pater noster’ and the ‘Ave

¹⁰⁰The prayers themselves are somewhat more metrically variable, though they appear for the most part as four-line stanzas rhyming on the second and fourth lines. They may be long-line couplets with each line copied in two lines as was the case in *Seynt Mergete* and *Seynt Katerine*, both copied by Scribe 1 in Booklet 1. In one case Scribe 3 has preserved a long line in his copying (lineated as as two lines, lines 85-86, in my transcription).

¹⁰¹See f. 70vb.

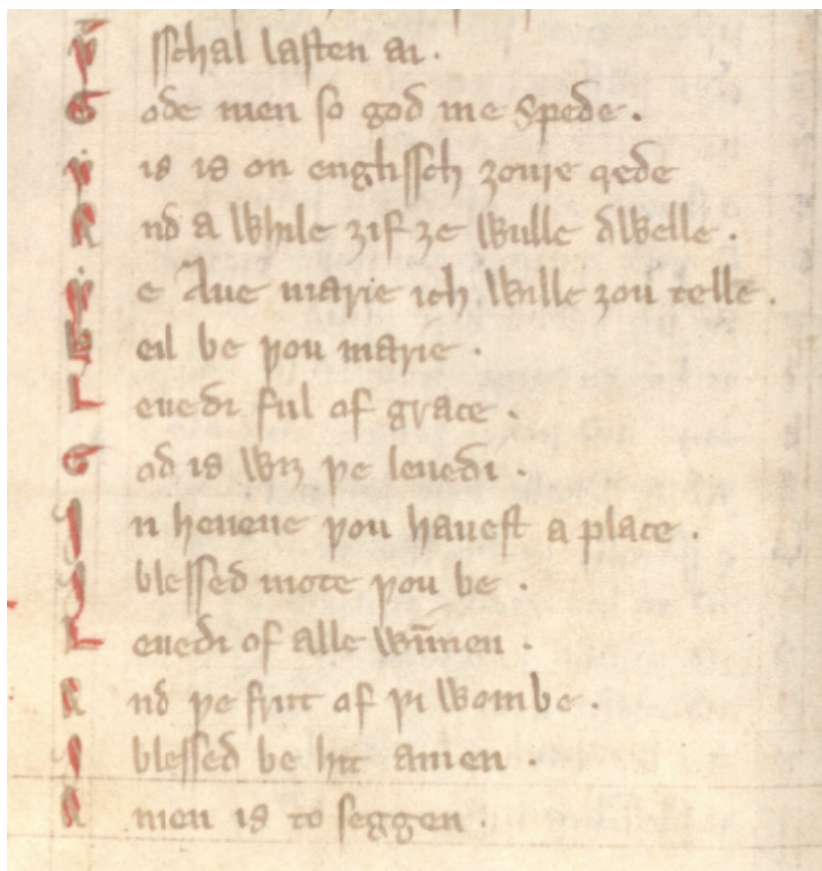


Figure 2. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, f. 70vb (detail). By permission of the National Library of Scotland.

Maria' terminate in *Amens* that signal the conclusions of these discrete prayers,¹⁰² and two painted initials enhance the visibility of the 'Pater noster' and the Creed.¹⁰³ These demarcations render the

¹⁰²The two *Amens* differ from each other. The *Amen* at the conclusion of the 'Pater noster' (line 96) follows the last metrical (and, in this case, rhyming) syllable of the line and is written in slightly larger display capitals. The *Amen* at the conclusion of 'Ave Maria' (line 152) furnishes the final metrical syllables of the line, as well as the rhyming syllable, and is visually indistinct from the text. Given that the word itself becomes the subject of the following two lines, however, this seems somewhat appropriate; its discussion in these lines flows from its metrical and visual incorporation into the text of the previous line.

¹⁰³The first initial of this section is placed within four lines of the beginning of the 'Pater noster' and would therefore have served as a useful finding aid; that said, it more effectively marks a section boundary. Placed at the beginning of the lines "Þese bez Godes hestes ten / Herknez, men and wimmen," (lines 75-76) the final lines of f. 70rb, the initial signals the conclusion of the previous section and the transition into the next. The Creed stands out among the collected prayers as the only one beginning unambiguously with a painted initial (line 101), as befits its length and the centrality of 'bileue' to this section (lines 22, 157). It is worth noting that the 'Pater noster' and Creed feature more prominently in the poem's frame, being the only two prayers named in the preface (line 17). Historically,

prayers visually and conceptually separate, approachable on their own terms, and they also reinforce the hierarchy implicit in the prayers' arrangement, rendering the most important prayers the most clearly marked.¹⁰⁴ The introduction underscores the distinctness of these prayers—both from the frame and from the poem's other contents—as it enumerates the ways in which readers and auditors should approach them:

And þe Pater noster and þe Crede,
Ðeroffe 3e sscholden taken hede
On Englissch to segge what hit were,
Als holi cherche 3ou wolde lere;
For hit is to þe soules biheue,
Ech man to knowen his bileue.¹⁰⁵

Three prescribed actions—pertaining to observation/consideration (*taken hede*), speech (*segge*), and instruction/authorization (*lere*)—stand out within this passage, whose ambiguous syntax multiplies the ways in which they may be understood to relate to each other. The opening lines exhort the poem's audience to take note of the prayers, to privilege them and dwell upon them within their minds. The enjambement in line 18 throws the force of this first verbal phrase behind the second, lending additional emphasis to the poem's enjoinder that its audience recite these poems in English, presumably the English translations here provided. The reader must not only peruse and ponder the prayers but perform them. Line 20 fleshes out Holy Church's underlying will in these matters; the word *lere* embraces the church's role in mandating knowledge of these prayers and in

these were considered the most crucial prayers for lay mastery, with 'Ave Maria' only being stipulated as similarly crucial at a relatively late date; see F. G. A. M. Aarts, "The Pater Noster in Medieval English Literature," *Papers on Language & Literature* 5 (1969). The earliest instance Aarts identifies in which 'Ave Maria' was specifically required was in the 1308 constitutions of Henry Woodloke, bishop of Winchester ("Pater Noster," 7).

¹⁰⁴See note 103. The 'Pater noster' was widely regarded as *the* most important prayer in the medieval church on account of its divine origin.

¹⁰⁵*Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 17-22.

teaching them. With the church, the poem stipulates the learning and comprehension of these prayers as essential foundations of *bileue*. In keeping with these prescriptions, this section's visual distinctions and distinctness serve a valuable purpose; a reader could access these prayers *en masse*, or one in particular, without recourse to the poem's other sections. As textual entities whose oral expression mattered as much as knowledge of—and meditation on—their content, these embedded prayers were intended to be revisited, to be pondered, learned, and performed repeatedly.

The third and final section of the poem shares the second's performative and prayerful bent, but diverges from what has come before insofar as it works within the medium of narrative. Scribe 3's choices in layout reinforce this distinction; they render the narrative of Christ's Passion as a single embedded text even as they identify stages within its temporal progression. As between the first and second sections, an initial here marks the transition from the prayers of the second section to the Passion recounted in the third. In this section Scribe 3 employs paraps for the first time within his stint to mark the transitions between the canonical hours as they figure in the narrative.¹⁰⁶ The poem never explicitly acknowledges its resemblance to the Short Office of the Cross, though it does periodically allude to this relationship with mentions of the specific hours. "Prime," "non," and "euensongtime [i.e. Vespers]" furnish the most overt references, but regular indications of times of day indicate that the seven sections of the narrative are faithfully keyed to the Short Office.¹⁰⁷ The paraps encourage readers to recognize these temporal markers and

¹⁰⁶There are three paraps in addition to these: two mark interpolated prayers and one marks Christ's death. This last one may have been placed mistakenly; textual cues in the preceding lines might have led Scribe 3 to think this was one of the aforementioned temporal transitions.

¹⁰⁷*Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 185, 225, and 255, respectively.

increase the likelihood that they might read the Passion narrative incrementally, even in tandem with the canonical hours.

Though this part of the poem does not strictly fulfill the function of a cycle of Hours—the elaborate sequencing of Latin versicles, responses, antiphons, hymns, and prayers characteristic of Hours are completely absent here—it does combine narrative and prayer to similar effect. Writing of Books of Hours as sites of what she terms ‘polytextual reading’—defined as “a type of reading taught in devotional manuals for the laity” whereby “the reading of one text becomes a process of reading multiple ‘virtual’ texts”—Sylvia Huot remarks that Books of Hours “[invite] at least two different kinds of reading” of the Hours of the Virgin, namely “visual reading [which] ignores the divisions into hours and moves through the episodes of the Virgin’s life” and “textual reading [which] in effect uses the visual narrative as a springboard for more exploratory movement through a series of texts and passages.”¹⁰⁸ The text embedded within this poem attempts something similar without the benefit of actual images: passages keyed to the canonical hours recount a linear narrative of the Passion, while brief prayers interrupt the narrative’s flow from one hour to the next. Thus, for example, the narrative for Matins, recounting Jesus’s seizure in the garden, is followed by a meditation on this stage of the Passion:

Ihesu, for þat foule despit,
Ðat hente þi bodi þat was so whit,
ʒiue vs grace þis dai to ende
In his seruise þe fend to sschende.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Huot, “Polytextual Reading: The Meditative Reading of Real and Metaphorical Books,” in *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and its Consequences in Honour of D. H. Green*, ed. Mark Chinca and Christopher Young (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 203, 213.

¹⁰⁹*Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 179-82.

This prayer positions Jesus's captured and beaten body as a contemplative focal point as it lifts the reader out of the narrative. Even the shift in the prayer's invocation of Jesus, from direct address (*Ihesu ... / 3iue vs grace ...*) to third person (*In his seruisse ...*), underscores the reader's perspectival shift from an intimacy with Christ and his Passion to an internally directed meditation.¹¹⁰ The poem's frame twice exhorts readers of this section to "habben" or "holdez hit [i.e. the Passion] in minde" so as "to sturen out of dedli sinne."¹¹¹ The prayers interpolated here provide an impetus for this prescribed internalization. They prompt the reader to pause amidst the Passion narrative, to read it episodically and reflect meditatively upon its episodes, and, in so doing, encourage the reader be transformed emotionally, morally, and spiritually by Christ's Passion.

These prayers intimate a process by which this Passion text shapes the users who read it. Christ's suffering works here as a goad to repentance. The narrative's affective force derives in part from these prayers, which repeatedly draw readers into contemplative contact with the Passion. This section also encourages its audiences to read Christ's narrative alongside their own. The Office of the Cross is the only cycle of Hours to follow real time in its movement through Scripture. For those praying this cycle in tandem with the Divine Office or according to the canonical hours, their own passage through time would progress in synchrony with that of the suffering Christ. This not only heightens the Passion's immediacy for its audience, but permits a kind of double narrative vision: the readers' experiences of their own time are overlaid with an awareness of Scriptural time.

¹¹⁰The editors of the online facsimile edition of *Seven Deadly Sins* treat another such mismatch in the Passion narrative as a mistake in composition or copying; see Burnley and Wiggins, "On the Seven Deadly Sins," line 196. That said, a similar pattern obtains in this and two other interpolated prayers (see lines 193-96, 203-6, 247-50). In other words, this perspectival shift occurs in the majority of the seven prayers woven into the Passion narrative.

¹¹¹*Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 23, 162, and 27, respectively.

Likewise readers of this poem—especially those reading it along with, or aware of, the hours—could read their own penitential progress, their temporal movement, alongside that of Christ.

Paternoster presents a brief poetic explication of the eponymous prayer that sustains the cultivation of self-conscious and polytextual reading evident in *Seven Deadly Sins*. Scholars have observed, generally in passing, that these texts make sense together and have speculated that they are intentionally paired.¹¹² After all, both present basic devotional content rendered in English and they share an accessible style and didactic tone appropriate to their probable pedagogical use. What scholars have not addressed, however, is the question of *why* these two texts have been paired here. Why follow the rather comprehensive digest of basic Christian knowledge furnished by *Seven Deadly Sins*—a digest that *includes* a translation of the ‘Pater noster’ into English—with what purports to be yet another translation? An English rendering of the prayer is what the poem’s title, “*De pater noster vndo on englisch*,” advertises most openly. That said, the word ‘vndo’ hints at something new within this poem. While the past participle might simply denote narration or translation, the verb carries related contemporary meanings of explication and interpretation.¹¹³ The poem furnishes all of the rerenderings, the ‘undoings,’ promised by this significant verb, and, in doing so, it promotes a new angle on reading prayer that takes a now presumably familiar prayer as its focus. *Paternoster* not only shares the didactic style and devotional concerns of *Seven Deadly Sins*, but it builds upon the project of the other poem, putting its preoccupations with sin, salvation, and reading to new and significant uses.

¹¹²Bahr (*Fragments and Assemblages*, 119) and Hardman (“Domestic Learning,” 20-21) have both made this observation quite recently.

¹¹³See “undōn (v.),” 7a-d, in the *MED*.

Paternoster amplifies structural elements and didactic concerns of *Seven Deadly Sins* in service to a pedagogy of devotion and reading that is still accessible but more complex. Like the poem preceding it, *Paternoster* embeds its spiritually beneficial content within a metatextual framework that takes on the role of teacher.¹¹⁴ With its information regarding the prayer’s provenance and significance and its instruction regarding how it may be read, this frame serves as sole intermediary between the prayer and its audience. This is an important function, particularly in light of the particular prayer at the heart of this poem. The ‘Pater noster’ stands preeminent among prayers, being itself the product of divine authorship. In making this point itself,¹¹⁵ *Paternoster*’s preface also emphasizes the longstanding pedagogical drive behind its dissemination, one inextricably bound up in its origins:

Ihesu Christ made hit him selue,
 And als hit tellez in þe bok,
 His apostles he hit bitok,
 For þai sscholden habben hit in minde

¹¹⁴Though the excision of most of f. 72^ar has left only a stub as witness to the concluding—or close to concluding—lines of *Paternoster*, the manner in which the cropped lines have been marked with paraphs and the text surviving in these cropped lines both suggest that the poem concluded with a coda as metatextual as its preface. Scribe 3 adhered to a very consistent layout for this text, and the only painted paraphs elsewhere in the poem subdivide the preface. (Two of Scribe 3’s paraph guide-marks are to be found elsewhere in the poem, but paraphs were never painted, whether through an accidental omission or a decision to preserve the aforementioned consistency in layout.) The first paraph on the stub marks the opening of what appear to be summative lines: “Þise bez ... / Þe beste ...” (*Paternoster*, lines 156-7). The most obvious referent for the plural subject would be the “seuen oreisouns” (*Paternoster*, line 21) making up the ‘Pater noster,’ a supposition supported by the superlative in the following line, which recalls the preface’s claim “Þer nis none of hem [i.e. clerks] þat conne/ A betere oreisoun iwis/ Þanne þe Pater noster is” (*Paternoster*, lines 16-18). The second paraphed line fragment, “Ech ma...” (*Paternoster*, line 160), echoes terms of address employed in the preface: “¶ Ech man hereof take hede” (*Paternoster*, line 7). The words and word fragments following this address seem to indicate a similarly didactic or prescriptive bent to these lines.

For these and all other references to the Auchinleck *Paternoster* see the partial edition in Appendix B (item 2). See also “The Paternoster,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/pater.html>.

¹¹⁵*Paternoster*, lines 15-18.

And techen hit to al mankynde.¹¹⁶

Here Jesus's acts of creation and bestowal take education as their ultimate end, leading as they do to an apostolic program of internalization and promulgation. In forging these associations, furthermore, this passage establishes the central role of teaching the prayer to the poem's aims and self-justification. Here text itself takes up the apostolic mantle of dissemination and instruction.

The miniature accompanying *Paternoster* functions as yet another framing device lending weight and nuance to the poem's didactic aims. As Shonk has noted (and I have reiterated above), its small size and unusual location—not within a column preceding the associated text, as in the case of all other surviving Auchinleck miniatures, but squeezed between two columns of text—would seem to indicate that Scribe 3 did not anticipate the inclusion of this miniature and thus left insufficient space at the opening of *Paternoster* for it to be added in the usual place.¹¹⁷ (See figure 3.) Though this does seem the likeliest hypothesis, I would point out that the miniature painter—whether deliberately or no—has made a virtue of necessity. The miniature has a greater impact in conjunction with the text because, rather than in spite of, its strange size and placement. The necessary narrowness of the miniature frame—it extends horizontally as far as it can without obscuring text in either column—suits its subject; the artist opted for a relatively simple composition that fits easily within these bounds. The miniature depicts a seated male figure, bearded and attired in a red robe and blue mantle, who makes a gesture of benediction with his right hand. Haloed and enthroned as he is, the man thus portrayed is almost certainly Christ.

¹¹⁶*Paternoster*, lines 10-14.

¹¹⁷Shonk, "Bookmaking," 82.



Figure 3. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, f. 72r (detail). By permission of the National Library of Scotland.

This miniature works as an author portrait, and it articulates a relationship between the divine author and his text while promoting a relationship between said author and his Auchinleck-reading audience. The picture has been placed, whether felicitously or deliberately, so that it abuts the three-line initial ‘P’ that marks the beginning not of the poem but of the prayer itself: “Pater noster qui es in celis.”¹¹⁸ In his left hand, Christ grasps a scroll that extends out of the miniature’s frame and over this opening line of the prayer. Though the scroll is empty, its placement directly over this line suggests an identification of the visual evocation of text with the literal text immediately adjacent and thereby visually reinforces the thrust of the passage cited above. At the same time, Christ’s benediction and his gaze, directed squarely outward towards the viewer, forge a connection between the image (as well as the text it frames) and the reader. As in the poem,

¹¹⁸*Paternoster*, line 27. Notably, this is the largest initial Scribe 3 employs within this text, not, as one might expect, the initial that marks the beginning of the poem. This choice suggests that even though Scribe 3 had probably not anticipated the inclusion of this miniature, he may well have recognized—and highlighted—the superlative significance of this point in the poem.

Christ's roles as author, benefactor, and teacher intertwine and, in doing so, accentuate the authority and value of the 'Pater noster' in the eyes and minds of its audience.

The poem's frame imagines an extensive audience—for itself and, more broadly, for the 'Pater noster'—even as it lays out a more sophisticated approach to the prayer than that advocated in *Seven Deadly Sins*. In keeping with the apostolic project delineated in the passage above, with its imperative to “techen hit [i.e. the 'Pater noster'] to al mankynde,” *Paternoster's* frame emphasizes the lay and inclusive nature of its intended audience.¹¹⁹ This poem positions itself as participating in addressing a nearly universal pedagogical need—the teaching of the prayer to all Christians—but it attempts considerably more than offering the poem in English for its readers' and auditors' memorization.¹²⁰ The final subsection of the introduction articulates a different mode of reading the prayer from the one offered in *Seven Deadly Sins*. *Paternoster* necessitates that its audience approach it in distinct pieces:

Seuen oreisouns þer bez inne
þat helpez men out of dedli sinne
And 3if 3e wille3 a while dwelle,
Al on Englissch ich wille 3ou telle
þe skile of hem alle seuene,

¹¹⁹*Paternoster*, lines 1-6.

¹²⁰Even *Seven Deadly Sins* arguably exceeds this minimal requirement in its thoughtful framing of the translated prayer. All Christians were expected to know the words of the 'Pater noster' and to be able to recite them. Maurice Hussey, treating some of the most sophisticated expositions of the 'Pater noster,' observes the disjunction between what the simplicity of what the Church had stipulated and the intricacy of what was produced, remarking, “The subjects [i.e. articles of faith] were treated with a complexity that becomes paradoxical when we realize that the demands of the archbishops had been for frequent and, above all, simple expositions and exhortations in every church”; see Hussey, “The Petitions of the Paternoster in Mediæval English Literature,” *Medium Aevum* 27 (1958): 8. This essential parochial pedagogical goal finds humorous illustration in the slightly later *How the Plowman Learned His Paternoster*, in which a parish priest tricks a stingy plowman into learning the words of the prayer in the guise of the names of a string of debtors.

Wi3 help of Godes mi3t of heuene.¹²¹

As in the preceding poem, *Paternoster's* guiding framework encompasses a collection and mobilizes it against *dedli sinne*. Here, however, the collected elements are canonical in their cohesion and sequence, deriving as they do from the fixed text of the 'Pater noster.' Within the outer instructive framework encompassing the prayer, the seven petitions of the 'Pater noster' serve not only as an embedded authoritative text, but as structural elements framing the meat of the poem, the *skile of hem alle seuene*. *Paternoster* does not purport to teach the prayer as a unitary and continuous text for memorization and recitation; rather, it uses the prayer to structure more penetrating readings geared to uncovering layers of meaning within the prayer. *Paternoster* offers its readers *skile* in the sense of a kind of hermeneutical knowledge, but, more importantly, it teaches them to develop the ability, the *skile* in our enduring sense of the word, to read hermeneutically.

Compared to its companion poem, the seven-part *Paternoster* promotes a deeper readerly engagement with text and, in doing so, it invites the reader of English to participate in the learned and Latinate exegetical tradition. The poem teaches the reader to begin navigating textual multivalence, to read in the manner, if not in the language, of clerks. Though the preface emphasizes the vernacularity of the poem, its structure foregrounds the Latin 'Pater noster' text. Each of the seven petitions begins with a painted initial—aside from the opening initial, the only painted initials Scribe 3 accommodates within the text—and the Latin line or lines of the 'Pater noster' that correspond to it.¹²² Then follows a metrical English translation of the Latin—one that

¹²¹*Paternoster*, lines 21-26.

¹²²In two of the seven cases, it should be noted, the initial is not part of a Latin line but is placed in the line preceding the Latin. In both of these cases it is used in a prefatory statement immediately preceding a Latin petition:

almost completely diverges from that offered in the previous poem¹²³—and an explication of the particular language within the petition. As in the Passion section of *Seven Deadly Sins*, the poem’s structure compels an interrupted and—recalling Huot’s formulation—polytextual reading.¹²⁴ Rather than reading the prayer through, as they might have done in *Seven Deadly Sins*, the reading audience are asked to read *into* it. Here readers must encounter ‘Pater noster’ with reference to the presumably aurally familiar, if not comprehensible, Latin, and they are invited to reread this prayer as not only spiritually efficacious but rich in sense and signification. Just as the interweaving of narrative and prayer in the *Seven Deadly Sins*’s Passion encouraged readers to meditate on Christ’s suffering and their own sins, this poem directs readers to meditate as they pray. At the same time, the poem’s uncovering of *skile*—the means and ends of explicating the prayer’s layers of meaning and metaphor—prompts a more complex readerly engagement with the text. Text in this poem is

“Þe sixte bede is þis” (*Paternoster*, line 122) and “Þe se//[uenth? ...]” (*Paternoster*, line 144). These initials serve the same function of emphasizing the Latin petitions of the prayer.

¹²³The only exception to this divergence occurs in the first petition, where the English translation is identical to the first two lines offered in *Seven Deadly Sins*: “Oure fader in heuene-riche, / Þi name be blessed euere iliche” (*Seven Deadly Sins*, lines 79-80; *Paternoster*, lines 29-30). This is also the one instance in *Paternoster* in which the English translation is out of synch with the Latin: the Latin of the first petition, “Pater noster qui es in celis” (*Paternoster*, line 27), corresponds to the first line of this couplet only, while the second line corresponds to the Latin of the second petition, “Saunctificetur nomen tuum” (*Paternoster*, line 50). Additionally, these are the only two lines of the prayer in *Seven Deadly Sins* that do not conform to the predominant long-line meter of the poem’s embedded prayers (see note 100); they make up an octosyllabic couplet. It is possible that the *Paternoster*’s author began by copying couplets from the translation in *Seven Deadly Sins*, only to realize the difficulties posed (not only the Latin/English correspondence but the metrical differences in the subsequent lines). This textual correspondence suggests that the *Paternoster* might have been composed deliberately as a companion to *Seven Deadly Sins*, in which case it may have been composed by someone close to this manuscript. If this were the case, Scribe 3’s authorship would be a strong possibility.

¹²⁴Huot acknowledges that treatises like this one encourage this kind of reading:

...we might think of texts such as the explications of the ‘Pater noster’ or ‘Ave maria’, in which each line of the prayer in question is examined, amplified, considered in different contexts, and associated with other scriptural passages. The point of these treatises is not really to explain the meaning of the text under scrutiny, since these simple and deeply familiar prayers would not have required such elaborate exegesis. Rather, these texts provide a model of how the prayer, in conjunction with meditative reflection informed by reading, can be the occasion for a potentially endless review of religious dogma, sacred history, and individual morality. (“Polytextual Reading,” 204-5)

anything but fixed and fixable; it lies open to translation—multiple translations, in fact, if taken with *Seven Deadly Sins*—and interpretation. In *Paternoster*, mere internalization of an English translation of the prayer cannot suffice because the poem reveals the prayer to be a hermeneutical starting point, a richly layered text that demands richly layered readings. If *Seven Deadly Sins* encouraged its early readers to think not only of their sins but of how they were reading, *Pater noster* capitalizes on such readerly self-consciousness to push readers into a more complex relationship with text and with themselves.

The ‘Pater noster’ prayer supplies this poem with a framework rich in mnemonic and interpretive potential, thereby situating it within extensive medieval expository and literary traditions structured around the seven petitions of the ‘Pater noster.’¹²⁵ At the same time, Auchinleck’s *Paternoster* pursues a project out of keeping with those of most ‘Pater noster’ tracts. Writing of a roughly contemporary Anglo-Norman ‘Pater noster’ poem, Hanna remarks that its accompanying Latin glosses “convert it into a full-scale septenary mnemonic ... [aligning] the petitions of the prayer, the seven deadly sins, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit.”¹²⁶ Even in a poem of a mere eighteen lines, the prayer’s structure offers a foundation on which a catechetically useful

¹²⁵For extended discussions of these traditions in England see Hussey, “Petitions” and Aarts, “Pater Noster.” It is worth noting that the septenary structure in Auchinleck’s *Pater noster* does not fit the most common septenary structure, that established already in the writing of St Augustine: 1. *Pater noster qui es in caelis sanctificetur nomen tuum* 2. *Adveniat regnum tuum* 3. *Fiat voluntas tua sicut in caelo et in terra* 4. *Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie* 5. *Et dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris* 6. *Et ne nos inducas in temptationem* 7. *Sed libera nos a malo* (see Hussey, “Petitions,” 8, drawing on Augustine’s ‘De Sermones in Monte,’ *PL* 34.1276-308). *Paternoster* splits the first petition into two—“Pater noster qui es in celis” (*Paternoster*, line 27) and “Saunctificetur nomen tuum” (*Paternoster*, line 50)—and combines the sixth and seventh petitions above into one: “Et [...] / Set liber[.]” (*Paternoster*, lines 145-46).

¹²⁶*London Literature, 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10.

network of associations may be erected.¹²⁷ Such septenary associations were common in ‘Pater noster’ expositions. Writing of the influential and oft-translated *Somme le roi*, Hanna attributes its “authoritative status” to its adept organization whereby “a sweeping range of Christian basics was arranged in a ready mnemonic order through grouping diverse topics into analogous and linked patterns of sevens” which “aligned instructional sets of quite disparate origins into a whole.”¹²⁸ *La Somme* integrates the seven petitions of the ‘Pater noster’ with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Seven Deadly Sins, the seven remedial virtues, and the seven beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount along with their associated rewards.¹²⁹ The popular mid-fourteenth-century *Speculum Vitae*, a long English poem which draws on adaptations and direct translations from *La Somme le roi*, manages to incorporate even more catechesis—including the Commandments, Creed, and Sacraments—within the matrix of the ‘Pater noster.’¹³⁰ For all that such catechesis appears close at hand in Booklet 3, Auchinleck’s *Paternoster* does not fit within this trend of septenary instruction. Why, we might ask, does the poem diverge from customary practice and omit such instructive and catechetically useful septenary alignments as the seven petitions and the seven deadly sins? Why, in other words, does it not engage more directly with the septenary material within *Seven Deadly Sins*?

The inclination in these two poems towards progression over aggregation suggests that catechesis is neither the main purpose of *Paternoster* nor the driving force behind the text pairing at the beginning of Booklet 3. Instead, the divergent properties of *Paternoster*, taken along with the

¹²⁷This poem is edited by Paul Meyer in “Les manuscrits français de Cambridge. II – Bibliothèque de l’université,” *Romania* 15 (1886): 342. A brief study of its lines indicates that it follows the more typical structure of the seven petitions (see note 125).

¹²⁸“Introduction,” *Speculum Vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna, EETS, o.s. 331 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), vol. 1, xiii-lxxxviii: lxx-lxxi.

¹²⁹See Hanna, *Speculum Vitae*, lxxi.

¹³⁰See Hanna, *Speculum Vitae*, lxxii.

rhetoric of framing in both poems, encourage increasingly self-conscious and sophisticated approaches to reading. Auchinleck's *Paternoster* finds a different use for the matrix of the prayer, one that befits its manuscript context: the seven petitions serve here as sites of explication centered on the figurative richness of the prayer's language. *Paternoster* encourages readers to read interpretatively and, specifically, metaphorically. The metaphors within *Pater noster* are not unique to this poem. The later and longer *Speculum Vitae*, for example, deploys similar (and often more extensive) material within its explication of the 'Pater noster.' That said, the preeminence of metaphorical analysis in Auchinleck's *Paternoster*, to the exclusion of septenary catechetical materials, argues for the specificity of the poem's priorities. *Paternoster* prompts its audience to ponder the implications of these metaphors' resonances with their own experiences in life and as readers.

Paternoster uses the very familiarity of the prayer's metaphorical terms to lead its readers through processes of interpretation. The poet identifies the concepts of dwelling and sustenance, for example, in the third and fifth petitions—"Adveniat regnum tuum" and "Panem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie"¹³¹—and uses the mundane ideas of physical residence and earthly food to interrogate the means by which Christians might attain spiritual shelter and nourishment. Similarly, the poem explicates the fourth petition—"Fiat voluntas tua / Sicut in celo ꝛ in terra"¹³²—in terms as much feudal/economic as spiritual, laying out a transactional economy of service, *paie*/satisfaction, and *bidding*/prayer. Commenting on a similar text's employment of secular and ordinary concepts within moral and spiritual allegory, Huot observes that such a practice not

¹³¹*Paternoster*, lines 68 and 104.

¹³²*Paternoster*, lines 84-85.

only capitalizes on terms familiar and important to the reading audience “but also encourages these readers to reflect on their own lives as images of a higher reality.”¹³³ In other words, such metaphorical constructions, encountered on the page, encourage their audience to read their own lives figuratively and mindfully, to find spiritual significance in the most quotidian of actions and experiences.

Auchinleck’s *Paternoster* undoubtedly makes a similar appeal to its readers, but it also erects associative frameworks through which they may read onward in the booklet—or in the manuscript as a whole. The metaphors in which Scribe 3 demonstrates the most interest make up the stuff of life, but, more to the point in their Auchinleck context, they also make up the stuff of romance.¹³⁴ As I remarked above, Scribe 3 followed a very consistent practice in subdividing this poem, employing initials to mark the beginning of the text and of each petition of the ‘Pater noster’ and employing paraphs to subdivide the framing content within the poem. Only twice did he indicate that paraphs should be painted within the petition section of the poem, once within the explication of the first petition and once within that of the sixth. (See figure 4.) In neither case did the paraphers attend to his guide marks, for all that they were quick to do so elsewhere in the

¹³³Huot, “A Book Made for a Queen: The Shaping of a Late Medieval Anthology Manuscript (B.N. fr. 24429),” in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel, *Recentiores: Later Latin Texts and Contexts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 136-7. Huot is speaking of text(s) intended for a lay, aristocratic audience, but her observations hold true even in such cases as Auchinleck, whose audience was certainly a lay one, but was not necessarily aristocratic.

¹³⁴Though Auchinleck’s *Paternoster* makes no explicit reference to romance, its later cousin *Speculum Vitae* evinces a rather complicated relationship with romance; it follows other vernacular religiously-oriented texts, notably *Cursor Mundi*, in heaping calumnies on romances like those of Guy and Beves. And yet, as Hanna remarks, the poet, having set himself up “as an ‘anti-romance’ versifier, a purveyor of sober doctrine, rather than unrestrained delight,” still “relies heavily upon what one might see as a romance persona—and more prevalently upon ‘romance diction’, those tricks of rhyming fillers that typify Middle English popular poetry” (*Speculum Vitae*, lxxviii-lxxix).

at ihu crist oure fader is.
if he wile be done in his
and in done his line.
anne molke he lhan he be of age.
aymen oure fader hermage.
blisse pat lastez his outen ende.
Anactific^o nomen tuu.
pat is to segge al and sit

at us habben here agut.
at in oure ayerij. ben i pulit.
if an man pat is in londe.
mez in nyht. ower in onde.
ough counseil of pe fendes sed.
e biddes agenes his albene hed.
nd make hi heere in erthe.
an ihu crist pat more is lwerthe.

Figure 4. Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.2.1, f. 72rb (detail) and f. 72vb (detail). By permission of the National Library of Scotland.

poem.¹³⁵ Even so, a reader could not miss Scribe 3's marks, both of which emphasize moments in which the poem probes the spiritual implications of the socially and literarily potent concepts of patrimony and counsel. The emphasis here cannot but have conditioned the ways in which the self-conscious reader would have read the subsequent texts—and especially the romances—of this booklet.

The paraph marking accompanying *Paternoster's* explication of its first petition (*Pater noster qui es in celis*) directs its audience to read their own narrative of inheritance in the words of the prayer.¹³⁶ Dwelling on the implications of spiritual paternity within the opening line of the prayer, the paraphed passage figures virtuous living as the means to fulfill the human end of this familial relationship and reap the benefits thereof:

Þanne mote we, so mote ich þe,
 3if we willen hise children be,
 Fonden to liuen in god lif,
 ...
 Þanne mowe [we] seggen, iwis,
 Þat Ihesu Crist oure fader is.
 ¶ 3if we wile be clene isschriue

¹³⁵This could have been a matter of carelessness; since it was Scribe 3's prevailing practice to omit paraphs within the petition section the paraphers may not have noticed the exceptions to the rule. On the other hand, their bypassing these guide marks could reflect a preference for a cleaner, more consistent presentation of the 'Pater noster.'

¹³⁶*Paternoster*, line 27. See note 125 above to the effect that this line was not typically treated as a petition in 'Pater noster' treatises; it was either treated as matter separate from the seven petitions of the prayer (as in *Speculum Vitae*) or as part of the longer petition *Pater noster qui es in cælis sanctificetur nomen tuum*. That said, *Speculum Vitae*, for one, submits the first line of the prayer to an extensive explication that addresses the same subject:

Ritches also to þam falles
 Þat men Goddis childer calles,
 For mare ritches may na man haue
 Þan Godde on his childer vouches saue.
 For Godde mas þam his heyres right
 Of þe kyngedome of heuen bright,
 Þar alkyn ritches þat may falle
 Er sene and alkyn delycles withalle. (Hanna, *Speculum Vitae*, lines 347-54)

And in clene lif liue,
þanne mowe we whan we beȝ of age
Claymen oure fader heritage,
þe blisse þat lasteȝ wizouten ende.¹³⁷

This passage employs the familiar concept of inheritance as a means of metaphorically conveying the obligations and rewards available to the children of “þe kyng of heuene” and working out the way that Christian duties may be conceived in relation to salvific grace.¹³⁸ Good confession (to *be clene issbriue*) and *clene lif* furnish those wishing to enter into this spiritual family the means of carrying out their filial responsibilities, and those who thus manage to claim God’s paternity stand to enjoy the eternal bliss of heaven as their *fader heritage*. The familiar logic of earthly familial inheritance enables the explicator to articulate a kind of divine causality whereby God bestows his grace; he grants abode in heaven not in payment for services rendered, but as a gift, a legacy in recognition of filial relationship and devotion. In service to this figurative construction, the explication implies death to be the point of inheritance, a coming of age, as it were. Having directed readers to read in the ‘Pater noster’ intimations of their own spiritual narratives, this rich metaphor activates a complexly layered reading of the four texts that follow *Paternoster*—one of which recounts a spiritual coming of age in the Virgin’s death and three of which recount earthly (and specifically royal) negotiations of inheritance and coming of age.

The poem’s treatment of the sixth petition (*Et dimitte nobis debita nostra / Sicut ȝ nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris*), likewise marked in the margin by Scribe 3, freights the concept of

¹³⁷ *Paternoster*, lines 37-39, 43-49.

¹³⁸ *Paternoster*, line 32.

counsel, good and bad, with similarly rich strata of meaning.¹³⁹ *Pater noster's* discussion of the sixth petition focuses on its second clause, which would probably have presented greater challenges to its reading audience, praying for God's forgiveness being more likely to strike many as a lighter (and more self-interested) burden to bear than forgiving those who had done them harm. The accompanying explication turns to diabolical metaphor to make a (self-interested) case for mercy and forgiveness:

¶ 3if ani man þat is in londe
 Liue3 in nyht oþer in onde
 Þourgh counseil of þe fendes red,
 He bidde3 a3enes his owene hed
 And make3 him heiere in erthe
 Ðan Ihesu Crist þat more is werthe.¹⁴⁰

There are several grave issues that arise from withholding forgiveness, most particularly that implied by the fourth line in this passage: the *sicut* in the prayer renders God's forgiveness contingent on human forgiveness and one who prays the 'Pater noster' having withheld forgiveness essentially prays that God likewise refuse forgiveness.¹⁴¹ Rather than spelling this out, however, the passage expresses the spiritual risks in more visceral terms. It identifies action motivated by wrath and envy (*nyht* and *onde*)—namely the withholding of forgiveness—as action taken by fiendish counsel. The self-evident wrongness of letting the devil tell you what to do—and the devilish presumptuousness of this particular action, which “make3 him [i.e. he who does not forgive] heiere in erthe / Ðan Ihesu Crist þat more is werthe”—conveys the spiritual harm of withholding

¹³⁹ *Paternoster*, lines 123-24.

¹⁴⁰ *Paternoster*, lines 130-35. The explication goes on for eight more lines, but the losses to f. 72a make it impossible to reconstruct the content of these lines.

¹⁴¹ *Speculum Vitae* treats this idea at much greater length; see Hanna, *Speculum Vitae*, lines 2947-3106.

forgiveness without resorting to an explication of the petition's conditional syntax. At the same time, this formulation permits the reader to imaginatively externalize sinful impulses towards wrath and envy as bad counsel to be repudiated. In its use of this metaphor, the passage obliquely acknowledges the gift of the Holy Spirit most often associated with this petition, that of counsel.¹⁴² The bad counsel of the fiend can be answered with the good counsel afforded by the Holy Spirit; the human agent occupies a position of judgment, weighing good and the bad advice. The terms of this metaphor invite readers to imagine themselves in such evaluative positions with the courses of their lives hinging on the counsel they choose to heed. The high stakes established here of following or dismissing such promptings resonate in the texts that follow and particularly in *Seven Sages*, whose narrative foregrounding of problems of counsel—and its reception and containment—features prominently in the arguments of the next chapter.

In this chapter I have argued that the *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* begin Booklet 3 with a project whose didactic, reading-oriented aims are unique to this booklet within Auchinleck. At the same time, there are strands of continuity between the portion of the booklet that I have attributed primarily to Scribe 3's agency and the portion in which I detect a greater influence from Scribe 1, especially, as I will address in the next chapter, in *Seven Sages*, which takes up the pedagogical concerns and the readerly focus of *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*. Recalling the discussion above regarding the ways in which the *Paternoster* miniature reinforces the project of its framing text, I would not necessarily argue that the booklet's accretions fit within the bounds of

¹⁴²See Hussey, "Petitions." It is worth noting that this is not the gift aligned with the petition in *Speculum Vitae*, knowledge is (and, as its treatment of the petition implies, this is specifically self-knowledge).

Scribe 3's original intentions (or those of any scribe, for that matter). Nonetheless, they work felicitously in advancing and nuancing the project of the first two texts.

Indeed, these texts condition readings of the booklet in much the same way that they condition readings of their own framed contents. The textual frames of both poems function in conjunction with curated collections of text in a guiding, didactic capacity, directing ways of reading and of thinking about these processes and of one's ends and actions as a reader. *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* work much like textual frames for the booklet as a whole, shaping readers' self-conscious experience of the texts that follow and establishing many of the crucial terms that make up the booklet's internal debates. These initial texts not only encourage readers to think about how they read, but they promote readings attentive to tropes and metaphors that resonate within the frameworks of spiritual aspiration and romance.

CHAPTER THREE

OF FRAMED PRINCES AND FRAMED TALES: READING MULTIVALENCE IN THE RIVAL NARRATIVES OF *SEVEN SAGES OF ROME*

If metaphors within *The Paternoster* draw on the world of romance to articulate the prayer's spiritual implications and make the layers of meaning within it available to a sophisticated reader, some of the most powerful metaphors within its Auchinleck neighbor, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, share a common focus on reading itself. In its incarnations in Auchinleck and elsewhere, *Seven Sages* exhibits a governing interest in, and concern regarding, ways of reading and their profound impact on the reader and the reader's community. The poem employs a complex narrative framework to articulate and evaluate different modes of reading, to work out the stakes of reading well in a narrative context. Situating stories in a heterovocal dialectic, *Seven Sages* uses these tales to foreground the problem of reading reductively while mobilizing them within a framework that cultivates ethical reading.

Seven Sages is fundamentally interested in knowledge and how it may be inculcated and communicated, contained and resisted. Its framing narrative moves from an account of the young prince Florentine's education in the seven liberal arts to a forensic dispute. Florentine's stepmother, the empress of Rome, attempts to seduce her stepson and, when her efforts fail, accuses Florentine of having designs on her body and on his father's imperial throne. What follows is essentially a trial in which both the prosecution and defense are conducted through stories that inquire into the motives and designs of all involved. The prince's life hangs in the balance for seven days as the empress and the prince's seven masters, the eponymous sages, attempt to sway his father's judgment by their tales and their strategic moralizing interpretations thereof. When the

prince finally speaks in his own defense he does not recount a literal truth—a narrative averring his innocence of the charges of attempted rape and treason. Instead, the prince’s story serves as a mirror in which the emperor Diocletian divines the emotional truths in the conflicts of his own narrative. The prince’s tale teaches the emperor how to read his own story.

Story-telling functions as a crucial form of agency in *Seven Sages*, and interpretation becomes an essential source of power and authority. The poem’s intricate frameworks exploit tensions between teller and listener, text and reception, even as they guide their own readers’ experiences. This chapter scrutinizes how the Auchinleck version of the poem extends Scribe 3’s pedagogical project in Booklet 3, and, in particular, how it dramatizes and investigates what it means to read and interpret well and what it costs not to. I turn first to one of the tales narrated in the forensic part of the poem, the story told by the sage Catoun, which encapsulates many of the conflicts prevalent in the frame narrative of *Seven Sages*. This brief narrative demonstrates the stakes of negotiating misleading signs and rival narratives and establishes the terms in which the frame narrative casts the empress’s villainy and the prince’s virtue. The next sections of the chapter explore how the frame encodes the two character’s respective agencies as expert manipulator and reader of narrative. The chapter concludes by analyzing how these interpretive issues converge upon the emperor Diocletian.

In many respects Diocletian supplies the reader’s stand-in within the text. His efforts to navigate the competing narratives of sages and empress—and, beyond that, to read the character of his wife, his son, and himself—speak to a crisis of judgment at the heart of the poem; confronted with epistemological uncertainty, the emperor’s reductive readings manifest his unwillingness to

acknowledge what he does not know. Diocletian's struggles mobilize the pedagogical potential of the poem—his arc traces a slow process of education as a reader—even as they expose the profound power of stories to activate and occlude insight, to reshape their readers' understanding of themselves and their world.

Weighing 'God Conseil' and 'Foles Red': Epistemological Anxieties in Catoun's Tale

When Catoun rides into Rome to advocate for his princely pupil, Florentine has been imprisoned for five days under accusation of attempted rape and treason, and the proper course of action for the emperor Diocletian has been contested in nine tales. These tales occasion and even embody some fairly straightforward polemic: nearly all of them critique the exercise of poor judgment, generally by a man, often acting on the basis of bad or even deliberately deceptive advice. The empress's tales commonly levy this criticism in situations in which a male authority figure suffers the consequences of the greed, disrespect, or deception of his (generally male) inferiors. By contrast, the victims within the sages' tales are more often relatively powerless, the targets—sometimes intentional, sometimes not—of women's bad or otherwise self-interested counsel. Catoun's story, the tenth tale embedded within *Seven Sages*, supplies a clear instance of this latter pattern. That said, its particular depiction of problematic feminine agency and its victims concretizes the epistemological fantasies and the epistemological problems that bedevil the poem's narrative frame by subjecting knowledge itself to the dynamics of trust and betrayal.¹

¹ In the Auchinleck version of *The Seven Sages of Rome*, lineated according to what remains within the manuscript, Catoun's tale fills lines 2193-2288. This and all other references to the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* are from the partial edition in Appendix B (item 5). See also "The Seven Sages of Rome," *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David

Told in an attempt to stay the prince's impending execution, Catoun's tale hinges on a burgess's allocation of belief. Possessed of a deceptive and unfaithful wife and an honest magpie who airs her private dealings, Catoun's burgess initially inhabits an epistemologically, if not domestically, enviable position. His wife may remain "fikel vnder hir lok," betraying her husband behind the closed doors of their home and the closed facade of her own self-presentation, but the magpie holds her accountable for her covert infidelities, "[telling] tales alle / Apertlich" within the public space of the burgess's hall.² Within the opening tableau established in this story, the wife's behavior is morally reprehensible—indeed, the text explicitly aligns her with Eve—but not problematic in a narrative sense.³ The burgess knows what transpires in his house; the magpie's reassuringly public speech undoes the troublingly private character of the wife's actions, just as his honesty supplies a counterbalance to the wife's dishonesty. The burgess can punish his wife's unwifely conduct and lavish his love on a companion whom he trusts. Indeed, the burgess's affections depend on trust: "þe burgeis louede his pie, / For he wiste he couþe nowt lie."⁴ What ultimately drives the narrative is the destruction of this trust—and even the capacity for trust—through the creation of an epistemological uncertainty whose origins emerge too late and with their validity already undermined.

Because the burgess's magpie is a paragon of honesty, its undoing at the hands of the burgess's wife depends upon the manipulation of truth. Indeed, if anything, the magpie is perhaps too honest—or too garrulous—for its own good. On the night of the narrative's chief action the

Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/sages.html>.

² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2197, 2203–4.

³ See Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2198.

⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2209–10.

bird makes no bones about what it knows and how it will dispose of its knowledge, informing the wife's lover, "Ȝa, now mi louerd is out ȝon, / Ȝou comest hider for no gode, / I schal ȝou wraie bi þe rode."⁵ In vowing to *wraie* the affair of the wife and lover, the magpie couples the threat of accusation with exposure and revelation; it threatens to make their covert actions visible and legible. Caged in the hall, the magpie does not possess the means of seeing the wife and lover *in flagrante delicto*, but, as its warning to the lover reveals, it deduces their sexual tryst from the lover's arrival and closeting in the wife's chamber (*Ȝou comest hider for no gode*). In vowing to make the lady's infidelity known yet again, the magpie establishes the harmful potential of its own empirical observations, deductive knowledge, and revealing speech.

The wife's strategem for undoing the magpie targets these threatening qualities and undermines their coherence. Fearing the consequences of the bird's looming revelations, she and her maid scale a ladder onto the roof of the hall, where they remove several tiles over the magpie's head. Beating a basin, shining a candle, and pouring water through the opening in the roof onto the bird, they not only torment the magpie, but they simulate a thunderstorm. The ingenuity of the wife's trick lies in its empirical appeal to multiple senses. The magpie's simultaneous aural, visual, and tactile experiences all accord with those of a storm; the bird hears a thunderous clamor, sees flashes of light, and feels a torrential downpour upon its own body and so it deduces that it has endured a spate of bad weather. Thus, when the burgess returns home and the magpie, in revealing what has transpired in the night, concludes its indictment of the wife's character—notably that the lover had "imad an hore of oure dame"—with a lamentation of its disturbed sleep

⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2222-24.

on account of the previous night's storm, characterized by "gret rain ȝ þonder briȝt," the wife can seize upon these words to discredit the bird.⁶ Not only she but all others in the neighborhood can attest that there were no thunderstorms during the night. While the burgess eventually discovers the wife's trickery, he does not do so until it is too late and he has already killed his magpie on account of its seeming dishonesty.

Ultimately, this tale foregrounds several ways in which truth can be manipulated and misapprehended. The brilliance of the wife's strategem lies in her fabrications of apparent truths, which culminate in a destabilization of language and knowledge. Accustomed to deductions grounded in empirical observation (but never *entirely* supported thereby), the magpie can be ensnared by a manipulation of empirical signs. Its extrapolation of a storm from all the experienced facets of a storm mimics the cognitive process by which a true storm would be recognized as such. Without knowing that the signs have been fabricated, the bird's deduction accords with common sense, with an assessment of the most probable reason for its sensations. As I will discuss in subsequent sections of the chapter, this facet of Catoun's story resonates strongly with the central problems of the narrative that frames *Seven Sages*: the poem abounds with scenarios in which falseness takes on the appearance of truth and thwarts characters' abilities to steer a clear course from accurate reading to correct conclusion. Here the sage's tale acknowledges the perilous vulnerability of a reasoning mind to such fabrication and the readiness with which a sensitive apprehension of what is known may still underpin an erroneous conclusion. The magpie's misinterpretation here is all too understandable.

⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2250, 2252.

This fabrication opens the door to the existence of multiple, apparently contradictory, truths and it is through this device that the tale applies pressure to the question of what truth *is* and to what extent it is an objective or subjective mode. If, as Catoun concludes, “þe pie þat saide soht was ded,”⁷ what degree of “soht” adheres to the pronouncements that were its undoing? By what standards are the magpie’s words true? The magpie’s account of the night to the burgess—which the text refers to as a “tale”⁸—conveys two aggregated sets of information, that the wife’s lover came around and participated in adulterous intercourse with the wife and that there was a violent thunderstorm. Both of these points contain some incontrovertible observations—for example, the paramour’s presence at the house and the bird’s disturbed rest—alongside the magpie’s extrapolations—for example, that the wife slept with her paramour and that there was a thunderstorm—and, indeed, judgments—for example, that the wife is a whore. Catoun has informed us of the wife’s indiscretions and from that vantage point we know that the magpie’s assessment of her infidelities is accurate, but the wife’s trick reveals the absence of direct knowledge subtending the bird’s accusations and indicates the means by which they could be cast into doubt. If the magpie mistakes a pot of water, banging on a basin, and flashes of candlelight for a thunderstorm, might it not also misinterpret the import of the movements of men in and out of the wife’s chamber?

⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2290.

⁸ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2255. This is not necessarily an unusual or surprising word choice in its own right—several senses of the word “tāle (*n.*)” listed in the *MED* comport readily with the meaning implied by context, including those that denote an oral or written account (1a, 2a), the act of speech (3), or an assertion or accusation (4)—but the word’s narrative and even fictive connotations (1, 2) make it a particularly fruitful choice here; it functions as a locus for the text’s ambiguities.

In this sense, the wife's stratagem is revealing. As she uncovers the magpie's reliance on certain assumptions in its apparent truth-telling, she exposes an underlying imperative in its actions to synthesize narrative from empirical observation. The bird's observations of her behavior cohere into an adultery narrative just as its nocturnal drenching begets its *tale* of a horrific storm of rain and thunder. Its sensations comport with those of a storm—though if a storm is understood to be a natural rather than manmade phenomenon that is objectively not what it has experienced—and so it is natural that this is how the magpie should communicate its experience. In probing the means by which the wife creates this epistemological tension, the tale lays its own machinery bare. The narrative framing of tale-telling in *Seven Sages*—and particularly the dialogues immediately preceding and following each tale—suggests that the power of these stories lies in their capacity to reconcile the complex and unarticulated conflicts at the core of the emperor's story with narratives that impose coherence, and even justification, on his inchoate inclinations. They make his experiences comprehensible, explicable, and permit him to act upon them.

The magpie's undoing, however, suggests a problem inherent in this approach to self-knowledge, or, indeed, any knowledge. For all of its truthful intentions, the bird's precipitous adoption of a ready narrative leaves it fatally out of step with what the community and the narrator hold to be true. For the characters who populate the framing narrative and have no recourse, as the reader does, to an omniscient narrator, the challenge of establishing which narratives, if any, are true becomes more challenging and more troubling. The efforts of the empress and the sages to discredit each other in their tales and, in some cases, to aggrandize themselves as well rely to a great extent on their employment of commonplace literary tropes such as the scapegoating of

women or bad counselors. While these stock themes might seem to invalidate the stories themselves as oversimplistic or unsophisticated, I would suggest that the element of predictability within these narratives is precisely the point. A central problem of *Seven Sages* is that the tale-tellers appeal to the emperor, and attempt to impose coherence on his confusion, through recourse to shopworn polemics. Counselors are just out for what they can get; they value lucre over loyalty. Women give self-interested, and often frivolous or stupid, advice. These are narratives to which beleaguered emperors in need of wise counsel might all too easily cleave.

Catoun's tale certainly villainizes the sole female character in this manner, but I would argue that the epistemological concerns of its narrative and its problematic moralization both resist a straightforward reading. Catoun explicitly mobilizes his tale in service to an anti-feminist polemic, aligning the wicked wife with the empress and the magpie, slain at the hands of the burgess, with Florentine, who stands in jeopardy of dying at his father's command. Still, the bird's misinterpretations unsettle the tale's account of feminine vice insofar as they call the origins and motivations of this narrative into question. If the magpie is capable of misconstruing the cause of its nocturnal drenching, might it be possible that the wife is also misconstrued? The tale's exposure of the magpie's problematic narrative extrapolations make it possible to read the wife's villainy as the product of the tale's presumption of feminine guilt, its insistence—in a judgmental tone similar to that of the magpie—that the wife “hadde a parti of Eue smok, / And manie ben zit of hire kinne, / Þat ben al bilapped þerinne” and that it recounts “on of wommannes wrenche.”⁹ The tale's

⁹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2198-2200, 2238.

presentation of the rival narratives of wife and bird allows the possibility of rival narratives elsewhere within the tale and even within its frame.

Catoun's moralization of the tale further destabilizes its overt anti-feminist critique. On its surface, his assessment of the tale's meaning advances a valorization of good counsel—and a critique of women's bad advice—that builds on that advanced by the sages who had preceded him as tale-tellers:

“Lo sire,” he saide, “for a foles red,
Þe pie þat saide soht was ded.
Hadde he [i.e. the burgess] taken god conseil
His pie hadde ben hol and hail.”¹⁰

The *foles red* in question clearly represents the wife's advice to the burgess—she had demanded that her husband avenge the magpie's apparently false, and thus presumably slanderous, speech once its honesty had been discredited—and yet Catoun's assessment underscores an awkward disjunction between the moralization he offers for his tale and the content of the tale itself. The most obvious reading of the phrase's meaning offers an indictment of the wife's foolishness.¹¹ While some of the other sages' tales do depict women who are stupid or otherwise blinded by self-interest, the burgess's wife in Catoun's tale is patently not a fool in this familiar sense of the word. Indeed, the tale attests to her cleverness and, rather anxiously, to her *wrenche*, her guile, as it foregrounds her success in confounding both magpie and burgess.¹² The word may instead point to a kind of moral

¹⁰ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2289–92.

¹¹ According to the *MED*, most meanings attached to the word “fōl (n.)” (1a-d, 3) center on some version of this sense. Furthermore, the *MED* records a proverbial saying pertaining to the folly of taking advice from a fool, though the earliest recorded attestation is from the *Tale of Melibee* in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*: “Salomon seith, “Take no conseil of a fool, for he ne kan nat conseille but after his owene lust and his affeccioun” (B.2363). That said, the terms of this proverb certainly resonate with the anti-feminist polemic advanced by the sages in *Seven Sages of Rome*.

¹² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2226, 2238.

foolishness grounded in her unchaste and deceptive behavior,¹³ but its inapplicability to the character in its most familiar sense throws Catoun's interpretation in doubt and raises the question of whether he, like the magpie with whom he, as well as Florentine, could arguably be identified, may be misinterpreting, drawing false conclusions.

This word choice underscores the ambiguous nature of the tale and Catoun's proffered interpretation. The word *fol's* double meaning activates two potential juxtapositions of values adhering to the concept of counsel: the contrast of *foles red* and *god conseil* may underscore Catoun's dichotomizing of wise and foolish advice—and surely his use of the word *fol* points to his intention to frame good and bad counsel as determined by its relative wisdom—but it also subtends a moral contrast, a juxtaposition of counsel that comes from a good person or that aims to effect good with that originating from a counselor motivated by sinful desires or ends. From the wife's perspective, her counsel is intelligent: it rids her of the problem of a talkative witness to her indiscretions and draws much of its conviction from the element of truth that it contains, namely that the weather had been “fair and cler” on the night in question.¹⁴ The burgess's initial credulity comes across more foolishly than any of the wife's maneuverings. The moral dimensions of Catoun's analysis encourage a different understanding of the text, however, one in which the wife's machinations come from a place of deeper foolishness for all their cleverness and (short-term) effectiveness.

Another way of understanding what Catoun means by his dichotomy of *foles red* and *god conseil* derives from a consideration of benefit, with *foles red* bound up in the interests of the

¹³ The second sense of the word attested by the *MED* would be appropriate here: “an impious person, a sinner, a rascal.” Indeed, one of the attestations of this sense of the word comes from the Auchinleck *Sir Tristrem*, copied by Scribe 1.

¹⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2259.

counselor and *god conseil* invested in its recipient's advantage. Ultimately, the wife's counsel is problematic in this tale not because it is foolish from her standpoint, but because it is wholly concerned with her self-interest and ultimately damaging to the burgess, who must come to terms with the groundlessness of his wife's accusations and his loss of a trusted companion after he has slain his magpie. In analogizing his interpretation to Diocletian's own situation, Catoun presents his own counsel and that of the empress within this dichotomy:

Bi here rede ne do þou nout;
3if þou do, þou art bicou3t.
Al þe world þe [sschal de]spise,
3if þou do be here and lete þe wise.¹⁵

As Catoun would have it, the emperor must choose between becoming ensnared (*bicou3t*) by the deceptive and damaging counsel of the empress or heeding *þe wise*, namely that advice which the sage himself offers him. Catoun's warning follows his assertion that the empress seeks Florentine's death, an outcome problematic for the emperor because, as in the burgess's situation, there can be "non amendment" for an overhasty execution and because he would face his people's hatred—and indeed, Catoun suggests, that of the entire world—for condemning his son to death.¹⁶ Framed in this way, these outcomes threaten the emperor's interests and stand in sharp contrast to the *wise* Catoun's advice, which largely amounts to a call for inaction.

That said, Catoun has surprisingly little to say about his own counsel. Instead, he depends on his criticism of the empress's aims and motivations and on his tale and his reading of it. His implication in the lines quoted above is that the empress's bloodthirsty advice, guided by "here

¹⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2299-2302.

¹⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2298.

resoun sscherewed and nice,”¹⁷ falls into the category of *foles red* and that his counsel to the contrary must therefore be preferable, the magpie’s honest speech as opposed to the wife’s cunning calls for blood.¹⁸ Catoun’s conclusions lack any indication of what makes his advice *god conseil* in the sense I have suggested above—that is, as counsel concerned with the interests of its recipient rather than, or as well as, those of its giver—or in any sense at all. It is readily evident how Florentine and Catoun benefit from the sage’s advice—Florentine’s life is spared another day and, with it, the lives of the sages, whom the emperor has deemed responsible for the prince’s behavior and thus subject to the same fate—but Catoun’s reticence calls into question whether the sages are any more invested in the emperor’s interests than the empress is. Indeed, all the tale-telling within the poem registers as an effort to dictate these interests, to convince the emperor that he needs to safeguard his rule or his reputation, his wife’s virtue or his son’s life.

The treatment of counsel in *Paternoster* provides a means of understanding what necessitates and problematizes Catoun’s efforts here. Recalling the discussion of counsel in Chapter 2, the concept of counsel offers a means of metaphorically externalizing the internal sins of wrath and envy and thereby identifying and resisting them as “þe fendes red,” the bad advice of the fiend.¹⁹ Part of what makes the emperor’s task of judgment so difficult in *Seven Sages* is that he must choose between two narratives that are largely predicated on inspiring, rather than quelling, his wrath and, in the case of the empress, envy: the sages’ efforts to sway the emperor depend on

¹⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2294.

¹⁸ The qualities Catoun attributes to the empress’s reason resonate with moral foolishness that he appears to connect with “foles red.” According to the *MED*, “nīce (adj.)” variously denotes foolishness or frivolousness, cunning and intricacy, and wickedness and lasciviousness, while “shreued (adj.)” denotes depravity, perversity, and, in a woman, critical, overbearing behavior.

¹⁹ *Paternoster*, line 132.

criticism of his wife while her sallies incite him to envious insecurity directed toward his son and anger directed toward Florentine and the sages. Even though the gist of the sages' tales may appear to offer a more clearly moral path, their constant recourse to anti-feminist narratives, along with their explicit criticism of the empress, clearly exemplified in Catoun's conclusions here, is calculated to provoke indignation—indeed, this indignation registers in the text in its overt references to *wommannes wrenche*—and, as such, their methods more closely align with than oppose those of the empress.

In foregrounding these problems of counsel and knowledge, Catoun's tale and moralization encapsulate the questions and anxieties central to *Seven Sages*. Knowledge in this tale is elusive, contingent, and vulnerable to the insidiousness of familiar narratives and cultural truisms. The validity—and morality—of counsel is similarly obscure; *foles red* can potentially look a lot like *god conseil*, since the foolishness behind it need not be of an obvious nature. Furthermore, Catoun's efforts to communicate the value of his perspective expose a rift between narrative and moralizing conclusions that is all too reminiscent of the magpie's self-assured extrapolations. Appealing to the emperor's self interest, he ultimately works against his best interests, neglecting an ethical reading for an expedient one. The next section probes the ramifications of such expedient narrative and interpretation as they manifest within the empress's narrative maneuverings and the text's attempts to contain them.

Turning “Sop” into “Falsenesse”: The Empress's Metanarrative Manipulations

The portion of *Seven Sages* dedicated to judging Florentine's culpability revolves around the telling of fifteen tales that are explicitly acknowledged as discrete narratives. Thus, for example,

prior to relating his tale, Catoun identifies it as such, announcing that if Florentine's life is spared for the day "I þe sschal mi tale sain."²⁰ Indeed, in the case of this particular tale the narrator even addresses the poem's audience with another such identification: "Nou euerich man þat louez his hale, / Lestne wel Catones tale."²¹ Within the world of the framing narrative, distinctions such as these between the actual and the fictive are clearly delineated; they are framed verbally and endowed with purpose. Diocletian knows at the outset that he is being asked to derive a lesson from a story in the manner common to medieval *exempla*.

That said, the frame narrative of *Seven Sages* in which these stories are purposefully and explicitly embedded is neither so stable nor so distinct as its concretizing name implies. The frame may identify, demarcate, and contain—and in doing so, authorize—these fifteen tales, but these are not the only tales embedded within the poem's narrative framework. This section addresses two stories enfolded within the narrative that go unacknowledged as such by their teller. These tales imbue their narrator, the empress, with the power to destabilize the narrative that she herself inhabits. Furthermore, they activate a reflexive dimension of the poem manifest in the tension inscribed between the empress's attempts to rewrite her narrative, to shape the ways in which it might be read, and the narrator's attempts to contain her cunning narrative agency. In other words, the poem is not only invested in a narrative depiction and evaluation of reception, of reading practices risky and rewarding, it evinces a palpable textual anxiety over how it is read itself.

The empress's adept manipulation of appearances and narrative assumptions lies at the heart of this anxiety. She is the first character to tell a tale in the poem, but the first tale she tells is not

²⁰ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 2188.

²¹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 2191-92.

the one known as *Arbor*, the initial tale presented to Diocletian within the poem's forensic section, but the one she offers to Florentine upon meeting him. Having sequestered him alone with her in her chamber and seated him close beside her, she frames the narrative of her marriage to Diocletian and their subsequent life together within a declaration of her love for Florentine:

I haue icast to þe mi loue,
Of al worhtlich þing aboue.
...
... for ich herde telle of þi pris—
Þat þou were hende, gentil, and wis—
For to haue wiz þe acord,
Ich am iwedded to þi lord.
Kes me, lemman, and loue me,
& I þi soget wil ibe.
So God me helpe, for he hit wot,
To þe ich haue ikept mi maidenhod.²²

The empress couches her strenuous protestations of love for the prince (and, notably, of her preserved virginity) as part of an account of long-cherished aspiration. As she tells it, Florentine has motivated all of her actions in respect to his father and shaped the trajectory of her life since she married him seven years earlier. On its face, her proclaimed passion, originally conceived for a seven-year-old, may strain the bounds of credulity. Still, she frames her words to the fourteen-year-old prince in a convincing physical context; her body's proximity to his, her gaze, and her embraces would all signal attraction and work to bolster the flattering and seductive thrust of her speech.²³ Her behavior produces some ambiguity in her seductive fiction-making, suggesting as it does that at least some of what she says may be true. As in the case of Catoun's magpie and the

²² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 318-19, 324-31.

²³ See Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 314-15, 332.

wife's false storm, the empress here speaks and behaves in such a way as to create the semblance of a passionate and single-minded romantic devotion.

Outside of the closed system of her bedchamber, however, the bulk of the empress's account of her marriage and its motivations is flatly contradicted by the narrative. *Seven Sages* presents a clear and ordered sequence of events in the marriage of Diocletian and the empress. After sending Florentine outside of the city to be educated by the seven sages, Diocletian submits to the counsel of his barons that he remarry and "biȝeten children mo," inaugurating a search for a suitable wife that culminates in his marriage to the empress "bi commun dome."²⁴ According to the narrator, theirs is not only a union applauded by the people, but a loving marriage as well—"ȝai were iwedded ... / And louede hem þourȝ alle þing"²⁵—until the empress first hears of Florentine's existence under less than ideal circumstances when someone in the household informs her that the prince will effectively disinherit any children of hers.²⁶ The empress herself corroborates the narrative in her own words to Diocletian:

Seue ȝer hit is þat þou me nome
And made me emperice of Rome,
ȝi make at bord and at bedde,
And o þing þou hast fram [me] hedde:
þou hast a sone to scole itauȝt.²⁷

The empress's account portrays a heretofore harmonious marriage (and, notably, a consummated one) and handles Diocletian's concealment of his son as a betrayal and as indicative of his lack of

²⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 101, 116.

²⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 116, 118.

²⁶ See Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 124-31.

²⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 148-52.

love for her. Sincere or not, the empress's outburst to her husband belies the account of their marriage she later tells to his son.

This textual moment warrants a closer look in connection to that dishonest narrative. The empress's discovery of the absent transforms and galvanizes her and the narrative. The text figures it as a morally and spiritually freighted moment of revelation, when the empress “coupe bope qued an[d] god.”²⁸ The phrase resonates with biblical language of the Fall; both the serpent and God link the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge to “scientes [or “sciens”] bonum et malum [knowing good and evil],” and the serpent elaborates that this means knowing “sicut dii [as gods].”²⁹ In a parallel sense, the age of discretion—so crucial to the reapportioning of moral liability in Lateran IV—marks the stage of maturity at which one may distinguish between good and evil and thus take responsibility for one's own actions. The text's biblical overtones here tacitly align the empress with Eve and the Fall, but they also suggest that the empress has achieved new insight into the world and its workings.³⁰ In framing the empress's change of heart in this manner, the text takes pains to hold the empress responsible for what she is about to do even as it confers

²⁸ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 132.

²⁹ Genesis 3:5, 21 and Genesis 3:5, respectively. This and other Latin references to the Bible are from the Latin Vulgate, specifically that printed in *The Vulgate Bible*, 6 vols., ed. by Swift Edgar and Angela Kinney (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010-2013). This and other English references to the Bible are from the Douay-Rheims translation printed in the same volumes.

³⁰ This alignment bears some comparison to that in Catoun's tale. The latter concentrates the connection between the two women on the wife's fickleness and identifies her as a kind of devotee of Eve, saying she “hadde a parti of Eue smok” (line 2198). A similar formulation was used in reference to the chemise of the Virgin Mary, a relic (see “smok (n.)” in the *MED*). The thrust of this line is to suggest that the wife has chosen the wrong biblical woman to emulate. In the passage here, however, the empress actually recapitulates Eve's Fall in a figurative sense. Her alignment with Eve conveys the moral seriousness of her transformation and an implicit transgressiveness in her insight.

on her the power to do it. Seeing where she stands and what moral (and immoral) paths lie before her, she sets about “so stepmoder doþ / Into falsenesse [to] torne soþ.”³¹

The empress’s wish to transform truth into falsity and her efforts in service to this end lie at the very heart of *Seven Sages*, driving its narrative and shaping its thematic preoccupations. Certainly, the tale she tells Florentine presents fiction in the guise of truth. Were it not for the contradiction supplied earlier in the narrative—contradiction to which Florentine has not, of course, been privy—her words could be credible. Indeed, in spite of these evident disjunctions between the empress’s narrative and the narrator’s, the text offers a more forceful assertion of the empress’s dishonesty, framing her tale with the prefatory apostrophe, “Wil 3e nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?”³² The poem calls upon its audience to recognize the falsehood of what the empress will say and to read it in this knowing light. Indeed, the formulation *wommannes wrenche*, later to be employed in Catoun’s tale as well, generalizes the empress’s cunning dishonesty to any woman, thereby inviting the reader to identify the empress as villain of a conventionalized anti-feminist narrative like those that the sages will later share. The reference to the villainy of stepmothers in line 134 similarly situates the empress in a familiar, and unflattering, narrative position.

In making these gestures, the poem’s narrator actually engages in behavior disturbingly analogous to that of the empress. The tale the empress tells Florentine derives much of its force and conviction from her ability to cast herself in a legible literary role and, in doing so, to attempt not only the manipulation of the prince, but a fundamental reshaping of the narrative of *Seven*

³¹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 134-35.

³² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 309.

Sages. In her *tête à tête* with Florentine, the empress contextualizes her supposed virginity and sexual availability within an account of the marital mismatch between herself and Diocletian. Not only does she claim to have married Diocletian with the intention of reaching an *acord* with his son, for whom she has thus preserved her *maidenbod*, but she also attributes her pristine state to the emperor's lack of interest or ability, telling Florentine, “Þi louerd þe emperour is old; / Of kinde, of bodi he is cold.”³³ This additional explanation invokes a specific literary topos, that of the impotent *senex amans*, and it enables the empress to position the prince as the young man who potentially stands to benefit from her marital dissatisfaction. By self-identifying with the *mal mariée* of *fabliaux* and romance—her double explanation makes it possible to understand her complaint as one of heretofore thwarted love or sexual frustration—the empress casts her contrived closeting with Florentine as a generically inevitable, and even sympathetic, prelude to a cuckolding. Her behavior is familiar—indeed, it resonates with an immediately neighboring text within the booklet—and its familiarity calls into question what sort of generic framework the empress occupies or wishes to occupy.³⁴

As she tempts Florentine to participate in this narrative with her, the empress flirts with the possibility of determining the poem's direction, of channeling its plot in a potentially comic or romantic trajectory. In other words, she creates a kind of narrative hinge, an encounter on which

³³ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 320-21.

³⁴ The text immediately following *Seven Sages* in Auchinleck, *Floris and Blancheflour*, nicely exemplifies a narrowly averted mis-matched marriage around which a similar romance logic operates. Separated from her beloved Floris and chosen by the emir of Babylon as his future queen, Blancheflour vows, “Nou [I] schal swete Florice misse, / Schal non oþer of me haue blisse” (lines 490-91). Furthermore, when the two lovers are reunited within the emir's palace, Blancheflour ceases all pretense of compliance with the emir, staying in bed with Floris so long that her absence eventually places the lovers in jeopardy. This reference to the Auchinleck *Floris* is from the partial edition in Appendix B (item 6). See also “Floris and Blancheflour,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/floris.html>.

the story's identify and outcome depend. This is not the only such hinge in Auchinleck. Indeed, a reader familiar with the book's contents might well recognize this on the basis of the text immediately preceding *Seven Sages*, *Sir Degare*. As Arthur Bahr recently observed in his discussion of Auchinleck, *Degare's* broadly sketched plot elements initially echo those of *The Legend of Pope Gregory*, now the manuscript's initial text.³⁵ At a crux in the narratives, a slightly greater degree of mindfulness on the part of the eponymous Degare (and some savvy advice from his mother) precipitates a marked divergence between the two plots: while *Degare* continues to follow a familiar romance trajectory, *Pope Gregory* pivots into a fundamentally hagiographical narrative. For a reader thus primed, the empress's tale and actions appear to capitalize on—or even to create—a similar generic plasticity within *Seven Sages*.

Ultimately, however, the narrative course taken at this generic crossroads depends on Florentine's response to the empress's enticements. The imperative exhortations woven within her speech (*Kes me ... loue me*) indicate her attempts to direct the prince's participation in the sympathetic narrative of infidelity that she has told him. When his refusal of her overtures compels her to abandon her pursuit of this particular outcome, however, she immediately sets about recasting her literary identity. The prince's evasion incites the empress to engage in a self-mutilating tantrum and to tell another tale, an account of Florentine's attempt to rape her, which she addresses to Diocletian:

³⁵ See Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, 123-24. Bahr attributes the divergence to "a small and arbitrary chance" (123), but this formulation misses *why* these become such different stories. If the difference were purely external, purely a matter of good and bad fortune, why would the second half of *The Legend of Pope Gregory* hinge on issues of contrition, penance, and forgiveness? Gregory is just as invested in the search for his mother as is Degare, but he does not take initiative, as Degare does, to determine whether the woman he has married might be his mother. Degare is open where Gregory is secretive.

Bot þis deuel þat her is,
Hadde me ner ihonisscht, iwis.
Hadde ich ben a while stille
Wi3 me he hadde don his wille,
And but 3e hadde þe raþer icome,
Par force he hadde me forht inome.³⁶

As in the case of the previous tale, the empress's words are patently at odds with the narrative's account, though the emperor is no more privy to this disjunction than Florentine was. The second tale also resembles the first in its accompanying demands; the empress concludes her speech by mandating a course of action for Diocletian: "Lat him binde, for he his wod. / A fend he is in kinde of man; / Binde him, sire, and lede han."³⁷ Her demands and the account that precedes them position the prince as an inhuman sexual predator, a fiend in prince's clothing.³⁸ Though, as in the earlier case, the reader is equipped to resist this tale, it derives some conviction from the proximity in the manuscript of a narrative of unearthly rape, the eponymous hero of *Degare* being the issue of a princess's rape by a fairy knight. The empress figures herself as Florentine's unwilling victim, a damsel in distress like Degare's mother. Diocletian, having supposedly prevented her rape and abduction, plays the part of her rescuer and champion. As becomes clear when the empress then tasks him with exacting justice on the prince, she has cast him in this chivalric role with the expectation that he continue to behave accordingly, even if it mean avenging her wrong with his son's death. In this light, the empress's determination *into falsenese to torne soþ* takes on a new and foreboding dimension. In her tales to Florentine and Diocletian, she demonstrates not only her gift

³⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 354-59.

³⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 363-65.

³⁸ Indeed, the empress insists to her husband that "he was neuere of þi blod" (Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 362), using his purported behavior to defamilialize—and delegitimize—Diocletian's firstborn son.

for fiction, but her ability to shift the shape of the narrative she inhabits, to retell it as best suits her interests.

Central to both of these fictions is the empress's body, whose attractions and vulnerability she exploits as a goad to action.³⁹ Just as she deploys her dishonest tales to redirect the narrative she inhabits, she uses her body to complicate notions of what is true and false and the means by which such distinctions can be made and proven. Her body functions within this narrative, and even more so in juxtaposition to the two texts that precede *Seven Sages*, as a site of epistemological confusion. As discussed above, the empress supports the credibility of her words to Florentine with eloquent body language. He, notably, does not reject her overtures because he thinks them dishonest, but because he recognizes them as treasonous and “wold his lord don non vnrizt.”⁴⁰ Her physical state similarly presents a foundation for the tale she tells Diocletian. Having mauled her clothing and herself in her wrath at Florentine's rejection,⁴¹ the empress presents her body to the emperor as proof of the prince's abortive violation of her person: “Lo hou he [h]ad me torent,” she explains, “[m]i bodi ȝ mi face isschent.”⁴² Just as the wife's feigned thunderstorm in Catoun's tale

³⁹ The empress also pushes an identification of her body with Rome; power over one, she implies, aligns with power over the other. Her sexual overtures to Florentine are clearly tied to a challenging of the emperor's authority and an acknowledgment of the prince's in his place. She distances herself from Diocletian, referring to him as “ȝi louerd” (Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 320, 327), but never speaking of him as her own. Her expressed wish to Florentine, to be “ȝi soget” (Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 329), emphasises the omissions in her references to the emperor; she only claims to subordinate herself to the prince. Given that this negotiation of power occurs in tandem with her proposal of a treasonous liaison, the prince's seizure of his father's wife would constitute a political betrayal as well. That Diocletian appreciates the political as well as the familial dimensions of such a betrayal is clear in his fears, exploited by the empress, that Florentine means to take his place as emperor of Rome.

⁴⁰ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 335.

⁴¹ See Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 342-51.

⁴² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 360-61.

prompts the magpie to draw erroneous conclusions, the empress's mutilated body encourages incorrect deductions.

Within the framework of *Seven Sages*, the empress's savaged body and her explanation for it threaten to overwhelm truth with falsity and, in doing so, test Diocletian's discernment. Indeed, the uncertainties immanent in her body and his judgment drive the poem's subsequent forensic inquiries. Outside of this framework, though, the poem's employment of the empress's body as a narrative crux sits uncomfortably alongside the two texts with which Scribe 3 precedes it in Booklet 3, *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin* and *Degare*. Both of these tales are similarly concerned with how the apparently unknowable may be known and in both of them a woman's body and her clothing—and, in *Degare*, her own glossing thereof—ultimately offer the solution to this problem.

Assumption is rife with tokens, most of which are furnished to Mary by the divine, but its concluding narrative strand centers on a token traditionally furnished by Mary to the apostle Thomas, notorious for his skepticism of Christ's resurrection in the Gospel of John.⁴³ Having failed to make it in time to Mary's deathbed, Thomas encounters her mid-ascent as he passes her burial place, seeing her, as the text notes, "wiȝ is eghen," and he requests a token "[þ]at ich bodiliche telle mai, / Þat ich saugh þe here today."⁴⁴ The girdle she obligingly removes from her waist and drops down to him serves as proof of her assumption into heaven when the other apostles, initially skeptical of Thomas's account, recognize the girdle as the one Mary was wearing

⁴³ See John 20:24-29.

⁴⁴ *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*, lines 573, 586-87. These references to the Auchinleck *Assumption* are from the partial edition in Appendix B (item 3). See also "The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin," *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/assumpt.html>.

when she was buried. In stressing the *bodiliche* nature of Thomas's encounter, the text communicates the dogma of the Assumption—that not only Mary's soul, but her body were taken up into heaven upon her death—but it also recalls the terms of Thomas's earlier skepticism, his insistence on seeing and touching Christ's wounds. In this narrative, the girdle's appearance and its tangibility render it a credible token of the miraculous.

In *Degare*, the two tokens that play central roles in reuniting Degare with his parents operate on a similarly tangible and stable basis. Indeed, the broken sword through which he recognizes his father the fairy-knight works almost as a chirograph would; his father matches Degare's blade to the tip he carries in his almoner. When Degare's mother sends her newborn child away, she includes a pair of gloves, sent to her by the fairy-knight, along with the obligatory letter and money in his cradle. Her letter insists that the child

ne louie no womman in londe,
But þis gloues willen on hir honde.
For, siker, on honde nelle þai nere
But on his moder þat him bere.⁴⁵

When Degare later marries an unknown princess, recollection of this stipulation moves him to mention these gloves before they consummate their union, allowing him to just barely avoid committing incest with his mother. Though he initially recalls the gloves and produces them, it is his mother who recognizes first the stipulation, then the gloves, and, having tried them on, her son. It is she, likewise, who explains their significance: "Þou art mi sone hast spoused me her, /

⁴⁵ *Sir Degare*, lines 213–16. This and other references to the Auchinleck *Degare* are from the partial edition in Appendix B (item 4). See also "Sir Degare," *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/degare.html>.

And ich am, sone, þi moder der.”⁴⁶ Like Mary’s girdle, the gloves serve not only as a tangible token in their own right, but they point infallibly to a specific associated body, as the princess readily reveals.

Coming on the heels of these two narratives, the empress’s simulation of her own body’s violation and her deliberate misreading of the mutilations she has wrought on herself registers not only as an exploitation of the emperor’s solicitous credulity, but of the reader’s familiarity with literary conventions cultivated by Auchinleck itself. Just as the empress falsely positions herself in a rape scenario rendered all too clearly elsewhere in *Degare*, so does she misleadingly appropriate the two previous narratives’ employment of the female body and its accoutrements as forms of unimpeachable corroborative proof. Indeed, the juxtaposition of these three texts creates a telling epistemological progression from a world saturated with tokens of divine will and the miraculous to a world in which fairy gloves may magically fit a single hand to the world of the *Seven Sages* frame in which humans are almost entirely left to their own devices. This last is not an unfamiliar world in the manuscript. In fact, this distinction offers a way of parsing the divergence between the narratives of *Degare* and the aforementioned *Pope Gregory*, the latter of which lacks the supernatural surety granted *Degare* and his mother by the gloves: the silk cloth Gregory’s mother places in the boat with her newborn child catches her eye when she meets her grown son, but, while she recognizes it, she reasons that “o cloþ was oþer yliche” and gives it no further thought.⁴⁷ In the world of readers’ lived experience, girdles and gloves, like Gregory’s cloth and the empress’s

⁴⁶ *Sir Degare*, lines 667-68.

⁴⁷ *The Legend of Pope Gregory*, line 558; my transcription. See also “The Legend of Pope Gregory,” *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, ed. David Burnley and Alison Wiggins, Version 1.1, National Library of Scotland, last modified 15 March 2004, <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/gregory.html>.

clothes and body, are all too subject to duplication or contrivance and thus imperfectly legible. Juxtaposed with *Assumption* and *Degare*, *Seven Sages* becomes a site at which narrative means of miraculously achieving the truth are rendered untrustworthy, or, in other words, where truth is turned into falseness.

If Scribe 3 frames a pedagogy of reading in *On the Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* that guides readers to read in increasingly difficult and sophisticated ways, the literary shift evident in the booklet's first three narratives broadly maintains this trend; Scribe 3's ordering of *Assumption*, *Degare*, and *Seven Sages* presents the reader with increasingly greater epistemological challenges as these texts trace a progression from reading material sharing a claim to truth and spiritual value with that of the opening pedagogical texts to the moral and narrative ambiguities of *Seven Sages*. *Paternoster* may be explicated with the help of metaphors culled from the world of romance, but within the romance-tinged world of *Seven Sages*, such metaphors take on a problematic multivalence that threatens to cloud, rather than to reveal, meaning. *Seven Sages* not only scrutinizes the difficulties and costs of reading this world, difficulties the empress shows herself adept at creating, but it also evinces a palpable anxiety over how it is read itself.

The poem's investment in tale-telling and its reception and containment extends beyond the responses of the tales' inscribed audience. In addition to depicting the interpretations of its characters, the text attempts to manage those of its readers, as previously suggested in the framing of the empress's closeted words with Florentine. In that passage the narrator's appeal to the audience (*Wil ze nou ibere of wommannes wrenche?*) and emphatic reiteration of the wickedness of the prince's step-mother signal the anti-feminist nature of the narrative, but they also manifest

concern that the empress's manner and tale have the potential not only to seduce Florentine, but the audience as well. Like Florentine and Diocletian, the reader has been placed in a position of testing at the instigation of the empress. Unlike the prince and the emperor, however the reader encounters the empress's fabrications armed with knowledge of their falsity. Given the reader's probable awareness of the contradictions between the empress's tales and the narrative in which they are framed, the narrator's attempts to nonetheless contain and denounce her speech merit further attention.

The text's added insistence that the audience recognize the empress's mendacity reveals an uneasiness in the poem over its readers' ability to read and interpret correctly. We cannot be left alone with the empress here, as Florentine is; rather, we must be told how to respond to her. It could be tempting to read her appeal to her step-son as partially true. The emperor really is old, after all, and the empress's objections to Florentine, stemming as they do from issues of inheritance, could be answered by his succumbing to her wiles and even fathering a child or two. Might her careful preparations for a seduction and her enthusiastic embraces indicate a true willingness—or even eagerness—to sleep with Florentine, rather than a well-performed concealment of murderous intentions? The poem makes it possible to apprehend the empress's motivations in this way, particularly in light of some of the tales she subsequently tells.⁴⁸ Unlike other Middle English versions of *Seven Sages*, closely related as they are, the Auchinleck version provides no clear depiction of malign agency on the empress's part until Florentine refuses her

⁴⁸ Her very first tale, for example, encourages Diocletian to view Florentine as a younger, more appealing rival.

advances.⁴⁹ This version of the text thus leaves the empress's tale and seduction open to multiple readings even as it forcefully promotes one interpretation. The empress is dangerously ambiguous as she is portrayed here, and our unaided reading, the text solicitously implies, may not suffice to lead us to a clear apprehension of the truth.

A further reason for these efforts at containment lies in way the empress makes use of her false tales. Poised to redirect the narrative she inhabits and, in doing so, to position herself as its heroine, the narrator counters her generic maneuvering by asserting a genre in which she figures as an insidious villain, dangerous precisely because she is so clever in manipulating appearances. This opposition to the empress on the narrator's part anticipates that of the sages during the forensic portion of the narrative, and, like the sages' subsequent efforts to sway Diocletian's judgment, the narrator's methods here mirror those of the empress. She tells tales and specifies exactly how they should be read. So, too, do the sages and the narrator. If the interpretations she furnishes elide the truth, as they so patently do in respect to her mutilated body, on what grounds are the interpretations furnished by the sages or even by the narrator to be accepted as more valid?

Recalling the questions raised by Catoun's tale and its moralization, can any of these tale-tellers, the narrator included, be said to furnish good counsel? The frameworks of the first two collections in Booklet 3 offer authoritative guidance in how to read well, but can the narrator of *Seven Sages* be

⁴⁹ While some versions of the Middle English *Seven Sages*—notably those in CUL MS Dd.1.17; London, BL, MS Cotton Galba E.ix; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 175—the empress clearly compels the prince's week-long silence at court by necromantic means, the Auchinleck version only mentions the necessity of the prince's silence, as determined by Catoun's and Florentine's astrological divinations. In this version of the story, the empress's malign agency is only ascribed explicitly to her false tale-telling; her involvement in the prince's enforced silence is implied at best as an intention to “brew swich a beuerage / Ðat scholde Florentin bicache” (Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 136–37). Though this turn of phrase evokes associations with poisoning, it actually reflects a figurative usage common in fourteenth-century in which the *beuerage* denotes a more generalized notion of bitterness or suffering. All we are told, then, is that the empress wishes to contrive hardships for her step-son.

trusted as a guide in this capacity? In provoking these questions, the empress not only destabilizes the narrative she inhabits, but the reader's faith in narrative authority.

In the face of the text's anxieties over modes of reading and the interpretive instability that these anxieties themselves beget, the poem proffers a solution to its epistemological impasse and narrative deadlock in the person of Prince Florentine. The next section will address the prince's education prior to the events at court and the ways in which his testing at the hands of the seven sages models a way of reading ethically in a world in which falseness can assume the appearance of truth.

Learning to be "Wis and War": Prince Florentine's Education in Ethical Reading

With its repetitive character, the forensic portion of *Seven Sages* can come across as an exercise in futility. Every night the empress tells Diocletian a tale convincing him to execute Florentine in the morning and every morning Florentine is duly marched out of prison to be killed, only to be saved by the intervention of a sage telling a tale convincing the emperor not to act on his wife's advice. It does not take long for Diocletian, up to this point a thoughtful and apparently wise ruler, to take on the semblance of an easy mark, willing to act on the conflicting words of whichever tale-teller has his ear. Florentine's intervention at this point halts this evidently futile cycle of events while underscoring his centrality to the other forms of resolution offered by the text.⁵⁰ Not only does Florentine usher in narrative resolution, but his character's narrative arc makes sense of Diocletian's seemingly nonsensical dithering.

⁵⁰ *Seven Sages* ends imperfectly in Auchinleck; it lacks the ending of the thirteenth tale and the entirety of the fourteenth and fifteenth (Florentine's), as well as the resolution of the frame narrative. Given the extent of what has

If the text ends with Florentine guiding the emperor out of the poem's narrative impasse, it begins with Diocletian's investment in the prince's guidance, his education. Before the empress makes her first appearance, the bulk of the text is given over first to the introduction of the sages as each introduces himself and his abilities to the emperor and then to an account of Florentine's education, once the emperor has determined that all seven sages should collaborate on the teaching of his son.⁵¹ This substantial opening effectively encloses the rest of the poem within a pedagogical framework that not only asserts Florentine's superlative wisdom and erudition but explores the forms of mastery and ability that define these achievements.

Florentine's education takes place in a space and manner shaped wholly by both heterovocality and consensus. No sooner do the sages take Florentine on as their pupil than they take counsel together in his presence in order to determine the environment in which he may best be educated. Rome is immediately dismissed as unsuitable, given the sages' fear that the prince might be distracted there and led into "riot" by unsuitable companions.⁵² Instead, they oversee the erection of a new hall outside the city. The hall and its surroundings reinforce the sages' purposes; they are quite isolated from the city, over a mile away, and they inhabit a space dedicated to Florentine's education. Situated in "an evene and a grene place" within an orchard full of "alle tres ... / þat ani frut an erthe bere," the hall occupies a *locus amœnus* whose exhaustive nature—the fact

been lost from Auchinleck, however, it is reasonable to assume that the text was initially concluded and almost certainly ended with the prince's vindication and the empress's downfall, as this is the ending attested in the related Middle English versions with intact endings and in the tradition more broadly.

⁵¹ The Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, being acephalous, lacks most of the sages' presentations to Diocletian; it picks up in the midst of the seventh sage's concluding words. As in the previous note, however, this is an element of the text common to all Middle English versions of the text where the beginning is not lacking, and the fragments of this section that do survive, along with the approximate number of lines that would have been lost, all point to this version having contained the same opening as the other versions, broadly speaking.

⁵² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 29.

that it contains *all* fruitful trees—and cultivation emblemize the project of the sages in respect to the prince.⁵³ Like the orchard, he too is being cultivated in a comprehensive manner.⁵⁴

The poem's description of the hall further underscores this parallel, while its layout and adornment amplify the structure of the prince's education. Built with seven chambers connected to a hall, it accommodates the prince's seven wise teachers, while the prince's "segh" occupies a central position within the hall.⁵⁵ From this position, the prince may immerse himself in the paintings that bedeck the hall, depictions of the seven liberal arts in which he is being educated:

Þerinne was paint of Donet þre pars,
And eke alle þe seven ars:
Þe firste so was grammarie,
Musike and astronomie,
Geometrie and ars mutike,
Rettorike and ek fisike.⁵⁶

⁵³ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 40, 37-38. Though it is not the main thrust of the poem's description, this is also one part of the poem that is slightly tinged with elements of the edenic or the otherworldly. The rich plentitude of its orchards recalls the "paradisum voluptatis" planted with "omne ligum, pulchrum visu" of Genesis 2:8-9. When it is later identified as a simultaneously natural and planned space, the "gardin / þat is icleped þe bois of seint Martin" (lines 290-91), the paradoxical nature of this description is suggestive.

⁵⁴ Indeed the prince's potential and the ends of his education may also be expressed through his name, with its floral etymology. The placement of the doubly floral *Floris and Blanche fleur* in immediate proximity to *Seven Sages* would certainly have reinforced this association.

⁵⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 58.

⁵⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 47-52. The presence of the term *fisike* in this list is noteworthy. Dialectic (or, more broadly, logic) is traditionally considered the liberal art that accompanies the other six mentioned within this list, and there is no metrical constraint necessitating the use of *fisike* rather than either of these more familiar terms. This may reflect a usage in the French source material. In his edition of *Seven Sages* Brunner notes that the same substitution occurs in some versions of *Sept Sages de Rome* (see Brunner, *Seven Sages*, 212, n. 171). The substitution has not to my knowledge been explained, perhaps on account of the scholarly reception of the word *fisike* as denoting physics or medicine (these are the definitions of "phisik(e (n).)" furnished in the *MED* as well). I would propose that the substitution is quite significant and is indebted Brunetto Latini's *Livres dou Trésor*. According to Latini, *fisique* is one of three disciplines pertaining to logic, along with dialectic and sophistic:

Logique est la tierse esciense de philosophie, cele propement qui enseigne prover & mostrer raison por quoi l'en doit fere les unes choses & les autres non. & ceste raison ne puet nuls hom prover se por paroles non, donc est logique sciense por laquel l'en puet prover & dire raison por quoi, & coment ce que nos disson est ausi voir come nos metons avant. & ce est en .iii. manieres: dialetique, afisique

This catalogue of the arts offers an encyclopedic and learned parallel to the comprehensively fruited orchard outside. The prince's education is fundamentally bookish—while housed in this hall he is “euer vpon his bok”⁵⁷—but these paintings visually inculcate him with the ends of his education with the sages, at the same time signaling to the reader that he will eventually embody, as the hall does, the assemblage of all these disciplines.

Though narrative accounts of children's (and, for that matter, adults') education are not uncommon in Auchinleck, the absolute centrality of the liberal arts to Florentine's education is atypical, as is the attention and detail lavished on his education. Many of the manuscript's narratives, romances or otherwise, describe the early achievements of their respective heroes in mastering reading, the courtly arts of singing and dancing, and, in some cases, military facility with weapons and horses. Indeed, *Pope Gregory* initiates this trend with its account of the upbringing

& sofisticque, dont la premiere est dialetique, & enseigne tancier & contendre & desputer li uns contre les autres, & fere questions & defense. La seconde est fisique, & nos enseigne prover que les paroles que il a dites sont veritables & que la cose est ensi com il dit por droites raison & por veraies argumens. La tierse esciense de logique est sofisticque, qui enseigne prouver que les paroles que l'en dit soient veraies; mais ce prove il por male engin & por fauses raisons & par sophymes, c'est por argumens qui ont semblance & couverture de verité, mais n'i a chose se fause non. (Latini, *Li Livres dou Tresor* 1.5)

[Logic is the third discipline of philosophy, the very one which teaches how to prove and demonstrate why one should do some things and not others. This one can prove only through words; therefore logic is a discipline through which one can prove and show why and how what we say is as true as we propose, and this occurs in three ways: dialectic, physics ... and sophistic. The first is dialectic, which teaches people how to debate and contend and dispute with each other, and to pose questions and mount defenses. The second is physics, and it teaches us to prove that the words we have said are true and that the thing is as we say, with good reasons and true arguments. The third discipline of logic is sophistic, which teaches us to prove that the words we have said are true, but this we prove through bad tricks and false reasons and by sophisms, that is, by arguments which have the appearance and outward cover of truth but contain only falsehood. (Trans. Barrette and Baldwin, *Brunetto Latini*, 5)]

As this chapter argues, Auchinleck's *Seven Sages* is profoundly concerned with the means by which truth can be proven through good speech, particularly in the face of sophistry bent on proving falsehood rather than truth.

⁵⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 61.

and accomplishments of its eponymous hero and the immediately proximate *Degare* offers a brief, but careful, account of the hero's education.⁵⁸ Given his high parentage and the likelihood that he will succeed his father as emperor, the absence of courtly and military training in Florentine's education comes across as strange, particular in juxtaposition with accounts like that in *Pope Gregory*.

The ultimate success of Florentine's education depends on the distinctness of the seven liberal arts and his ability to master all of them. Diocletian's appointment of all seven sages underscores the multiplicity of the arts and the heterovocality of the prince's education. Florentine has not one but seven masters, we are led to believe, because each has a disciplinary specialization or particular areas of strength. Thus, for example, Catoun's readings of the stars hold particular weight in the poem because he is "þe wisest in þat."⁵⁹ During the seven years devoted to his education, Florentine's tutelage takes the form of a progression from one sage to the next: "whan o maister him let anoþer him tok."⁶⁰ At the same time, the poem presents the circumstances and structure of Florentine's education as the result of the combined wisdom of the seven sages, of

⁵⁸ Gregory is "sett ... to boke" (*Pope Gregory*, line 377; my transcription) and eventually the text sums up his attainments as follows: "Gregorii couþe wele his pars / ȝ wele rad ȝ song in lawe / ȝ vnderstode wele his ars" (*Pope Gregory*, lines 383-85; my transcription). This account of Gregory's attainments features his facility in grammar (*his pars* being a reference to the parts of speech) and his skill in reading and singing, and it implies he is educated in the liberal arts. Gregory later acquires a kind of on-the-job training in feats of arms when he sets out as a knight in search of his family. Degare is fostered with a merchant and his wife until he is ten years old, whereupon the hermit who found him insists that Degare be returned to him to be taught "of clergise" (*Degare*, line 268). The hermit then teaches Degare "of clerkes lore" for ten years (*Degare*, line 285).

⁵⁹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 211.

⁶⁰ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 60. It is interesting to note that during the seven days of the prince's trial, the emperor, his people, and the poem's audience all progress through a more abbreviated 'education' at the hands of the sages in what is suggested to be same order: the first tale-teller among the sages is Bancillas, "þe childes firste maister" (Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 531), and each subsequent sage's tale is preceded by an identification of his place in the sequential progression of the prince's education.

their collaboration and consensus. As discussed above, their pedagogical strategy arises from their counsel together, and first the hall and then the prince embody the fruits of their concord. The combined efforts of the seven sages—and the prince—over seven years result in Florentine’s mastery of the seven liberal arts and his surpassing of his masters: “Þe seuende 3er so tok he on, / He passede his maistres euerichon.”⁶¹ His assimilation of the separate and cumulative expertise of his seven masters renders him a greater master than they. Their collaborative success is recapitulated later in the poem when the sages and the prince again work together, taking turns telling tales to save the prince’s life. In this case as well, the prince openly surpasses his masters: the sages have abilities sufficient to delay the prince’s impending execution, but only Florentine’s tale can definitively overturn his conviction.

If the seven sages together represent an assemblage of disparate knowledge or strengths, the prince emerges from his education as embodying a synthesis, a framed compilation, of their combined expertise. The poem’s account of his education signals his identity both as a receiver of collection and, ultimately, a collection in his own right. The orchard and more particularly the hall function as a kind of ideally conceived framework in which the sages and the liberal arts are always at Florentine’s disposal. On a literal level, the prince reads the books provided by the sages, but the effect of the poem’s descriptions of the hall and its environs is to situate the prince in an encyclopedic space where knowledge is housed and considered with thoughtful planning and comprehensiveness is wedded with cultivation and care. This place, subsequently referred to as “þat

⁶¹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 90-91.

gardin / Þat is icleped þe bois of seint Martin,”⁶² recalls Hugh of St Victor’s arboreal metaphors in the *Didascalicon*. Specifically, the *bois*, which carries meanings both cultivated and wild, resonates with Hugh’s depiction of reading as, at various points, passage through a wild forest or a fruited orchard. The poem’s use of the ambiguous *bois* momentarily evokes the specter of the wilderness and, with it, the possibility of getting lost, whether in a wood or in one’s reading. Still, the greater emphasis on the cultivation of Florentine’s surroundings upholds the fundamental value of his education, that the sages have placed him within a framework that guides him through the immense body of knowledge it behooves him to master and that the end result of this guidance is his eventual embodiment of the coherence, cultivation, and comprehensiveness that garden, hall, and sages represent. In encountering and mastering an encyclopedic collection of knowledge in these conditions, the prince becomes a kind of encyclopedia himself.

The culmination of the pedagogical section of the *Seven Sages* frame narrative establishes the practical value of Florentine’s encyclopedicity. In particular, the poem’s account of his progress through the latter years of his education highlights some of his particularly important attainments:

Þe ferþe 3er, hit was no dout,
Wi3 his maister he gan to despout,
Þe fifte 3e[r] he gan argument
Of þe sterre and of þe firmament.⁶³

This summation, emphasizing Florentine’s disputational and astrological abilities, anticipates two significant demonstrations of his acumen further on in the frame narrative, both of which begin to

⁶² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 290-91.

⁶³ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 64-67.

establish his ability to navigate the empress's metanarrative manipulations and the epistemological quandaries they beget.

Within a text essentially structured as a dialectic, as the forensic section of *Seven Sages* is, the ability to engage in disputation figures as a definite asset. In the poem's depiction of Florentine disputing with his masters, at the moment when Diocletian's messengers arrive at the sages' hall at the end of Florentine's seven-year education, the textual tableau emphasizes not only the prince's prowess, but the extent to which his epistemological facility sets him apart, not only from the messengers and the Roman court they represent, but even from the sages themselves. Entering the hall, Diocletian's agents "founde þe maistres alle seuene / Disputend in hire latyn / Wiȝ þat child Florentyn."⁶⁴ The emphatic latinity of the debate signals the erudition of the prince and his masters and, taken in its medieval context, distinguishes prince and sages linguistically from the two courtly messengers. Indeed, the tableau of the fourteen-year-old boy disputing with these learned men offers a scholastically-infused twist on the biblical account of the disappearance of the twelve-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem and his parents' discovery of their son three days later, "in templo sedentem in medio doctorum, audientem illos et interrogantem eos [in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions]."⁶⁵ Florentine, like Luke's Jesus, registers as a strange and wondrous figure precisely because of his youth and his demonstrated affinity not to his biological family but to this intellectual community.⁶⁶ Florentine's learned disputations with his masters suggest his exceptional character and abilities and, with

⁶⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 191-93.

⁶⁵ Luke 2:46.

⁶⁶ Indeed, when Mary reproaches Jesus for having eluded the family, his rejoinder articulates his familial obligations to a different parent, his divine father: "Nesciebatis quia in his quae Patris mei sunt oportet me esse? [Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?]" (Luke 2:49).

those, his abilities to stand outside the maneuverings of his family in Rome. This passage, moreover, establishes Florentine's superlative skill in disputation. In contrast to his fourth year, when he disputed with a single master, he now holds his own disputing with *alle seuene*. This accomplishment illustrates the sages' conclusion that the prince has surpassed them and, in doing so, indicates his ability to negotiate an intensely heterovocal situation, a compilation, as it were, of many potentially irreconcilable voices and views.

If the prince's disputations show him equal to the task of navigating contradiction and ambiguity, his astrological efforts signify his ability to transcend this ambiguity altogether, to read on a metanarrative level. When Diocletian's messengers arrive at the sages' hall to escort Florentine back to Rome, the prince and his masters turn to the stars in order to probe the consequences of the emperor's summons. First Catoun and then Florentine 'read' the heavens and, in doing so, read their situation at court and particularly how the prince's actions will be received by Diocletian. Catoun divines from what he sees "wel in þe mone" that the sages' and prince's lives depend on Florentine's silence at court: "3if we bring him [i.e. Florentine] biforn our lord," Catoun warns, "[h]e steruez ate ferste word / Þat he schal in court speke" whereupon Diocletian "wil of ous be wreke, / To drawe ous oþer to hongisone."⁶⁷ As the subsequent narrative attests, Catoun is right to see danger at court, not only to Florentine, but also, by extension, to the sages who have fashioned him into the young scholar-prince that he has become. In other Middle English versions of this poem, there are explicit supernatural reasons for this ban on the prince's speech; the empress's necromantic machinations have cursed it and rendered it fatal to him. Here, however, it

⁶⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 223, 218-22.

is possible to read this ban as the inevitable outcome of the empress's false narratives. Her efforts to refashion Florentine and the narrative—to seduce him into being her young lover or to tar him as a would-be rapist and traitor—create situations in which any speech on Florentine's part might indeed be fatal; in turning truth into falsehood, the empress has undermined the potential efficacy of Florentine's true speech. Catoun's prognostication reveals the impasse at the heart of *Seven Sages*.

When he subsequently upstages Catoun's celestial reading, Florentine not only demonstrates that he has indeed surpassed his masters, but that this achievement has allowed him to see his way through the narrative confusions created by the empress. Like her, he is capable of operating on a canny metanarrative level, of reading the narrative he occupies and its implications for himself. When he reveals the “toknyng” of the star beside the moon in which Catoun divined their doom, Florentine unveils the essential structure of the rest of the poem:

... Maister, I schal wel liuen;
3if I mai þis daies seuen
Kepe me fram answering,
I mai liue to god ending
And sauue me to warisoun
And 3ou fram destruccion.⁶⁸

The prince's metanarrative vantage point, his ability to see himself and others within the scope of a larger narrative, allows him to navigate the labyrinthine thickets of his step-mother's false narratives and his father's conflicted allegiances and to guide his masters through as well. Indeed, Florentine's insights in this passage, seen within the context of the frame narrative, recall Vincent of Beauvais's *specula rationis*, and not without reason. Vincent's *Libellus apologetius* essentially asserts

⁶⁸ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 231, 234-39.

that his own exhaustive reading and assimilation thereof have culminated in his ability to look upon the world and its vast arrays of knowledge, as from a tower of reason, and to frame and guide other readers' experiences from this vantage point.⁶⁹ It is striking that Florentine divines a means by which he may save himself and his masters principally through his own agency. Crucial to their salvation is his strategic deployment first of silence and then of speech. He does concede somewhat dismissively that his masters may play a useful dilatory role—"Litel 3e conne, par ma fai, / But echon of 30 mai saue me a dai"⁷⁰—but he recognizes that his own speech, if saved for the proper moment, "schal hewe þe wai atwo / þat had wrout me þis wo."⁷¹ This turn of phrase is highly suggestive as well; by virtue of his superior knowledge and mastery, he not only sees his way through his own narrative's difficulties, but possesses the means of surmounting them, of cutting a path through the obstructions he sees. Recalling Hugh's metaphor, Florentine has not only identified the direct path through the wood, he intends to hew it clear for himself.

This passage affirms Florentine's ability to navigate the rest of the frame narrative and, in the process, equips the reader to do the same, but it does not indicate the logic—if, indeed, there is any logic to be found—behind his seven days of silence. Especially for one so perceptive, what value is there in silence? If the prince is capable of seeing the essential truths of his own narrative, why does he withhold them? The sages' eventual evaluation of the prince's mastery in his sixth year—a passage comparable in length and detail to that establishing the terms of his education—furnishes a significant glimpse into the pedagogical aims of both the sages and the text itself.

⁶⁹ See Chapter One.

⁷⁰ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 252-53.

⁷¹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 256-57.

Unlike the earlier textual benchmarks of Florentine's progress mentioned above, this testing does not focus on specific disciplinary masteries. Instead, the narrative frames the test as a means by which the sages "wolde proue in þe sexte 3er / 3if he [i.e. Florentine] ware wis and wer."⁷² This doublet articulates the result of the processes of collection and synthesis underlying the prince's education, a combination of the wisdom and judgment implied by the word *wis* and the awareness and skill implied by the word *war*.⁷³ The point of Florentine's education, it suggests, is not merely the successive masteries of the seven liberal arts, but also a more general sagacity and perceptiveness, the product presumably of the fusion of these masteries.

In testing their student, the sages compel Florentine to put these qualities to an unexpected use. Unbeknownst to the prince, the sages gather sixteen ivy leaves and place four under each of his bedposts before he retires for the evening. Early the following morning, they range themselves before his bed to observe him as he wakes. His response evinces an immediate awareness of a change having taken place, as he looks "here and tar, / Vp and doun and everywhar."⁷⁴ When the sages ask for an explanation of his behavior, he responds:

Par fai ... a ferli cas.
 Oþer ich am of wine dronke,
 Oþer þe firmament is isonke,
 Oþer wexen is þe grounde
 Þe þiknes of four leues rounde.
 So much to ni3t heyer I lai,

⁷² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 68-69.

⁷³ See "wīs(e (adj.))" and "wār(e (adj.))" in the *MED*. Entry 3a of the latter indicates the common use of this doublet as a rhyme tag and its consequently diminished force. I would note, however, that it is hardly common within Auchinleck, appearing in doublet form only once outside of *Seven Sages* (within *Amis and Amiloun*) and four times within *Seven Sages*, where it is put to deliberate use (see below).

⁷⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 78-79.

Certes þanne ʒisterdai.⁷⁵

This is the response, or at least a response, that the sages sought; Florentine's words lead them to the conclusion that they have succeeded as his masters, that he "coude inow of alle gode."⁷⁶ What, though, is the nature of the wisdom and awareness that the sages confirm with their covertly placed ivy leaves?

In one sense, Florentine's evaluation anticipates his later ability to read the heavens or, understood in a different light, to read the narrative that he inhabits. His perception-based response (*so much to nizt heyer I lai / Certes þanne ʒisterdai*) places this spatial shift in a very specific temporal context; his ability to detect the change in his position depends on earlier observation. The sages' test appraises not only the prince's powers of scrutiny on this particular occasion, but his previously unsolicited perceptions upon awakening every morning up to that point. Even in the space in which he rests, he has taken no respite from study, from reading the world around him. This testing of Florentine reveals an expectation, initially satisfied by the prince's reply to his teachers, that his public identity and obligations, anchored at this point in his education, permeate even the most private spaces in his life. In this sense, the sages' interference with the prince's bed signals their recognition that his responsibilities as a scholar, and presumably also as a prince, extend to the very bounds of his consciousness.

It is thus significant that in the one instance when the narrative revisits the prince in his own bed, it has become a space not of repose but of private reflection. After he has been summoned back to Rome and has divined the course of the frame narrative in the heavens,

⁷⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 81-87.

⁷⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 89.

Florentine retires for the night “to his bed” and ponders his best course of action.⁷⁷ Situated at the site of his earlier testing, he “þouʒt al niʒt her and tar, / Hou þat he miʒt be wis and war / To ouercome þe emperice.”⁷⁸ The text’s repetition of two line-final doublets recalls that earlier evaluation and the terms in which the prince’s attainments were judged. The bed remains a place in which Florentine strives to be *wis and war*, but now the action of his earlier bedroom test, his looking *here and tar*, has been internalized. These repetitions underscore the emblematic nature of the earlier examination.⁷⁹ Ultimately, Florentine’s wisdom and perception must serve him in less tangible fashion than they had in that earlier situation; in place of the hypersensitivity he displays in response to the ivy leaves, he must detect the shifts occurring in his relationships, political, social, and particularly familial.

The substance of Florentine’s response to the ivy leaves under his bed thus anticipates the increasingly difficult uses to which he will have to apply his powers of scrutiny, culminating in the tale he chooses to tell his father. In effect, it establishes a standard of very close reading, not only of the prince’s world, but of the dynamics shaping his movement through it. Just as important, however, this test models an interpretive practice that advances this close reading. Recalling Florentine’s words to the sages in the midst of his testing, what is striking in his elaboration on his *ferli cas* is that he offers not one but three possible explanations for what has happened. The first, that he could be drunk, posits that, were his senses thus impaired, he might detect a change that had not actually occurred. The second, that *þe firmament is isonke*, imagines an external but cosmic

⁷⁷ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 279.

⁷⁸ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 280-82.

⁷⁹ The Auchinleck *Seven Sages* makes strategic use of this tag in particular. It is applied in these two instances to Florentine during the narrative of his education and then later held up by two of the sages as a standard to which Diocletian ought to aspire.

change, that, however unlikely, might explain the prince's shift in perception. The third, that the ground has risen, allows for an external but potentially more local change in the other direction, and, with the prince's precise analysis (*wexen is þe grounde / þe þiknes of four leues rounde*) he acknowledges the possible—and what we know to be the actual—intervention of the sages. The prince proceeds from a potentially counterfactual explanation to the most plausible explanation for what he has observed in the sage's test.

In at least one later Middle English copy of *Seven Sages*, Florentine weighs and dismisses the potential causes for his physical disorientation as he goes.⁸⁰ Here, however, Florentine never settles upon a particular interpretation; he leaves all of the possible explanations he has articulated—both internal and external, cosmic and local—within the realm of possibility and lays no claim to certainty. Here, the sages' approval suggests that Florentine is correct to respond in this way, that the sages value not only his observations and his range of interpretations, but, more importantly, the prince's interpretive restraint, his recognition of the indeterminacy of the situation. Because Florentine has not witnessed the sages' intervention and acknowledges no evidence supporting a particular means of accounting for the change, he has no definitive grounds for reducing the possible explanations to the most likely. Placed in a situation much like that of the magpie in Catoun's tale, the prince adopts a different course, running through all of the possible explanations for what he has observed empirically and refraining from excluding any. Indeed, if the magpie had undertaken a similar review of possibilities, from impaired senses to an external intervention attributable to a human rather than the heavens, the wife's actions could have

⁸⁰ This variation can be found in CUL MS Dd.1.17. Most copies preserve a reading closer to the one in Auchinleck, though these lines are missing in CUL MS Ff.2.38 and London, BL, MS Arundel 140.

been suggested, if not known. Unlike the magpie, Florentine stops short of the leap from formulating interpretive hypotheses to asserting certainties founded on interpretation. His achievement lies not only in his assessment of what the sages did with his bed and the ivy leaves, but also in his ability to consider alternative explanations and to suspend judgment.

The prince's examination establishes his wisdom and powers of observation, physical and moral,—his achievement, in other words, of being both *wis and war*—as a standard against which later attempts to reveal and explain concealed truths must inevitably be measured. Through the prince's education and particularly through this episode of successful testing, the text models and endorses a mode of reading that navigates, and even embraces, textual multivalence. In the process, the narrative establishes Florentine as a worthy opponent of the empress and an able negotiator of the ambiguities begotten by her rival narratives.

Enacting Suspended Judgment: Reading with and through Diocletian

The testing of Diocletian bears out the text's valorization of suspended judgment, as practiced by Florentine, while modeling what this looks like to a reader of, rather than a character within, *Seven Sages of Rome*. Faced with a situation as indeterminate as Florentine's ivy leaves or the magpie's dousing, Diocletian's response more closely resembles that of the hapless bird. Rather than analyzing the epistemological obstacles he faces, the emperor leaps from one conclusion to the next. While the prince's temporary muteness imposes a necessary delay on his role in resolving the narrative, Diocletian's tenuous and all-too-temporary interpretations of his own situation contribute another obstacle to the plot's resolution. And yet, even as he models the difficulties of suspending judgment as Florentine does, it is Diocletian, not Florentine, who most vividly

dramatizes the workings of textual reception and interpretation and whose struggles chart a meaningful course for the reader through the poem and even, I will argue, through the manuscript in which it appears.

When the empress presents her battered body to Diocletian, the emperor faces an interpretive challenge comparable to the earlier testing of Florentine. His wife has rendered her actions in her bower as unwitnessable as the sages' interventions in the prince's bedroom. By its nature as a private, closed-off space, the empress's chamber propagates the same kind of indeterminacy Florentine recognized in his testing. Though the empress's account of what happened to her is at odds with the narrative's account, either supplies a possible explanation for the mauled body she presents to the emperor and, as I have suggested above, the empress has chosen a familiar, appealing genre with which to construct her fabrication, which situates her husband in the role of heroic rescuer. Still, her tale compels Diocletian to allocate fault, either to his son, if he be judged a treasonous rapist, or to his wife, if she be judged a cruelly calculating liar, or even to himself in the far more unlikely scenario that he should judge himself responsible for creating this conflict through his remarriage and subsequent concealment of his son.

Indeed, Diocletian's role as unwitting originator of the central conflict within Seven Sages of Rome merits some additional attention. As the narrative sententiously implies, the empress's turn towards villainy—articulated in terms of the Fall—arises from suppression and its inevitable inefficacy:

Herknez nou a selli tiding.
Þing ihid ne þing istole,
Ne mai nowt longe be forhole.
Ne þing mai forhole be

But Godes owen priuete.⁸¹

Here the text reveals a suppression of its own, that the emperor's happy marriage to his second wife, harmonious both in their pleasure in each other and in Rome's general approval, has taken place without any acknowledgment of Florentine's existence. Diocletian's failure to acknowledge his son to his new wife, cast in the light of a deliberate concealment by this strange passage, results in her discovery of a warped version of the truth, one that the foregoing narrative appears to contradict. Indeed, the revelation of Florentine's existence as an agent of disinheritance by "some squier or some seriant nice"⁸² is arguably the first instance of a false narrative within the world of the poem, insofar as it puts a significantly darker spin on the emperor's intentions toward his offspring than his advisors had articulated in encouraging the marriage. Whereas the barons had suggested that the emperor had "inow ... of werldes won" to enrich all of the children he might have, the tale-telling man of the household effectively disinherits the empress's putative offspring, insisting that "hir schildre scolde be bastards."⁸³ This apparent contradiction ultimately stems from Diocletian's silence, though. Lurking behind the empress's overt machinations and perversions of the truth is this strange incongruity in the emperor's life, suggestive of an unscrutinized irresolution in his own character, an inability to reconcile his old life with his new one or his son and heir with his appealing young wife.

Figuratively then, the empress's savaged body is as much the locus of Diocletian's conflicted affinities and desires as it is the means by which she expresses her rage and advances her own agenda. It emblemizes the violence and estrangement that have erupted within his family,

⁸¹ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 119-23.

⁸² Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 124.

⁸³ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 97, 128.

unavoidably evident but still indecipherable. Confronted with the empress's body, Diocletian recognizes (correctly) that someone has done her a grievous dishonor. Attempting to determine the author of this dishonor, however, the emperor readily succumbs to the tale the empress furnishes, offering, as it does, a simple interpretation of his familial dynamics and a clear sense of his own blamelessness in their present tangle. While Florentine's test demonstrated his attention to the intimate space of his bedchamber, the empress's body forces Diocletian to assess what has been shifting in the intimate space of his familial life. His ready acceptance of the empress's interpretation registers in the text as an impropriety, a breach of conduct. Though, as a ruler, he cannot perhaps be expected to refrain from judgment, to leave an indeterminate situation unresolved, the emperor's advisors swiftly overturn his precipitous condemnation of his son to death on the grounds that he has violated proper procedure in meting out a verdict before taking counsel. Even within the context of practical governance, Diocletian's snap judgment registers as intensely problematic.

The same holds true for Diocletian's responses to the tales told by the empress and the sages, and for much the same reasons. Unable (or unwilling) to see beyond the interpretive pronouncements of the tale-tellers, the emperor wavers between a nightly conviction that his wayward son must die, along with his wayward teachers, and a daily conviction that his son's life should be spared and his wife's word doubted. What is consistent within these opposed convictions is the emperor's certitude that these actions, the necessity of which is revealed in the tale-tellers' stories, serve his own best interests and that his decision must ultimately hinge on these interests. The emperor's susceptibility to these stories registers as all the more jarring because these tales

invite considerably more complex readings than the tale-tellers acknowledge with their narrow moralizations. Even so, Diocletian remains content to accept the interpretations with which he is provided and reads no further into the stories than he is asked, even when he is invited to identify with distinctly unsavory characters including thieves, pimps, and notorious villains of British history. These identifications trouble the cyclical narrative of the poem's forensic section, contributing to a sense of ridiculousness in the emperor's literary susceptibilities that the text itself acknowledges. Thus, for example, the empress expresses frustration with the repetitive structure of the forensic narrative, questioning the value of telling her tale:

Nai, sire, ... hit his nowt worþ,
Mi tale ne mot nowt forþ;
Telle ich þe ensauple neuer so god,
þou me haldest of wit wod.⁸⁴

On a second occasion, she indicates the readiness with which the emperor has been swayed to exchange the sages' advice for her own: "þou dost þing þat me is loht. / þou leuest tales of losengrie / Of falsnesse and of trecherie."⁸⁵ Her observations do not prevent her from perpetuating this cycle—in both cases these remarks furnish part of her lead-in to new tales—but they do acknowledge the apparent absurdity of Diocletian's indecision. Why should this man, extolled in the text as an emperor "wis of dome,"⁸⁶ embrace these tales' vastly oversimplified interpretations and their conflicting implications?

One explanation for Diocletian's ready acceptance of these tales and their moralizations stems from the problematic nature of the advice and of the motivations he might have for heeding

⁸⁴ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 1419–22.

⁸⁵ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 1944–46.

⁸⁶ Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, line 100.

it. As suggested earlier in the chapter, the sages and the empress rely on cultivating indignation, even wrath, in their tales and in the interpretations they offer. Even as they ask Diocletian to trust their advice, their tales sow blame and distrust. Furthermore, the text highlights Diocletian's vested interest in viewing himself and his actions in the light of the conventional narratives advanced by the moralizations of the tale-tellers. Even when he is invited to identify with problematic characters in these tales, their concluding interpretations absolve him of any culpability provided that he follow the tellers' advice. Identifications such as these unsettle the restrictive interpretations provided by the tellers of these tales. In pointing to potentially subversive readings of these stories, they underscore the rigidity of the narratives between which the emperor vacillates.

While Florentine's testing promotes a mode of reading consonant with such ambiguous texts, the tale-telling of the empress and the sages exposes the moral hazard of reading narrowly, of bypassing complexity in favor of reductive simplicity. The sages and the empress offer up readings of their tales that pander to the emperor's wish to externalize the conflict at the heart of the *Seven Sages*. Florentine's tale, by contrast, demands that the emperor scrutinize his own behavior and come to terms with his own inconsistencies and thus with the obscurity hinted in the opening of the poem. As the poem itself so sententiously insists, nothing can remain hidden indefinitely, not even the emperor's conflicted attitudes towards his son. Diocletian's ultimate willingness to acknowledge some of this conflictedness within himself, a conflictedness revealed in the prince's tale, enables the poem's ultimate resolution. Viewing Diocletian as a surrogate for the reader, the character's trajectory within the narrative suggests an end for telling or, more specifically, for reading stories. The collection of tales framed within this narrative hold up a mirror to their

audience, in the person of the emperor, but also, potentially, in the person of the manuscript's readers.

But what is the point of reading all of the empress's and sages' tales along the way and what does this reading accomplish? Why does the poem delay Florentine's tale for so long and perpetuate a series of reductive readings in the meantime? The overarching structure of the poem, with its flip-flopping emperor and its fifteen embedded tales, supports the narrative's valorization of suspended judgment. Though the emperor's acquiescence to each tale's tidy moralization is undoubtedly problematic, the cyclical system in which this story-telling takes place—with the empress telling a tale every night and a sage telling one each day—defers resolution. There is, the narrative implies, a 'true' story to be told, an interpretation of events that does justice to the events within the empress's bower and the emotional stakes of Florentine's return. Structurally speaking, the tale-tellers work in concert within this narrative to defer a verdict until the 'true' story can be told and recognized as such. The frame narrative itself enacts the form of ethical reading it advocates in the character of Florentine and, in doing so, it guides the alert, self-conscious reader through a similar process.

The physical framing of this text in Auchinleck supplements the guidance afforded by the textual frame. Just as *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster* draw attention to ethical reading practices performed and interrogated within *Seven Sages*, so too does the visual presentation of the text. Subsequent copies—and, eventually, print editions—of this text unambiguously subdivide it into its frame and embedded tales. Some provide sufficient identification of each tale that a reader could read selectively. This is the kind of possibility Geoffrey Chaucer flirts with in his prologue to the

Miller's Tale, when his narrator enjoins the reader of delicate sensibilities to “[t]urne over the leef and chese another tale.”⁸⁷ Such choice—or, indeed, any breaking of the frame—depends on the physical demarcation of tales as tales. No such demarcation is available in Auchinleck’s *Seven Sages*. As in other longer narratives copied within the manuscript, the text of *Seven Sages* is visually subdivided with painted initials marking moments of transition. But these initials do not neatly align with the embedded texts within the frame narrative. Auchinleck’s copy of the text provides no visual indication of multitextuality, no sense that the text’s narrative is anything but linear and continuous. Its embedded tales can only really be encountered as the narrative unfolds and, as such, they must be encountered within the context of the frame’s guidance.

In modeling the kind of reading it does in Florentine and enacting that kind of reading through the vacillations of Diocletian, stand-in for us readers, *Seven Sages* models a way of understanding the potential moral or intellectual value of reading a tale collection, particularly one that repeatedly traces familiar generic or narrative trajectories. These narratives can and may be read in connection to one’s own lived experience—as somehow exemplary, that is—but there is some peril in reading them as simplistically or straightforwardly exemplary, in being led as Diocletian allows himself to be led. *Seven Sages* models a form of contemplative reading of vernacular literary texts, a method of reading introspectively but also cautiously, with judgment suspended, that could be extended to the rest of the booklet and, indeed, to Auchinleck as a whole.

Scribe 3’s interventions here in *Seven Sages*, but also within the earlier *Seven Deadly Sins* and *Paternoster*, enfold the reader within an abundance of guiding frameworks, whose layerings

⁸⁷ I. 3177. This reference to *Canterbury Tales* is from Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

guide the reader through an increasingly sophisticated awareness of reading practices and their ethical valuations. Interpretation supersedes basic rote internalization. Suspension of judgment takes precedence over reductive moralization. In his discussion of *sententia* cited in Chapter One, Hugh of St Victor cautions readers to aspire to an understanding of Scripture on its own terms rather than a precipitous imposition of their ideas on the text. In his framing mediations between reader and collected texts, Scribe 3 advances an argument that the same hold true in vernacular reading practice. His frames imbue his collections—heterogeneous, polyvocal, and irreverent entities that they are—with ethical weight, conferring on them a form of vernacular textual authority.

CHAPTER FOUR

READING THROUGH *DIVISIOUN*: COLLECTION AND PARTITION IN THE *SEVEN SAGES-CONFESSIO AMANTIS* BOOKLET OF BALLIOL MS 354

*The man, as telleth the clergie,
Is as a world in his partie,
And whan this litel world mistorneth,
The grete world al overtorneth.
The lond, the see, the firmament,
Thei axen alle jugement
Agein the man and make him werre.
Therwhile himself stant out of herre,
The remenant wol noght acorde.
And in this wise, as I recorde,
The man is cause of alle wo,
Why this world is divided so.*

- John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*¹

The prologue of John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* teems with worldly problems. Gower's narrator laments the strife among and between nations, the conflict and corruption within the Church, the poor self-governance of individuals, and the world's inevitable decline. As the lines above suggest, the prologue traces these social and individual ills, and even the disjointed state of the natural world, back to a common source: the inherently divided nature of man. Situated in an alarming genealogy between sin, "moder of divisoun," and confusion, of which "divisoun / ... moder ... / Is," this chaotic force finds in man's postlapsarian nature a conduit by which it weakens the foundations of society, just as the alloyed earth and steel feet of the *ymage* in Nebuchadnezzar's dream render it vulnerable to its eventual pulverizing.² In the process of advancing this thesis, Gower's prologue depends heavily on drawing such connections and on the mirroring potential of

¹ Prologue, lines 955-66. This and all other references to *Confessio Amantis* are from Russell A. Peck, ed., *Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000-2004).

² *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 1030, 851-53.

his juxtapositions of lords and commons, history and prophecy, microcosm and macrocosm; he situates these problems within an elegantly argued system.

The prologue itself holds up a mirror to the framing narrative of *Confessio Amantis* and to its deployment of the many tales embedded within it. Just as man's four humors necessitate that "the contraire of his estat / Stant evermore in such debat" and that until "o part be overcome, / Ther may no final pes be nome,"³ so does Amans suffer from an internalized *debat* brought on by his identity as a lover, which is inherently problematic insofar as "[love's] nature is so divers," and by the struggle for ascendancy within himself between love and reason.⁴ The reformed Amans/Gower concludes that it is only with the reassertion of reason and wisdom, commensurate with charity but with no other kind of love, that one presumably "can ... se the ryhte weie / How to governe his oghne estat."⁵ We witness this restoration in the person of Amans/Gower when Venus's mirror compels him to see himself truly; the world remains a profoundly divided realm—the twelve months in which Amans/Gower sees himself testify to this division—but he may now situate himself more harmoniously within it.

This moment of epiphany recalls the conclusion of *The Seven Sages of Rome* in its resolution of the internalized conflict of a central figure whose position within the narrative renders him a kind of surrogate of the reader. Like Diocletian in *Seven Sages*, Amans spends much of the poem examining himself without penetrating far enough to obtain true insight; both resist acknowledging the transformations wrought on them by age. The many tales to which they are

³ *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 979-80, 981-82.

⁴ *Confessio*, VIII, line 3157. Charity, or divine love, as noted in the very final lines of the poem, is an exceptional case, a form of love that poses no harm or division to man (*Confessio*, VIII, lines 3162-67).

⁵ *Confessio*, VIII, lines 3148-49.

privity ostensibly attempt to reveal them, the tales' stubborn auditors, to themselves and, in the process, to resolve the inner *debat* to which each is subject. That said, unlike *Seven Sages*, in which Florentine's tale finally moves Diocletian to recognize not only his son's innocence but his own fears of succession, Amans does not arrive at his own self-acknowledgment through the impact of any of Genius's tales. While it is possible to read the end of *Seven Sages* as an affirmation of the revelatory capacities of story-telling when the right tale is told in the right circumstances, *Confessio* resists such a reading. Amans achieves his insight in another moment of internal mirroring within the text, literalized in the actual mirror Venus holds; in an inversion of Gower's earlier reading of the world's divisions as emanating outward from the *litel world* of man, the world and its mutability show Amans what he is.

What, then, is the purpose of the tale-telling leading up to this moment? In a poem where *divisioun* stands at the root of all conflict and ignorance, the motives for such a multitextual approach to resolving *debat* merit further attention.⁶ Confronting the problem of a person's inevitable internal strife, Gower's prologue insists that heterogeneity lies at its root, that a unity of substance would obviate these issues. "[I]f a man," he writes, "were / Mad al togedre of o matiere / Withouten interrupcioun," then "scholde no corrupcioun / Engendre upon that unite."⁷ Within humoral theory and without, difference breeds conflict and dissolution. In light of this assertion and the prologue's prevailing concerns with *divisioun*, this poem's notably heterogeneous nature

⁶ And they receive it. See, for example, R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990); Rita Copeland, "Translation as rhetorical invention: Chaucer and Gower," chap. 7 in *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Hugh White, "Gower," chap. 6 in *Nature, Sex, and Goodness in a Medieval Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁷ *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 983-87.

raises questions about the applicability of these concerns to a literary undertaking. *Confessio* comprises scores of narratives drawn from different sources and embedded within a narrative frame consisting almost completely of dialogue; it is not made of one thing, but of many. Even its typical manuscript presentation, almost certainly the product of Gower's supervision of the *Confessio's* earliest exemplars, highlights some of the ways in which it is divisible.⁸

These visual divisions, however, foreground Gower's own subdivision of his poem rather than the diversity of his source materials. As Rita Copeland has observed, Gower's poem is as much concerned with scholastic *divisio*, the organization and categorization of knowledge (or of the text in which knowledge is couched), as it is with the problematic *divisioun* lamented in the prologue and elsewhere.⁹ Crucially, the former offers a means of reordering, even reconciling, the fruits of the latter, the diversity of what is known or experienced, within a coherent structure; in other words, it is a form of compilatory framing. Visually and textually, *Confessio* registers as a compilation, an encyclopedic text with a pedagogical thrust.¹⁰ Seven of the poem's eight books, the most clearly distinguished parts of *Confessio* in its manuscript witnesses, correspond to a familiar confessional framework, structured according to the Seven Deadly Sins. The tales mobilized within this framework are usually marked with Latin summative material within the text space or in the margin, but, while this eminently visible Latin—it is generally rubricated—confers a palpable textual authority, it does little to delineate or identify the tales Gower has embedded within the

⁸ See Derek Pearsall, "The Organisation of the Latin Apparatus in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: The Scribes and their Problems," *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. by Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer and Tokyo: Yushodo Press, 2004), 99-100.

⁹ See Copeland, *Rhetoric*, 202-220.

¹⁰ Indeed, Gower is indebted to Brunetto Latini's vernacular encyclopedia, *Li Livres dou Trésor*, particularly in Book VII of *Confessio*.

poem, given that its presence is not limited to these contexts. As in Auchinleck's *Seven Sages*, the visual immersion of these tales within their textual framework reflects an understanding of their function with the narrative frame; these tales serve the narrative and pedagogical imperatives of that frame, both for Amans and, as argued by James Simpson, for the reader.¹¹ Amans may resist insight until the end of the narrative, but at the reader's level the poem's manifold parts work in concert to drive a process of ethical transformation, to not only embody but enact good accord.

The exemplary figure of Arion asserts the ethical value and artistic nature of such a process. Situated at the interstices of the poem's externally directed prologue and the opening of the confessional frame narrative in Book 1, the brief tale of Arion depicts the powerful consequences of the musician's performance in a series of resolutions of natural and social antipathies, from hind and lion to *commun* and lord.¹² Literal harmonies effect this external harmonizing of predator and prey, oppressor and oppressed; specifically, Arion inculcates charitable love and "good accord" through the moderating effects of his harp's "temprure" and his voice's "mesure."¹³ Though these words both have specific musical applications, denoting the proper tuning of an instrument and rhythmic patterning of the notes it produces, they more broadly connote the qualities of proportion and moderation that Arion's music begets in his audience.¹⁴ They also call attention to the divisions underlying music itself. Insofar as they resolve discord and impose pleasing order and

¹¹ Addressing Gower's project alongside that of Alan of Lille, Simpson asserts, "The ultimate aim of both Alan and Gower is not so much to represent the formation of the soul, but to enact that formation in the reader" (*Sciences and the Self*, 14).

¹² *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 1053-69.

¹³ *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 1065, 1055-56.

¹⁴ See *MED* "temperūre (n.)" and "mēsūre (n.)." As attested by the *MED* (sense 3a), *temprure* has humoral applications as well, being used to describe the proper balance of the four humors within the body; the heterogeneity of the humors lamented by Gower may be unavoidable in the postlapsarian world, but their balance, their *temprure*, offers a kind of achievable accord.

sequence on a diversity of notes, *temprure* and *mesure* depend on the existence of division to produce an accord that is, in Arion's case, profoundly moving and transformative.

Purposeful division, like the scholastic *divisio* that informs Gower's project, is essential to the creative act, whether it be Arion's music, lovely in its *mesure*, or God's creation of the world in Genesis, characterized by a series of divisions, from dark and light to man and woman. That said, the natural world's divisions serve as a source of anxiety for Gower over the distinctness of *divisio* and *divisioun*. He reads distinctions of night and day, dark and light, not as purposeful, prelapsarian impositions, but as manifestations of the ways in which "the grete world al overtorneth."¹⁵ Gower's decidedly negative take on these distinctions here suggests the inherent vulnerability of meaningful *divisio* to chaotic *divisioun*. The story of Arion offers a fantasy by which *divisioun* might be drawn into good accord, and it predicates this fantasy on the aesthetic and meaningful potential of a different kind of division, one deliberately wielded by artist or thinker in order to resolve *debat* and bring divided things into concert. Still, as Gower's anxieties indicate, the good order and sequence implicit in *temprure* and *mesure* depend on a skillful deployment of *divisio*. Without the agency of an Arion enlisting division in service to a framing accord, *divisio* can fall into discord.

The tension between *divisioun* and *divisio* within Gower's prologue highlights the fragility of *good accord* and its contingency upon the framing vision and control of the artist, thinker, or, indeed, compiler who creates it. In his navigation of these issues of division and accord, multiplicity and framing coherence, chaos and sequential order, Gower engages with many of the ethical concerns pervading the discourses of compilation addressed in my first chapter, particularly the

¹⁵ *Confessio*, Prologue, line 958.

problem of reading well and of guiding such reading. In his account of the disorderly *divisioun* present in man and therefore in the world, Gower's narrator says of man that while he "stant out of herre, / The remenant wol nocht acorde," or, in other words, that as long as people remain out of kilter within themselves and with the world they inhabit, what remains cannot be reconciled.¹⁶ The meaning, and, indeed, the referant, of *remanent* in these lines resists a clear reading: does Gower refer to what remains of man, of the world, of temporal existence? All of these readings make sense within the logic of the prologue and its governing metaphor, the *yimage* of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and they all work against the fantasy of accord wrought by *temprure* and *mesure*. Beyond these applications, however, this troublesome *remanent* could be read with reference to Gower's literary project and specifically the remaining text of *Confessio*.¹⁷ Read in that sense, these lines call the efficacy of his creation into doubt: as long as artists and thinkers remain *out of herre* how can their work embody, much less engender, the accord of which they themselves are incapable? Surely some remnants will elude the careful framing of the author. These lines demand that readers acknowledge the inevitable imperfections of the text and its vulnerabilities to *divisioun*. Gower's *Confessio* may hold the potential to transform its readers, as Arion's listeners were transformed, but this passage serves as warning that this cannot be taken for granted, that readers must proceed with care and participate in the process of achieving, or at least aspiring to, accord.

¹⁶ *Confessio*, Prologue, lines 962-63.

¹⁷ Indeed, this is a specific application of the word that is frequently attested in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (see "remenaunt (n.)" 1b in the *MED*).

In light of this textual anxiety over the remnants that elude accord, we can read Gower's careful organization and *divisio*, both textual and codicological, as efforts to shore up his work, and through that, perhaps, his readers, against the encroachments of discord, however unavoidable they may be. As in the Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, most *Confessio* manuscripts promote a largely holistic reading of the text; compelled to encounter their multiple narratives within contingent and hierarchical arrangements, readers of both texts may derive from the texts' guiding frameworks an appreciation of their ethical and epistemological complexities. If Nebuchadnezzar's *yimage* encapsulates Gower's disconsolate view of history and the world's decline, Daniel embodies the ideal reader in this fallen world. His parsings of Nebuchadnezzar's dream dramatize the demystifying mechanisms of interpretation, of deriving the entire truth, "the hol entente," from the seemingly indecipherable puzzles of dream vision, through the interventions (divine, in this case) of that dream's author.¹⁸ The main thrust of his explication depends, moreover, on his ability not only to understand the significance of each of the *yimage*'s parts—and, indeed, each of the dream's elements—but to see how they relate to each other.

In this chapter, I turn to a manuscript, Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, that presents both of *Seven Sages* and *Confessio*—the former in its entirety and the latter in heavily excerpted and reconfigured form—within a radically different context and, in the process, upends the careful frameworks that work, as I have argued, to guide the ways in which both of these texts are read and to demand self-conscious reading and thoughtful interpretation. This chapter probes what happens when this little world of the text misturns, what value adheres to embedded stories when

¹⁸ *Confessio*, Prologue, line 668.

the frames erected by authors, original or scribal, give way to partition and *divisioun*. The first two sections situate Balliol 354's contents and circumstances of production within the context of the manuscript traditions of both *Seven Sages* and *Confessio*, arguing that Balliol 354's adaptations of both texts represent deliberate departures from, or repurposings of, these traditions on the part of Richard Hill, the compiler of Balliol 354. Hill's interventions in the framing of *Seven Sages* and *Confessio*—and even in the texts themselves—reflect his own idiosyncratic readings of the texts and of their divisibility. Within the visually coherent but textually demarcated booklet that contains *Seven Sages* and thirteen tales extracted from *Confessio*, Hill pursues a compilatory project that promotes readings predicated on textual excerptability and reconfigurability enabled by division. In the final section I probe the ethical and aesthetic implications of Hill's project and the non-linear readings it mobilizes. Hill furnishes readers with a paratextual framework that downplays—or even, in the case of the *Confessio* tales, effaces—the textual frameworks that elsewhere condition their reception and deploy these texts within a meaningful narrative progression and, in doing so, he embraces an ethics of reading grounded in readerly choice rather than firm compilatory guidance.

Framing Divisibility and Accord in Richard Hill's "Boke of dyueris tales"

In contrast to Auchinleck, about whose original owners almost nothing is known and much has been speculated, Balliol 354 sheds an obliging light on its original owner. Indeed, said owner, Richard Hill, leaves his mark all over the book, having fashioned it in its entirety and signed his name multiple times throughout. Autobiographical notes within the manuscript indicate that Hill was born in the late fifteenth century at Hillend, his family's seat near Hitchin, Hertfordshire, and he apprenticed to John Wyngar, a London grocer who was elected Mayor in

1505.¹⁹ Hill married Wyngar's niece, and the names, birthdates, and christenings of their seven children have all been set down in Balliol 354. Some of the manuscript's contents reflect Hill's professional interests as a London-based grocer with the freedom of Antwerp and Bruges while others hint at his investment in London's civic governance and pageantry, his (probably reform-minded) religious sympathies, and even his possible involvement in supplying the book trade, not unheard of for grocers of the day.²⁰ As much of the foregoing suggests, Hill's manuscript was framed by its maker in more than one sense. Not only did he produce this manuscript by his own hand and with many significant details of his own life inscribed within its pages, but he determined the textual and visual shape that this manuscript took over the many years in which he labored over it.

As the previous chapters have suggested and as much of this section will corroborate, relatively few manuscript collections can be read within the framework of such knowable, nameable agency. As both the shaper and the owner of this volume, Hill could fashion it according his intentions, his priorities, and his tastes. Contingencies would certainly have influenced some of Hill's choices, but, as Heather Collier has demonstrated, Hill could exhibit tenacity in overcoming

¹⁹ For further information on the details of his personal and professional life Hill recorded within his manuscript, see Heather Diane Collier, "Late Fifteenth and Early Sixteenth-Century Manuscript Miscellanies: The Sources and Contexts of MS Balliol 354" (PhD thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 2000), 5-8 and also Collier, "Richard Hill: A London Compiler," *The Court and Cultural Diversity: Selected Papers from the Eighth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, The Queen's University of Belfast, 26 July – 1 August 1995*, ed. Evelyn Mullally and John Thompson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 319-329: 322. For more information on Hill's life, see also Carol Shrank, "Hill, Richard (fl. 1508-1536)," *ODNB* and William P. Hills, "Richard Hill of Hillend," *Notes and Queries* 177 (1939).

²⁰ See Collier, "Richard Hill." Collier also discusses the possibility that Hill was involved in the book trade at greater length in her dissertation (see "Sources and Contexts," 25, n. 3).

the problem of poor exemplars and obtaining the texts he sought.²¹ Furthermore, collation of Hill's manuscript with the print exemplars from which he worked reveals that he did not merely copy what came to hand when it came to hand; he selected, reordered, and even rewrote.²² Indeed, as Alexandra Gillespie has pointed out, Hill could probably have found and purchased many of the texts he copied in their contemporary print versions and bound them together in one or more *Sammelbände*.²³ That he did not do so, at least not to the exclusion of this manuscript undertaking, suggests, among other things, that he wished to exercise the kind of textual and visual intervention and control so vividly on display in Balliol 354. Hill's framing agency and interventions reveal themselves in Balliol 354's *Seven Sages* and excerpts from *Confessio*. Hill did not simply copy these texts because they were what he had to hand; he chose them and made something new of them.

Internal evidence within Balliol 354 indicates that this manuscript came together over the course of several decades—1503 is the earliest date provided in the manuscript (written in the top margin of f. 165) while the contents of the manuscript's chronicle of London extend to 1536—and

²¹ Collier points to an instance in Balliol 354 in which Hill began to copy "The Ordinance for the Assise and Weight of Bred in the Cite of London" (f. 106v) only to stop in the middle and cancel the text he had already copied ("Richard Hill," 325). She suggests that Hill was working from a defective copy of the source, Richard Arnold's *Chronicle* or *The Customs of London*, first printed in Antwerp in 1502 and printed in second edition in 1521 in Southwark ("Richard Hill," 323, 325). A different copy of the "Assise of Bread" copied slightly further on in the manuscript attests to the likelihood that Hill had not aborted the earlier text because he no longer wished to include the text; once he had obtained a wholly intact copy of the "Assise of Bread," he copied it ("Richard Hill," 325). "This example," writes Collier, "does give a sense of a real person behind the finished product" ("Richard Hill," 325). It is worth noting that the real person we glimpse in this instance resists the narrative of exemplar poverty so common to scholarly reconstruction of multitext manuscripts' origins and contents.

²² See Collier, "Richard Hill," and Alexandra Gillespie, "Balliol MS 354: Histories of the Book at the End of the Middle Ages," *Poetica* 60 (2003). For another discussion of Hill's rewriting that is not anchored in comparisons to print, see Kate Harris, "John Gower's 'Confessio Amantis': The Virtues of Bad Texts," *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study: Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983).

²³ Gillespie, "Balliol MS 354," 55.

that its manifold contents were initially copied in independent booklets that Hill only later treated as units within what he referred to as a “boke | of dyueris tales ꝓ balettes | ꝓ dyueris reconynges.”²⁴ On these grounds and on the grounds of the sheer diversity of texts copied within this manuscript—contents range from poetry to prose, from recipes and personal memoranda to carols and proverbs, from catechetical texts to the aforementioned chronicle, and they include texts in Latin and French as well as English—scholars have typically designated Balliol 354 a commonplace book.²⁵ According to the expansive definitions of the term favored by medievalists, in other words, Balliol 354 has been deemed an essentially miscellaneous and informal collection of material appealing to the interests and tastes of its single compiler. Writing densely and with relatively little decoration—flourished letters, the occasional drawn initial, small paraps, and highlighting in red chalk mark the extent of Hill’s decorating efforts—in account-sized booklets of several different paper stocks, Hill gradually assembled a series of booklets whose outer leaves were (initially) left blank. These blank outer leaves would have safeguarded the booklets’ contents when they were

²⁴ Balliol 354, f. 3av. This is how Hill refers to the book at the head of his table of contents (ff. 3ar-4av). See pages 5-8 of the online digital facsimile of the manuscript: “Balliol College, MS 354,” *Early Manuscripts at Oxford University*, Oxford University, 2000-2001, <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=balliol&manuscript=ms354>.

For further particulars on the probable dates of Balliol 354’s composition, see Collier, “Richard Hill,” 319. For further discussion of the probable circumstances of this book’s composition and compilation, see Collier, “Sources and Contexts,” particularly 15-20, and Gillespie, “Balliol MS 354.”

²⁵ Collier embraces this term herself and notes that Gisela Guddat-Figge and A.G. Rigg preceded her in this designation, with Rigg identifying Balliol 354 as an exemplary instantiation of the type (see Collier, “Richard Hill,” 319, n. 1). Gillespie acknowledges that this is the common designation, but highlights the distinction between this understanding of the commonplace book and the more specific usage of the term by scholars of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century to refer to books of learned extracts, poems, and mottoes keyed to specific, often pre-determined subjects, compiled by educated humanists during that period (“Balliol MS 354,” 48-49). “The [Balliol] manuscript,” she notes, “like a humanist volume, represents the values of a specific social *milieu* ... [b]ut the ‘codicising’ activities that lie behind it are not those that controlled the production of other books deemed to be commonplace collections” (Gillespie, “Balliol MS 354,” 49). On the one hand, some of Balliol 354’s contents have been copied wholesale from identifiable print exemplars, not assembled piecemeal by Richard Hill. On the other hand, Balliol 354, unlike these later humanist commonplace books, does not necessarily adhere to a predetermined set of concerns.

handled, particularly if they ever circulated beyond Hill's hands, and they also left Hill the option of expanding booklets, particularly at the end.²⁶ Eventually he imposed order on this collection, foliating the booklets as parts of a continuous volume and setting their contents down in a table of contents, copied on two leaves of four bifolia most likely added to the outside of the manuscript's first quire for this very purpose.²⁷

The next five quires within Balliol 354 make up the manuscript's second booklet and contain *Seven Sages*, followed by thirteen tales excerpted from Gower's *Confessio*.²⁸ These quires must have been copied initially as a part of a free-standing booklet and they still register as a distinct unit within the manuscript. Hill probably left the opening leaf of the booklet blank on both sides when he initially began copying *Seven Sages* into the booklet's first quire.²⁹ He appears to have begun filling the opening leaf with memoranda pertaining to his family in 1521—he switched pens for the first time on this page between recording the birth of his son William in 1521 and his daughter Elizabeth in 1522—and Collier has suggested that these additions coincided with the beginning of Hill's efforts to create a volume from the independent booklets he had previously copied.³⁰ Having concluded his copy of *Seven Sages* at the bottom of f. 54v, Hill began copying the first of the thirteen *Confessio* tales, that of Apollonius of Tyre, at the top of f. 55r, and copied the subsequent twelve tales with great economy of space, leaving no blank areas in between

²⁶ Gillespie points to both of these possibilities ("Balliol MS 354," 52).

²⁷ See Collier, "Sources and Contexts" and Gillespie, "Balliol MS 354" for more particulars on the manuscript's collation and the chronology of its compilation. Collier suggests that Hill might have produced this table of contents in tandem with his assembly of the manuscript, adding items to the table as he added booklets to the volume and, in some cases, as he filled up these booklets in anticipation of their inclusion within the volume ("Sources and Contexts," 17-19).

²⁸ Balliol 354, ff. 17r-96v. This foliation corresponds to pages 37-196 in the online facsimile.

²⁹ *Seven Sages* fills ff. 18r-54v of Balliol 354.

³⁰ Collier, "Sources and Contexts," 17-19.

them. Following the conclusion on f. 96r of the final excerpted tale from *Confessio*, that of Midas, Hill left the rest of the page and its verso blank. Combined with the blank leaf opening the third booklet, this expansive empty space emphasizes the boundary here between booklets.³¹

Beyond that, however, this space's enduring blankness strikes me as suggestive of the elasticity of this booklet and of Hill's project within it. There is no indication of a conclusion at the close of the Midas tale and, in fact, Hill has stopped short of copying the tale's final lines, as well as Genius's concluding moralization. This could have been a deliberate choice on his part; as it stands, the tale is still coherent, concluding with the resolution of the narrative's central problem, Midas's golden touch.³² In the meantime, however, I would note that the manner in which Hill has concluded his copy of this text left him space to add to this excerpt or to include further excerpts in additional quires, should inclination or opportunity arise. Had he made such additions, they could have been integrated seamlessly with the foregoing text. Until he bound his booklets up in this volume, he allowed himself the option of adding more tales, from *Confessio* or otherwise, to the end of this narrative-rich booklet.³³

Hill's manner of copying *Seven Sages* and *Confessio* extracts underscores this booklet's narrative richness in both qualitative and quantitative senses, highlighting the interest and plenitude of its contents. Before addressing the distinctive manner in which Hill chose to present

³¹ The third booklet begins with f. 97.

³² Hill's stopping point leaves the resolution of the narrative ambiguous; Midas's subsequently reformed conduct is excluded entirely. Hill does copy Genius's moralizations in the other twelve *Confessio* tales within this booklet, so this dropping of the moralizing conclusion does not appear to be a consistent part of his approach.

³³ In fact, Hill did include another tale from *Confessio*, *The Tale of the Three Questions*, elsewhere in the manuscript (ff. 171v-175r; these correspond to pages 364-71 in the online facsimile). In contrast to his treatment of the *Confessio* tales in the *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet, he provided no heading of any kind for the tale and, as in the tale of Midas, his conclusion of the tale excludes any moralization.

these texts, however, I wish to establish the manuscript precedents within or against which he was working and, with them, the meaningful implications of his interventions. As my analysis of presentational strategies within these manuscripts will demonstrate, the complex narrative structures of both *Seven Sages* and *Confessio* enabled a significant range of interpretive responses on the parts of the scribes who read and copied these texts. As the previous two chapters have suggested, such responses speak not only to the ways in which scribes themselves read the texts, but to the manner in which they might have sought to guide subsequent readers. The poems' frames furnish sophisticated narrative and epistemological contexts for tale-telling and in the complex interplay between tales, tellers, and audience they establish potentially complex characterizations of both tellers and audience, but by their nature they also facilitate textual partitioning and reconfiguration. Drawing on tools with which they and their collaborators could inscribe textual division—initials, paraphs, incipits, explicits—or identity—incipit and explicit headings, accompanying miniatures—scribes could emphasize the interstices of frame and tales and the interpretive material that occupies these textual boundaries. They could also segregate tales from their narrative frame, alerting readers to the multitextuality of these frame narratives and to the tellers, contents, or moralizations of the tales embedded within them. In other words, these poems compelled scribes to exercise textual judgments now manifest in the paratextual apparatus with which they presented them. Scribal deployments of textual headings and textual layout, initials and paraphs, even the miniatures and borders that they added or anticipated, determined textual divisibility and excerptability within these poems, the extent to which accord could or should be attempted.

Recalling the previous chapter's argument regarding Auchinleck's presentation of *Seven Sages* in these terms, Scribe 3 enforced a kind of textual accord within this multitextual poem. Though he imposed a form of division within the poem, having allowed space for painted initials within *Seven Sages*, he did not do so exclusively at the boundaries between the frame narrative and the embedded tales, nor, indeed, did he even consistently leave space for an initial in this context. These initials demonstrate a sensitivity to the narrative rhythms, the *mesure*, of the text and to the temporal conditions in which it could have been read: a reader might pause at one of these points, leave the book open, and find his or her place later. On the other hand, nothing in Auchinleck's presentation of *Seven Sages* shows it to be multitextual or in any way narratively distinct from the romances to either side of it. Like *Sir Degare* and *Floris and Blancheflour*, the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* registers visually as a single text to be read in a linear manner, from beginning to end.

As indicated in the opening of this chapter, the same was true in the predominant manuscript presentations of *Confessio*. Rubricated Latin and painted initials invariably precede embedded stories, but they occur in other contexts as well, so that they cannot be assumed to mark a tale. This can only be established with recourse to the Latin or, as in Auchinleck's *Seven Sages*, scrutiny of the text. Instead, these manuscripts frame the poem—literally and figuratively—in accordance with the confessional framework in which Gower incorporated these tales as *exempla*. Rich foliate borders set off these instances of textual *divisio* while accompanying rubrics assert the sequential nature of the books as “Liber Primus,” “Liber Secundus,” and so on. The two standard miniatures that appear within *Confessio* manuscripts assert an even more fundamental division within the text, with the depiction of Nebuchadnezzar and the *ymage* of his dream representing the

governing conceit of the poem's outwardly directed, historically minded prologue and the picture of Amans kneeling before his confessor, Genius, signalling the confessional framework in which the rest of the poem operates.³⁴ These programmatic features of most Gower manuscripts routinely emphasize the structural and thematic logic that bind the poem and drive its aspirations to good accord. They promote a linear reading like that encouraged within the Auchinleck, but on a larger scale, with its most prominent and navigable divisions enabling readings of smaller textual increments, but increments always thematically or structurally grounded within the larger framing concerns of the text.

The ensuing discussion of divergent textual treatments of these poems will explore the implications of scribal readings that recognize these texts' multitextuality and differently articulate their accordant excerptability and mobility. Compared to the Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, every other extant copy of the poem evinces a more concerted effort at marking boundaries between the text, specifically those between frame and embedded narratives. The Balliol *Seven Sages* is the eighth and latest extant copy of the poem, and, as such, it stands at the greatest temporal distance from the Auchinleck version, which is the earliest surviving copy. The six other manuscripts produced in the intervening two centuries—Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson poet. 175 (c. 1350); CUL, MS Dd.1.17 (s. xiv^{ex}/xvⁱⁿ); London, BL, MS Cotton Galba E.ix (s. xvⁱⁿ); London, BL, MS Arundel 140 (s. xv¹); London, BL, MS Egerton 1995 (s. xv²); and CUL, MS Ff.2.38 (s. xv^{ex}/xviⁱⁿ)³⁵—bear witness to a continuum of scribal approaches to representing the narrative

³⁴ See Pearsall, "Organisation," 100.

³⁵ For the dating of these manuscripts, see Whitelock, *Seven Sages*, xxxii-xxxviii.

complexities of *Seven Sages* on the page, many of which ultimately inform Hill's approach in Balliol 354.

Though no other manuscripts match Auchinleck's effective elisions of the boundaries between frame narrative and embedded tale, two others share Auchinleck's visual emphasis on the larger textual unit rather than on the embedded narratives. The scribes of CUL MS Ff.2.38 and Arundel 140 employed a similar system of painted initials to mark the beginnings of the embedded tales narrated within the forensic portion of *Seven Sages*.³⁶ Neither scribe offers any further identification of the tales, and, like Auchinleck Scribe 3, the scribe of CUL MS Ff.2.38 scribe uses these initials to mark significant transitions and distinctions in the frame narrative as well. The scribe has indicated his own recognition of the embedded narratives within this frame, but his presentation of the text provides no means by which specific tales could be located or read as extracts from *Seven Sages* as a whole. It is possible that Arundel 140 originally obscured its embedded narratives in the same way, but the text has sustained heavy losses, and the surviving text falls wholly within the forensic portion of the poem. As a result, the extant text exhibits a system of presentation in which initials only demarcate the tales told within the frame narrative.³⁷

³⁶ It should be noted, however, that neither manuscript preserves the beginning of every tale. Arundel 140 lacks the beginnings of the first, second, and third tales and CUL MS Ff.2.38 lacks the beginning of the fifth and eighth tales.

Furthermore, in CUL MS Ff.2.38, the beginning of the Florentine's tale goes unmarked. An initial does mark a preface to the prince's tale, in which its telling is anticipated. Assuming this was a deliberate choice on the part of the scribe, I think this points to a recognition of the greater narrative importance of this tale and its prefatory dialogue and even to the scribe's sense that this is a tale more intrinsic to the frame than those that had gone before.

³⁷ The scribe of Arundel 140 often marks these tales' endings as well, using marginal *nota*-marks to designate the tellers' concluding interpretations for six/seven of the eleven tales whose endings are extant. In the case of a seventh ending, the *nota* marks the point of transition from the teller's moralization to the narrative action of the frame, but in the other six cases the scribe consistently marks the point of transition from the action of the embedded narrative to the teller's moralization. In doing so, the scribe of Arundel 140 focuses readerly attention not so much on the tales as

A reader familiar with the text in its present form still cannot easily identify individual tales within this system, but can be sure that any initial within the poem correlates with the beginning of an embedded narrative.

Though they vary in the specificity with which they foreground the tales of *Seven Sages*, the remaining manuscripts all mark the boundaries between frame and tale with a shared deliberateness that confronts readers with the poem's multitextuality. CUL MS Dd.1.17 displays demarcation tendencies similar to those in CUL MS Ff.2.38, albeit more often with paraphs rather than initials. Here, however, the scribe took the further step of identifying the tales as such in the manuscript margins. Having labeled the first two tales with some specificity as "Fyrst Talle" and "A tale of þ^c mayster," respectively, the scribe marked each subsequent tale as "A tal(l)e."³⁸ Here, even more so than in Arundel 140 as it currently stands, the multitextuality of *Seven Sages*, its nature as a collection of tales as well as a sophisticated poem that makes strategic use of them, shines through in the scribe's presentation of the poem. This scribal approach to the poem appears to have appealed to the itemizing instincts of a later reader. Evidently finding these laconic labels insufficiently informative, a later annotator of CUL MS Dd.1.17 went through the poem

on their meaning. The scribe's *nota*-marks in *Seven Sages* indicate moments in the poem that are particularly sententious in tone and connective in structure. Within the framing narrative, these lines offer the tale-tellers' justifications for their stories. In this manuscript context, though, these lines also furnish justifications for the narrative as a whole and for its inclusion in a volume whose other contents (*Ypotis*, *Mandeville's Travels*, *Pricke of Conscience*, *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, and, in a later addition, *Melibee*) suggest a preoccupation with the inculcation of moral wisdom and knowledge.

³⁸ CUL MS Dd.1.17, f. 55va and f. 55vc.

numbering the tales and identifying their tellers by name alongside the scribe's original marginal labels.³⁹

The same itemizing imperative appears to have driven the scribal presentations of *Seven Sages* in Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix. Both manuscripts contain copies of the poem whose marked textual, dialectal, and, as I will discuss, visual similarities all argue for a common exemplar.⁴⁰ These manuscripts lavish careful attention on the opening of each tale, not only consistently marking the beginning of each tale with a rubric and an initial, but consistently marking each tale's prefatory dialogue in the same manner. The rubrics distinguish tales from prefaces, referring to the prefatory material in the first five instances as a "proces(s)" and subsequently as a "prolong [*sic*]."⁴¹ As in the annotated CUL MS Dd.1.17, these rubrics indicate

³⁹ This (sixteenth-century?) annotator numbers every tale, but the first, having already been numbered by the first scribe, and the last, and, similarly, identifies tellers for all but these two tales. As in CUL MS Ff.2.38, the exclusion of identifying information from the last tale, if deliberate, might indicate a sense that this tale has a different function or stands in a different relationship to the frame narrative than those preceding.

⁴⁰ In their respective editions of *Seven Sages of Rome* Killis Campbell and Karl Brunner both assert the textual closeness of these two manuscripts while insisting that neither was copied directly from the other; see Campbell, "Introduction," *The Seven Sages of Rome*, ed. Killis Campbell (Boston: Ginn, 1907), xi-lxxvii: xlii-xliii and Brunner, *Seven Sages*, xvii. Ralph Hanna and Katherine Zieman have suggested that both manuscripts were produced in the same copying center, most likely based in northern Yorkshire; see "The Transmission of 'The Book of Shrift'," *Journal of the Early Book Society* 13 (2010). Hanna suggests that this center was based at Ripon Minster in "Some North Yorkshire Scribes and Their Context," *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London: Routledge, 2008).

⁴¹ Notably, in both manuscripts the rubricated incipits for the poem refer to it as "þe proces(s) of þe seuyn (seuen) sages" (Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 109r; Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 25v). While "prolong" is a fairly straightforward term, denoting a textual introduction (see *MED*, "prōlog(e) (n.)"), the multivalent "proces" resonates richly with the structural and thematic concerns of *Seven Sages*. Though the term might have been used in this context simply to denote narrative (see *MED*, "prōces (n.)," 3a), the more specific contemporary uses of the term in reference to expository, exegetical, or argumentative discourse or to the content or gist of a discourse (see *MED*, "prōces (n.)," 3c, 3d, and 3h) activate multiple significant readings of the narrative function of the prefatory dialogues so denoted, emphasizing their problematic interpretive contents and their dialectic functions. The word also held a set of legal meanings at the time (see *MED*, "prōces (n.)," 4b and 4e in particular). Indeed, the CUL MS Dd.1.17 *Seven Sages* makes reference to the emperor's denial of his son's "proses of lawe" (line 533 in Whitelock, *Seven Sages*). The use of "proces" in reference to the entire poem and particularly to the dialogues preceding each tale highlights the forensic

the sequential place of each preface and tale within the narrative—eg. “Here bigyns þe thred process”⁴² and “Here bigyns þe þrid proces”⁴³—as well as each tale’s teller—eg. “Þe xij tale said maister Jesse”⁴⁴ and “Þe xiiij tale said þe wyfe.”⁴⁵ As in CUL MS Dd.1.17, this consistent system of identification renders the tales distinct within *Seven Sages* and navigable with reference to the frame narrative’s characters and chronology. To an even greater extent, Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix evince scribal attention (on the part of their exemplar’s scribe, but also on the part of their own) not only to tales’ identities as such, but to their broader narrative context. These manuscripts thereby suggest that these scribal readers, like the annotator of CUL MS Dd.1.17, were interested in how the tales work within the framing narrative. In demarcating the dialogues preceding the tales, moreover, these two scribes convey a sensitivity to the interfaces between frame narrative and embedded tale, and to the contested or enforced interpretations promoted therein.

The remaining manuscript, Egerton 1995, shares the tale-labeling tendencies of CUL MS Dd.1.17, Rawlinson poet. 175, and Cotton Galba E.ix, but the manner in which the scribe of Egerton 1995 textually designates these tales shows a marked divergence from the scribal (or annotative) practices in these other manuscripts. In addition to the painted initials marking the beginning of each tale, as well as other narrative divisions within the frame narrative, brief headings precede ten of the fifteen tales. Beginning with their own painted initials and indented within the text block, these headings appear distinct from the text—like the marginal identifications in CUL

function of tale-telling in *Seven Sages* but also the poem’s anxieties over the absence—and, perhaps, the impossibility—of formal legal recourse for the unjustly accused prince.

⁴² Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 114r.

⁴³ Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 30v.

⁴⁴ Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 127r and Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 40v.

⁴⁵ Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 128v and Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 42r.

MS Dd.1.17 and the red rubrics of Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix—but share one of its most distinctive features: the headings take the form of couplets. With the exception of the first heading, “He[re] begynnythe the fyrste tale of the Emperasse,”⁴⁶ which more closely resembles the rubrics within Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix, the headings of Egerton 1995 mimic the pattern of rhyme found within the poem itself.⁴⁷ Furthermore, these couplet headings derive their content from the tales that follow. Some of these establish the circumstances in which the tale’s narrative takes place—eg. “Here begynnythe the tale of an olde man / That hadde weddyde a yong woman,” a premise which could apply to any number of tales, but that hints pretty strongly at the tale’s genre and outcome—while others highlight the conflict driving the narrative—eg. “Here begynnythe the tale of Crassus the kynge / That louyd tresour more thenne anythyng”—or even hint at a tale’s outcome and moralization—eg. “Here begynnythe the tale of a knyght / That cyld hys grehound with unryght.”⁴⁸ The latter two examples demonstrate one of the crucial distinctions between Egerton 1995’s mode of marking these tales and those of the foregoing manuscripts. Whereas these other manuscripts’ headings focus on the tales’ relationship to the framing narrative of *Seven Sages*, to the use the poem makes of its own divisibility, Egerton 1995 emphasizes the tales’ individual contents and their distinct narrative identities. As the scribe of Egerton 1995 presents them, these tales depend in no way upon the *Seven Sages* frame narrative for their meaning

⁴⁶ Egerton 1995, f. 10r.

⁴⁷ It is possible that first tale’s unrhymed caption and the subsequent couplet captions were copied as is from an exemplar, but the absence of rhyme in the first caption and the absence of any captions at all for the tenth, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth tales together suggest a tempting alternative, namely that these rhymed captions were the work of Egerton 1995’s scribe, who began to tire of them towards the end of the poem. The distinct textual variants within the Egerton *Seven Sages* could certainly support the idea that the scribe of Egerton 1995 shaped the text he was copying in other respects.

⁴⁸ Egerton 1995, ff. 28v, 31v, and 12v.

or even their presence; they stand alone, and, as such, invite non-linear reading, reading that potentially excerpts or reconfigures them.

In spite of having the materially simplest decorative program of any of these manuscripts, with only one large drawn initial at the beginning of the poem and no painted decoration whatsoever, the Balliol *Seven Sages* integrates the bulk of these demarcating features into its own presentation of the poem and its embedded tales. Within his *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet, Hill marked textual boundaries in a consistent and visually striking fashion. On most pages within this booklet (and across much of the rest of the manuscript) text has the look of a uniform block carefully justified along its left edge. Where Hill copied non-stanzaic verse—and, less consistently, where he copied prose—he accentuated this aspect with a continuous vertical line of red chalk following this edge as it highlights the initial letter of each line.⁴⁹ In cases where this red line was added on the facing leaf, the red tint transfers, effectively creating a parallel red line demarcating the right edge of the text block. Hill uses this visual uniformity on the page to striking effect in this booklet, which is wholly given over to verse, and thus to this *mise-en-page*; with the exception of some interesting formatting choices he makes in the opening pages of *Seven Sages*, to which I will return later, Hill only disrupts the uniform red-tinted edges of the text to insert textual headings, which he indents within the text block and highlights and generally frames in the same red chalk. (See figure 5.) With this presentation Hill renders these headings so distinct that even at a glance they cannot be missed on the page. To a lesser but still significant extent, Hill's red-highlighted marginal paraphs and line-initial flourished capitals grab the eye for similar

⁴⁹ Where he copies stanzaic verse, Hill similarly employs a vertical red line, but it is not continuous up and down the length of the text block; instead, its breaks highlight the separability of the stanzas (see f. 104r, for example).

do stee on an orle of foyr conty
 my go moys go loved his wiff
 than go sids his own byff
 than sayd tge empyer anon
 go was a fild by spunt jogn
 doct mo tge tale I pray tge
 tge day I will waynt tge
 ay son from detg for to quyt
 and of his byff hym kspite
 tge than shalt tgew eslede mo
 thy wiff gatg moys gylt tgean go
 for to moys go gylt fofe
 and figgtfully hym seck d moys
 and tge empyer w art tge
 of I may know tge setg
 wgo gatg wzong t wgo gatg nigt
 after tge laws judgement shall be siggt
 go eslede his pante for tge tge
 and bynges to hym his son anon
 tgey went a non t dide all tge
 than sayd tge empyer to maximo
 waf tott mo all tge drao
 gow tge orle disseved was
 maximo tale gow an orle gow d
 byngt disseved go of his wiff

On go sayd I will not be
 in tge byngdom of gnyng
 somtms tgez was a sarty byngt
 fuchs go was t fionte in figgt
 in a myght do go d slope was
 go dromed go was in fuchs d drao
 a lady shuld hym lobs woff
 tgeat dwelld in a fhoung castel
 tge was a full gret lady
 but go woffe net in wgat contey
 go shuld foud tgeat lady byngt
 but myght go of gze gans d figgt
 of gze go shuld gans d figgt
 of gze go shuld gans knowlogynge
 go woffe woffe by his dromyng
 wgan go gad tge dromed mott
 fforty go went foud dize tgeat
 all d moundg go travayled foyr
 t go was of his purpofe ndoz v nays
 go dromed tgeat lady tgez she was
 go gze shuld fait fuchs d drao
 after a byngt lobs she shuld foudo
 but she woffe not in wgat londe
 tgeat she shuld foudo his womyng
 tgezfor she was in mytge moymng
 tge byngt his way gatg y nomis
 and to a castell is go coms

Figure 5. Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, f. 47v. By permission of Oxford, Balliol College.

reasons; the visual divisions they create signal textual divisions. The red chalk lines with which Hill visually frames and demarcates the text assert his framing reading of its manifold narratives and their potential discontinuities.

Hill's consistent presentational strategies create a visual unity between all of the texts within the booklet, but at the same time they emphasize the boundaries between texts and the identities that make it possible for the texts to be separated. Hill precedes each tale excerpted from *Confessio* with such an indented heading, functioning in these cases as an incipit. In the same manner, he frames *Seven Sages* with an incipit and explicit and precedes each tale within *Seven Sages* with a heading.⁵⁰ The placement of these tale headings accords with Hill's tendency to provide stronger textual sign-posting at the beginning than at the end of a text; they assertively signal the beginning of each tale, while flourished initials mark the resumption of the frame narrative at the conclusion of each tale along with other divisions within tales and frame. These tale headings not only draw the eye and enforce textual distinctions, but they identify the texts they frame where this identification best enables nonlinear reading.

The content of Hill's headings upholds the divisive potential of his textual layout. As the next two sections will elaborate, he combines in his headings the preoccupation with tales' tellers on display in the annotations of CUL MS Dd.1.17 and the rubrics of Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix along with the engagement with tales' contents evident in Egerton 1995. These headings consistently make it possible for the reader to orient him- or herself within the frame

⁵⁰ The incipit of *Seven Sages* on f. 18r is actually set closer to the gutter than the opening lines of the text. Hill may have been working out the optimal format in which to copy poetry at this point (especially if this were one of the earlier booklets he copied, as Collier has implied; see "Sources and Contexts," 18). Notably he uses different strategies to demarcate text in the booklet that he definitely copied earlier (ff. 144r-177v). Both are visually striking, but this new approach incorporates more textual information into the demarcations.

narrative, but also to identify a tale based on its subject matter alone. Unlike the headings of Egerton 1995, Hill's hybrid headings do not completely ignore the narrative framework afforded by *Seven Sages*; they signal Hill's own knowledge of the poem, predicated, no doubt, on his having read it through in a linear manner, and they provide a similarly knowledgeable reader with a means of navigating the text. At the same time, however, they permit the reader to bypass such knowledge, to read the embedded tales of *Seven Sages* as individual and mobile narratives. Recalling the mediating function of compilatory frameworks, Hill's headings assert a guiding intervention within this poem that simultaneously acknowledges the text's linearity and its reconfigurability.

“Quod Richard Hill”: Compilatory Agency in Balliol MS 354

Richard Hill caps off his copy of *Seven Sages* with an open-ended acknowledgment of his agency in its production. Following an interesting four-line explicit, to which I will return in the next section, he concludes with an inscription of his own name: “Quod Richard Hill.”⁵¹ It is possible to read this laconic phrase as an acknowledgment on Hill's part of his purely manual labor setting down the poem. His wording does echo that of scribal colophons to be found in fifteenth-century manuscripts—but with one crucial difference.⁵² Colophons of this sort generally supply a subject for the verb ‘quod,’ some specification of how the named agent situates him- or herself in respect to the text. Indeed, in other instances within Balliol 354 in which Hill has named himself,

⁵¹ See Balliol 354, f. 54v.

⁵² A very preliminary examination of the first volume of *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au xvi^e siècle* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1965), produced by the Benedictines of Le Bouveret, yields several typical instances of this kind of colophon in fifteenth-century English manuscripts, including “Amen quod A” (Cambridge, St John's College, MS 29, f. 119v) and “Explicit ... quod A” (Oxford, Worcester College, MS 233 [formerly Oxford, Merton College, MS 318], f. 127r) on the first page alone (*Colophons*, nos. 2 and 3).

he typically concludes with some variant of the phrase “*Explicit* quod Richard Hill” or “*Explicit* quod Hill” (emphasis mine).⁵³ As I will discuss further on, even where he confines his speech—this being the implication of the verb ‘quod’—to such concluding pronouncements, Hill’s assertions of his presence and agency within the book may extend well beyond an acknowledgment of his manual labor.⁵⁴ The absence of any circumscribing subject following *Seven Sages*, however, permits a far more ambiguous assertion of agency on Hill’s part, one in which not only the explicit but the foregoing poem may all register as his speech.⁵⁵ He effectively declares his presence as a textual mediator, as a compiler, not a copyist.

It should be clear from the foregoing section that Hill’s practices in Balliol 354 as a whole—and in *Seven Sages* in particular—give every reason for believing that he copied texts with the intention of shaping them to his tastes. That is, there is an editorial, and even authorial, character to Hill’s interventions in shaping and framing the contents of *Seven Sages* and the *Confessio* tales. The *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet bears witness to his own compilatory vision, to his readings of embedded texts and to his sense of their collectedness and divisibility.

⁵³ I cite these phrases from ff. 117r (at the conclusion of *On Graffying*), 213v (at the conclusion of *The Nutbrown Mayde*), and 250v (at the conclusion of “When netillis in wynter bere rosis rede”) and f. 205v (at the conclusion of *The exhortation to hearing mass*), respectively.

⁵⁴ See “quēthen (v.)” in the *MED*.

⁵⁵ It is worth noting that in the other instance in which Hill uses this open-ended formulation at the conclusion of a text, he does so in order to attribute it to an author: he concludes the brief Latin poem “Si sum diues agris ꝓ nobilitate quid inde?” with the inscription “Quod doctor Iohannes Ednam” (f. 208). The inscription most likely refers to John Ednam (or Edenham) (d. 1516/17), who at various times held the positions of dean of the college of secular canons at Stoke by Clare, in Suffolk; treasurer of St Paul’s; and master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Ednam also held several positions at court, serving as privy chaplain to Henry VII, almoner and confessor to Prince Arthur, and almoner to Henry VII; see Charles Henry Cooper and Thompson Cooper, “John Edenham,” in *Athenae Cantabrigienses*, vol. 1, 1500-1585 (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, Macmillan, 1858).

The text of the Hill's *Seven Sages* stands apart from that of the other extant Middle English *Seven Sages* manuscripts just as does his presentation of *Seven Sages* and its tales. Given the overarching similarities of demarcation and layout and the textual closeness of the Egerton and Balliol *Seven Sages*—in his edition of *Seven Sages*, Brunner assigns the two to a distinct subgroup, descended from a common source⁵⁶—the differences that abound between the Egerton and Balliol *Seven Sages* testify to the likelihood that at least one, if not both of these manuscripts represents a willed divergence from their putative common source. Even a brief collation of the two texts reveals small, but considerable differences between them. Thus, for example, a comparison of an early passage in both texts reveals roughly the same content filtered through two different sensibilities:

Egerton 1995

His fadyr was olde and ganne to hoore;
 His sone thoo he sette to lore,
 And lette byfore hym com sone
 The vij sagys that were yn Rome.
 To hem he thought his sone take
 For to knowe the letters blacke,
 For they were wysyst men leryde
 That were amonge alle mydylerte.
 The emperoure sayde anon

Balliol 354

The emperowr began to hore;
 He thowght to sett his sone to lore,
 He lett call and beffore hym come
 Seven þe wyseste þat were in Rome.
 He sayd to them, “Lordynges gent,
 After you I haue sent,
 For ye be þe wyseste men leryd
 That be in all medyllerde.
 My son I will betake to you

⁵⁶ See Brunner, *Seven Sages*, xviii-xxi. Produced in a similar London milieu in the fifteenth century and sharing six further texts with Balliol 354, Egerton 1995 furnishes a tempting candidate for a Balliol exemplar, but there is sound evidence that it was not. Scrutinizing the textual relationship between the Egerton and Balliol *Seven Sages*, Brunner has concluded that though these texts are closely related, neither could have been copied from the other (*Seven Sages*, xxi). Collier observes that scholars have arrived at similar conclusions regarding two other texts common to both manuscripts, citing Hilda Murray's conclusion to this effect regarding “Erthe upon Erthe” and Herbert Huscher's parallel conclusion regarding *The Siege of Rone* (see Collier, “Sources and Contexts,” 33-34). Collier further notes that the four other shared works are more textually dissimilar (“Sources and Contexts,” 35-37) and concludes that “[e]ven when it is possible to establish a link of some sort between an item in Balliol 354 and a similar item in Egerton 1995, as is possible in three out of seven cases, it is obvious that the relationship between the manuscripts is far from straightforward” (“Sources and Contexts,” 37).

To the maysterys eurychone,
“Which of you wille take my sone
To teche hym wysdome, as ye cone?”⁵⁷

To teche hym well for your prowē.
Which of you shall I hym betake
To teche hym the lettres blake?”⁵⁸

The most obvious difference between these two passages is that Balliol conveys the emperor’s wishes through his speech, while Egerton reveals them through narration of his thoughts. Beyond this discursive distinction, however, the two passages operate according to a different narrative logic. Egerton introduces the seven sages of Rome with a definite article as a preconceived unit and suggests that Diocletian intends from the beginning to recruit all of them, or as many of them as possible, to teach his son (*To hem he thought his sone take*). When he does speak, his phrasing indicates that he solicits volunteers. The corresponding passage in Balliol depicts the assemblage of the sages as distinctly less predetermined. The sages who meet with Diocletian are seven of the wisest people in Rome, but only in Diocletian’s words do they figure as *the* seven wisest men. Here, the assembly of seven potential teachers figures more as Diocletian’s choice than as a foregone conclusion, and Diocletian comes across as a canny speaker, praising the seven job candidates before he effectively sets them at odds with one another. The final lines of the passage solidify this impression; when Diocletian solicits teachers for his son from among the seven sages, he emphasizes his agency and not theirs, asking not “Who will take my son?” but “To whom should I entrust my son?” Where the Egerton passage calmly anticipates the outcome of the interview between the emperor and the sages, the Balliol passage instills tension and frames the speeches of the sages as distinctly more competitive.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Egerton *Seven Sages*, lines 19-30. This reference to the Egerton *Seven Sages* is from Brunner, *Seven Sages*.

⁵⁸ Balliol *Seven Sages*, lines 15-26. This reference to the Balliol *Seven Sages* is from Brunner, *Seven Sages*.

⁵⁹ The corresponding passage survives in relatively few copies of *Seven Sages*, since most copies are acephalous, but it is worth noting that among the next closest versions of the poem in which this passage survives, those in Rawlinson

Beyond distinctions of this nature, there are a number of instances in which the Balliol text expands portions of the narrative with content completely absent from the other copies of the Middle English *Seven Sages*.⁶⁰ To take one example, in the eleventh tale—“The Emprise tale how | Harowde lost his sight” according to Hill’s heading⁶¹—when a young Merlin informs Herod of the cause of his blindness, the Balliol *Seven Sages* uniquely contains four added lines in which Merlin offers to solve Herod’s problem—but for a price, which Herod agrees to pay.⁶² In no other Middle English version of the tale does Merlin ask for payment. It is tempting to attribute Merlin’s recognition of the lucrative potential of his insight to Hill’s mercantile sensibilities; this version of the tale commodifies knowledge and lays bare the transactional nature of its expression. Additions of this nature point to an editorial, even an authorial agency, behind the Balliol *Seven Sages*.

That many, if not all, of these textual variations and additions—along with their paratextual textual framework—originated with Richard Hill and not some putative lost exemplar is further substantiated by a consideration of the excerpts from *Confessio* in Balliol 354. As noted above, *Confessio* manuscripts exhibit an unusual stability in their preservation of text and textual apparatus and in their consistent presentations of the text’s book structure and internal dialogues and tales. This presentation might be adjusted according to the manuscript’s level of expense, but regardless of these adjustments the primary divisions visible within the manuscript consistently

poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix, the text is substantially different. While the sequence of lines more closely aligns with Balliol 354’s and Diocletian is given more, rather than less, to say, the elements of the Balliol passage that create its tension appear to be unique among the surviving versions of this passage; the introduction of the seven sages and the emperor’s final question in Rawlinson poet. 175 and Cotton Galba E.ix both more closely resemble the corresponding lines in Egerton 1995.

⁶⁰ A quick look through the footnotes in Brunner, *Seven Sages* suffices to reveal the extent of these divergences, and these warrant closer study.

⁶¹ Balliol 354, f. 42v.

⁶² Balliol *Seven Sages*, lines 2584–87 in Brunner, *Seven Sages*.

accorded with its major division into prologue and eight books.⁶³ In cases where text was excerpted from *Confessio*, as it was in Balliol 354, scribes adopted different approaches to representing textual division. At least three other manuscripts follow the practice evident in Balliol 354, specifically excerpting tales from *Confessio* and, in most cases, effacing all traces within the text of the framing narrative in which they were initially embedded.⁶⁴

The example of one of these manuscripts, London, British Library, MS Harley 7333, will suffice to demonstrate that Hill's treatment of his Gower excerpts had fifteenth-century precedent.⁶⁵ In his tale headings, the scribe employs several approaches to titling each excerpted tale, the most notable (and pervasive) of which acknowledge the confessional structure of the otherwise absent *Confessio* frame. Copying each excerpted tale continuously in two columns, the scribe precedes each one with a rubricated title, then begins each one with a sizable decorated initial, and then follows the conclusion of each one with a rubricated explicit. The title headings vary somewhat in the kind of content they feature; while the scribe heads the tale of Constance with a title that identifies its particular subject as well as the sin it addresses—"The tale of

⁶³ Noting the continuities of division among manuscripts of variable levels of expense, Pearsall notes, "It is as if a stationer or customer could choose from a 'sliding scale' of decorative elaborateness, in which the different elements of the *ordinatio* would be preserved in the hierarchy" ("Organisation," 101).

⁶⁴ Harris lists and describes eleven manuscripts containing extracts from the *Confessio*, including Balliol 354, in "Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*" (PhD thesis, University of York, 1993), 27-75. In addition to Balliol 354, she specifies three other manuscripts that also excerpted tales only: London, BL, MS Harley 7333 (s. xv^{med}); Tokyo, Toshiyuki Takamiya 32 (s. xv^{med}); and CUL MS Ee.2.15 (s. xv^{3/4}).

⁶⁵ Though I have been able to consult all of the *Seven Sages* manuscripts in person or digital facsimile, as well as a number of *Confessio* manuscripts, I regret that I have not been able to consult Takamiya 32 or CUL MS Ee.2.15. Harris notes of Takamiya 32 that running titles accompany two of the seven extracts (two of which are combined and presented as a single work); *Demetrius and Perseus* is accompanied by the title "kyng Phelip of Macedoyne" and *Nectanabus* is accompanied by the title "Alexandre" ("Ownership and Readership," 31). She makes note of no comparable demarcations in CUL MS Ee.2.15 ("Ownership and Readership," 32).

Constaunce what Felle of Enuye and of Bakbytinge”—many of the titles are less specific—“A Tale of Ouide what fell of Raueshing,” for example, could describe any number of Ovidian narratives—and most of these focus almost exclusively on the sin that the tale emblemizes, hence “A tale agein Pride” and “A tale that fill be twix covetous and Enuy.”⁶⁶ In a sense, the titles of this last type work analogously to the tale headings in the Rawlinson and Cotton Galba *Seven Sages*; they primarily orient themselves outward toward the frame narrative. In this case, the titles’ invocations of specific sins engage with the larger confessional structure in which these tales were initially embedded, even though, in this case, they can no longer be encountered within that structure.

Balliol 354’s treatment of its Gowerian excerpts maintains the visual and textual emphasis on demarcation and identification of tales evident in Harley 7333, but the contents of these identifications and of the texts themselves point to Hill’s editing intervention. Unlike the titles in Harley 7333, the Balliol Gower titles follow a uniform approach: they all refer to the particular contents of each tale and in every case they do so with reference to one or more of the tales’ primary characters.⁶⁷ Particularly in contrast to the tale headings in Harley 7333, this concerted focus is suggestive, pointing as it does to an overriding concern with the tales’ particular narratives. The Harley 7333 headings speak to the scribe’s recognition of tales’ sources—both immediate, as suggested by the invocations of the sins, and originary, as in the identification of the one tale’s

⁶⁶ Harley 7333, ff. 122r, 120r, 126r, and 127v, respectively.

⁶⁷ There are two exceptional cases within the booklet: in two instances Hill has presented two consecutive tales—consecutive not only in Balliol 354 but in *Confessio*—as single tales marked by headings that refer to the contents of the first tale, but not the second. In the first instance, Hill’s heading, “The tale of pyrotous j | ypotasis þe ffayre mayde” (f. 83v), refers to the *Marriage of Pirithous* (*Confessio*, VI, lines 485-536), but provides no indication that the *Tale of Galba and Vitellius* (*Confessio*, VI, lines 537-616) follows it. In the second case, Hill’s heading, “The tale howe pore lazar | lay at the lordes gate” (f. 84v), refers to the *Tale of Dives and Lazarus* (*Confessio*, VI, lines 975-1150), but not to the tale of *Nero’s Sensuality* (*Confessio*, VI, lines 1151-1260) that follows. It is notable that all four of these tales are closely clustered together in *Confessio*.

Ovidian provenance—and of the exemplary purposes for which they might be mobilized. Hill’s headings, on the other hand, assert the essential narrative appeal of the tales without circumscribing them within a particular authoritative or interpretive framework. In doing so, they maintain some functional continuity with the tale headings within the Balliol *Seven Sages*, which, as indicated above, uniformly address tales’ particular contents as well.

While it is possible Hill copied from one or more sources containing these texts and framing them in this fashion, it is far more likely that Hill had a hand in imposing this concerted focus. As Kate Harris has argued, Hill was almost certainly responsible for “[t]he independent programme of revision” evident in the Balliol Gower excerpts; in support of this view, Harris remarks that “the editor’s second thoughts are embedded in the text in the form of deletions and rewriting.”⁶⁸ It is likewise possible to observe instances in which Hill has refined tale headings. In the heading preceding the fourteenth tale of *Seven Sages*, for example, he appears to have begun the title with a construction, “Maxius tale how an erle ...,” common to many of the previous headings, most proximately “Jesseus tale how þe sheryff | dyed for his wif cut her thombe.”⁶⁹ The title now concludes with such a construction: “... how a knyght disseyved hym [i.e. the earl] of his wiff.” In this case, Hill appears to have thought better of summing up the tale with reference to the earl’s agency after he had copied the initial phrase. Crossing out the first “how” and writing in “of” above it, he was able to redirect the title’s focus to the knight’s agency: “Maxius tale *of* an erle how a |

⁶⁸ See Harris, “Bad Texts,” 34. In “Ownership and Readership” Harris pushes this idea further, suggesting that “[t]he confidence with which Hill intervenes as an editor ... suggests a participation in the book trade of a different order, involving creative engagement with the intellectual commodities of the trade” (“Ownership and Readership,” 46). That said, she appears to find little of value in Hill’s editing of the tales, concluding that his handling “garbs them in modern dress but ... also represents a literary degradation: his proselytizing versions accord fully with the narrative tastes of this new world” (“Ownership and Readership,” 48).

⁶⁹ Balliol 354, ff. 47v and 44v, respectively.

knyght disseyved hym of his wiff’ (emphasis mine). Evidently still finding the earl’s prominence troublesome and the syntax unwieldy, he (unusually) provided a lightly emended version of the title in his table of contents, referring to the tale as “Maxius tale of a knyght þat stale | away an erles wyff.”⁷⁰ These revisions reveal Hill’s editorial actions, specifically his efforts to find a more felicitous phrase balanced against his unwillingness to make large unsightly changes to his copy of the poem. They further suggest that, beyond considerations of streamlining syntax and visual presentation, the content of this heading mattered to Hill. Rather than following the original thrust of his heading and simply describing the tale with reference to its passive and credulous earl, he adapted the heading to encompass the tale’s central action and actor.

Pulling back from these specific interventions, what larger vision did they serve? What ideas of text and of textual intervention do they allow us to attribute to Hill? At the opening of a treatise on gardening, *Of Graffynge*, copied further on within Balliol 354, Hill delineates a philosophy of textual selection and arrangement—or, in other words, of compilation—with resonances that extend well beyond this particular treatise.⁷¹ Explicitly acknowledging his compilatory role in fashioning the treatise, Hill notes, “The maner of tretise is manyfold ȝ so comyn þat at þis tyme I wold not shewe of here most vsuall settinge but of prevy workes conteynyng the same maters and after euerything in ordre appereth.”⁷² His terms here yield some crucial insights into the ways in which Hill may have conceived of the project that yielded Balliol 354. Broadly speaking, his

⁷⁰ Balliol 354, f. 3av.

⁷¹ *Of Graffynge* occupies ff. 109r-117r in Balliol 354. In “Richard Hill,” Collier observes the conjunction of this opening statement with Hill’s use of a colophon, “Explicit quod Richard Hill,” on f. 117r at the end of the treatise (see “Richard Hill,” 325-27). Collier has suggested that Hill uses this colophon here in order to acknowledge “his personal contribution to the process of compiling the text” (“Richard Hill,” 327).

⁷² Balliol 354, f. 109r.

formulation articulates an approach to texts both common and subject to variation, characterizations that might readily extend to *Seven Sages* and the *Confessio* tales, all of which were circulating in print at the time that Hill was filling the booklets that would eventually make up Balliol 354.⁷³ Perhaps in recognition of the ease with which he might access any one of these texts in *here most usuall settinge*, particularly in print, Hill voices a preference for eschewing such settings. Instead, he performs the essential tasks of a compiler, assembling *prevy workes conteynyng the same maters* and placing *euerything in ordre*.⁷⁴ He reveals a predilection for collection, for variability and multiplicity encompassed and, crucially, *ordered* within a single set of framing concerns.

In these remarks Hill articulates a rationale for his compilatory project—his manuscript booklets enable a plasticity of text and scope for his particular creative vision that he could not achieve in amassing a print *Sammelband*—but he also reveals a textual sensibility that resonates within his handling of the *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet. *Seven Sages* is not Hill’s compilation in the sense that *Of Graffying* is—that is to say, Hill has not assembled its contents from disparate sources. Still, as the next section will argue at greater length, Hill treats it as one, both in his handling of the poem and in his handling of the booklet in which he situates it. In the concluding observation within his formulation, namely that *euerything in ordre appereth*, Hill invokes an aspect of compilatory intervention that speaks to the guiding framework in which collected texts are embedded and their placement in relation to this framework. Extended to *Seven Sages*, Hill’s

⁷³ William Caxton printed *Confessio* in 1483 (*STC* 12142). *Seven Sages* was printed first by Richard Pynson in 1493 (*STC* 21297) and then in 1506 by Wynkyn de Worde (*STC* 21298).

⁷⁴ Collier observes that Hill’s *Of Graffying* represents an instance in which he was clearly working with knowledge of a print source—Richard Arnold’s *Chronicle* or *The Customs of London*, from which many of Balliol 354’s texts were definitely copied—and yet chose not to copy from it; Hill’s *Of Graffying* is significantly longer than Arnold’s treatise and it separates and acknowledges Arnold’s sources (“Richard Hill,” 326-27).

emphasis on ordination resonates with his inclusion of tale-tellers within his headings and, indeed, with his handling of the poem as a whole. For all the demarcation of the *Seven Sages* tales, Hill has preserved their usual order and their narrative framework; it is possible to read the Balliol *Seven Sages* in the manner that Auchinleck compels, from beginning to end. Still, Hill's textual demarcations within *Seven Sages* and the content-oriented headings with which he initiates its tales and those excerpted from *Confessio* enable the perception and consumption of these tales as *prevy workes conteynyng the same maters*, as texts distinct from each other—a distinction his headings celebrate—yet subject to a certain homogeneity of type.⁷⁵

The final section of this chapter probes the implications of these aspects of the Balliol *Seven Sages*—its linearity, its separability, its internal homogeneity—to an understanding of Hill's compilatory project in this booklet and his project's negotiations of textual division, purposeful or chaotic, and of textual accord and the remnants that resist or reshape it. Hill's framing agency and interventions matter because they give deliberate shape to the booklet he produced and underscore his meaningful reconception of *Seven Sages* in relation to the excerpts that he may or not have knowingly inherited from Gower's *Confessio*. Hill's idiosyncratic reworkings of *Seven Sages* and the *Confessio* excerpts expose a valuation of reading predicated not on the sequential experience of narratives described in the previous chapter, but on a textual reconfigurability that enables non-linear reading.

⁷⁵ In his use of “prevy” here, Hill may be indicating informed or trustworthy aspects of his sources (see *MED* “privē (adj. (1)),” senses 2d and 2e), but the sense of particularity or individuality (see *MED* “privē (adj. (1)),” sense 2a) might also apply here, underscoring the distinct nature of these works.

“Many a notable tale is ther in”: Reconfigurable Reading in the *Seven Sages-Confessio* Booklet

In his *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet, Hill demonstrates a predilection for division and demarcation within two text collections that elsewhere depend on their simultaneous narrative multiplicity and unity to create meaning and inculcate an ethics of reading. Hill’s interventions threaten to devalue, destabilize, and even, in the case of the *Confessio* extracts, efface, the frame narratives that connect (or connected) these tales and so powerfully communicate their collective value. His presentation of these texts makes it possible to read tales individually and to divorce them from their contextualizing and interpretive frameworks. At the same time, however, though there is every reason to believe that Hill deliberately sought to make this kind of reading possible, Hill’s compilation ultimately enables the creation of new networks of meaning, new interpretive, if elective, frameworks in which Balliol 354’s readers might experience the tales told in this booklet. These networks of meaning suggest a valuation of reading—aesthetic and even, conceivably, ethical—predicated on textual mobility, on the potential of forging new accord out of textual *divisioun*.

Before exploring the implications of Richard Hill’s reframing of the Balliol *Seven Sages* and *Confessio* extracts, I turn first to the literary project of a fictive compiler, Chaucer’s Monk, whose ethically and aesthetically problematic compilation offers a useful framework from which to approach Hill’s *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet. When in the *Canterbury Tales* Chaucer’s Monk accedes to Harry Bailey’s importunate requests for a tale, he shows every inclination of telling not one story, but many. He will tell “a tale, or two, or three,” including not only “the lyf of Seint Edward,” which, in fact, he never narrates, but also “tragedies ... / Of whiche,” the Monk

announces, “I have an hundred in my celle.”⁷⁶ With his reference to this abundance of tragedies, the Monk signals his intention to draw on the Fall of Princes tradition exemplified in Boccaccio’s *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium*, and, in doing so, to present a collection of tales that share a common narrative downward trajectory. Indeed, the Monk frames his tale-collection with an explicit identification in his prologue of the tales’ shared genre—namely, tragedy, defined by the Monk as the fall from prosperity to misery—and, in the opening of his tale, a blanket moralization, that no one can withstand fickle Fortune or the inexorable turning of her wheel.⁷⁷ The Monk concludes his prologue with what amounts to a warning:

... I by ordre telle nat these thynges,
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,
But tellen hem som bifore and som bihynde,
As it now comth unto my remembraunce.⁷⁸

Contrary to the expectations cultivated by such texts as Boccaccio’s *De Casibus*, his narration of his assorted tragedies will follow no particular order, being conditioned more by his *remembraunce* than any organizing principles of character or period. Chaucer thereby allows himself some latitude in the arrangement of the Monk’s tragedies—a latitude upon which *Canterbury Tales* manuscripts have capitalized—and some narrative verisimilitude: one would hardly expect this outrider, so

⁷⁶ VII. 1968, 1970, 1971-72. This and all other references to *Canterbury Tales* are from Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

⁷⁷ On tragedy, see *Canterbury Tales*, VII. 1973-77. On Fortune, see *Canterbury Tales*, VII. 1992-96.

⁷⁸ *Canterbury Tales*, VII. 1985-89.

frequently away from his cloister, to have committed to memory not just the content but the arrangement of the tragedies in his *celle*.⁷⁹

More significantly, however, this prefatory apology highlights the potential absence of order—chronological or otherwise—among the Monk’s tales. They may share in a common theme, but, given the likelihood that they will be narrated *som bifore and some bihynde* as the Monk recalls them, we are led to expect a haphazard sequence of tales, perhaps more expressive of the Monk’s mental associations than of any deliberative arrangement. Framed by the dual prospects of a lack of significant order and of a multitude of tales adhering to an overdetermined structure and meaning, *The Monk’s Tale* foregrounds the issue of meaningless—and, conversely, meaningful—textual organization and calls the purpose of collecting and of reading collections into question. What is the point of reading the Monk’s promised tales when he has already disallowed any possibility of progression in their meaning or in the reader’s reception of it?

Chaucer is inverting the function of the frame in this tale; rather than a goad to confronting literary complexity, the Monk’s frame accentuates the punitively tedious and, at times, almost comically reductive nature of his collection. The arbitrary and inevitable predations of Fortune, as the Monk envisions them, appear to obviate the need for careful reading from both the Monk’s fatalistic vantage point and from that of his fallen protagonists. In the well-known case of Ugolino, for example, the Monk’s rendition envisions an unjustly imprisoned Earl of Pisa undone by Fortune. In attributing so much power to Fortune in the narrative, he elides the alarming

⁷⁹ For a discussion of the debate regarding the different placement of the “modern instances” in manuscripts, see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 313-14.

agencies and expressive ambiguities of Dante's account of Ugolino in the *Inferno*. At the same time, he acknowledges and promotes this version of the story:

Whoso wol here it in a lenger wise,
Redeth the grete poete of Ytaille
That highte Dant, for he kan al devyse
Fro point to point; nat o word wol he faille.⁸⁰

The Monk's gesture here reveals a problem of ethical reading glossed over by his narrative: in pointing readers to the fuller version of the story, he asserts a common identity in what are essentially two different narratives and thereby frames Dante's account within his own problematic rewriting.

Fortune's implacable force enacts a leveling across the Monk's tales in which agency and culpability are often, as in the case of Ugolino, rendered moot or invisible. Chaucer models the problem of this reading within the last of the Monk's narratives. In his account of Croesus, the Monk devotes considerable space to the doomed man's prophetic dream.⁸¹ Croesus's daughter, Phanye, follows Croesus's overly optimistic reading of the dream with what is almost immediately proven to be a correct interpretation, namely that Croesus will die on the gallows. What is fascinating and unsettling here is the tale's alacrity in juxtaposing interpretation with event. Phanye's warning is justified—but it is also rendered futile by its fruition three lines later. This tale leaves no space for reading or interpretation to *matter*. Indeed, recalling the Monk's formulation of Dante's literary prowess, his ability to *devyse / Fro point to point*, what the Monk fails to deliver in his tales is any sense of meaning within narrative progression. If Dante plots a careful itinerary in

⁸⁰ *Canterbury Tales*, VII. 2459–62.

⁸¹ See *Canterbury Tales*, VII. 2727–66.

presenting his account of Ugolino, the Monk collapses this narrative space. The Knight's subsequent intervention and his halting of the *Monk's Tale* at this point highlight the futility of the Monk's narrative project.

From a pilgrim's perspective, the heterogenous narratives assembled within the *Monk's Tale* combine to communicate a relentlessly homogenous moralization to which their own potential complexities appear to contribute nothing; the only difference between the Monk's narrating one of these tales and narrating all of them is the tragedy-fatigue bemoaned by the Knight. It is only at the metanarrative level of the reader that this narrative flattening takes on another dimension as an ironic indictment or mockery of a mode of reading that appreciates neither complexity, ambiguity, or context. For all that the Monk superficially derives a unified meaning from his assemblage of stories, his manner of telling them is fundamentally more isolating than synthesizing. As heralded in the insouciant parataxis of his declared intention to tell *a tale, or two, or three*, the Monk reads his falls of princes paratactically, linking one narrative to the next by way of the chain of identical moralizations he can derive from all of them—or, for that matter, from any of them, read in any combination.

Of course, this paratactic mode of collecting and reading need not be the way in which generically similar stories are organized or experienced. As discussed in the previous chapter, the framing of the Auchinleck *Seven Sages* imparts ethical value to the process of retreading familiar narrative and generic paths, and it imparts literary value to the narrative embodiment of internalized processes of reading. That said, neither the individual tales nor even the frame narrative itself communicate or register so effectively in isolation; these ethical and literary values

depend on the combined readerly experience of frame and tale, or, in other words, on reading hypotactically. Such hypotactic reading depends on an experience of frame narrative and framed tales that is both ordered and sequential, moving *fro point to point*. Indeed, it is our own hypotactic—and thus sequential—reading of the Monk’s Tale within the context of his framing declarations and the more sophisticated framing project of the *Canterbury Tales* itself that enables the Tale to function as a humorous critique. The sequential experience of these different narrative layers—frame and Tale and the tales within this Tale—opens up a reflexive space for compilatory guidance and for readerly response, visceral or evaluative or interpretive.

A similar appreciation for the literary and ethical potential of hypotactic reading manifests in Gower’s *Confessio*, particularly in the poem’s excoriations of *divisioun* and its attempts to establish, and thereby beget, *good accord*. This *accord* depends on the exemplary narratives distributed throughout the poem, but it also, crucially, depends on the framework in which Gower has written them and his imposition of a deliberate *divisio* upon his materials. In their gestures towards the confessional framework of *Confessio*, structured around the seven deadly sins, the tale titles in Harley 7333 arguably maintain a tenuous connection to Gower’s project. No such connection remains in Balliol 354. Nothing within the text of Balliol 354’s Gower excerpts or in Hill’s presentation of them links them to Gower or the *Confessio* frame at all. The tale copied in Harley 7333 under the heading “The tale of Constance what Felle of Enuye and of Bakbytinge” becomes “The tale of Tybory constantyne | ytaly his wyf] his dowghter constance.”⁸² Though Hill groups thirteen *Confessio* extracts together, their authorial and textual commonality remains

⁸² Balliol 354, f. 70v.

invisible in the manuscript. The shared identity that rises to the surface, instead, is the status of these excerpts as tales; all eleven headings begin referring to their respective texts as “The tale...”.

This transformation represents the most extreme instance of the *divisioun* with which the rest of this chapter is concerned, that of tales from their frame narratives and, in the process, from each other. Where such textual frameworks are diminished or excluded altogether, along with the interpretive guidance and readerly pedagogies inscribed within them, what, if anything, fills the vacuum? To what extent can the emphatic parataxis implicit in Hill’s reframing of these works preserve or reinscribe prompts to ethical reading? Or does this reframing signal indifference to reading well?

While the *Confessio* tales in this Balliol booklet represent clear instances of excerption, having been lifted entirely out of their Gowerian framing context, a less obvious tendency towards excerption—as readerly experience, if not compilatory process—shapes the Balliol *Seven Sages*. As established in the previous section, Hill’s methods of demarcating the tales within *Seven Sages* effectively outstrip all earlier efforts to do so in their consistent and identifiable character—the visually striking headings with which Hill marks the beginnings of tales reliably indicate the same kind of textual boundary in each case—and in the quantity of information they communicate. Not only do his tale headings track tale tellers, but they generally provide the reader with distinct information pertaining to each tale’s content.⁸³ For example, where Egerton 1995 vaguely identified a tale under the aforementioned vague rubric, “Here begynnythe the tale of an olde man

⁸³ That said, “Lentilius tale how the wiff deseyved her husbond” (f. 33r) proves an exception to the rule, leaving its contents extremely vague. On the other hand, this brief tale offered Hill relatively little distinctive material to work with. One wonders whether this unusually uninformative heading expressed a relative lack of interest or engagement on Hill’s part.

/ That weddyd a yong woman,” Balliol 354’s heading seizes upon one of the climactic and, surely, distinctive moments in the tale, dubbing it, “Malendryas tale how þe old man | lete his yonge wyff blode.”⁸⁴ Unconstrained by considerations of rhyme, Hill identifies this tale in such a way that it cannot be confused with the other May-December narratives inevitable in *Seven Sages*’ assortment of anti-feminist tales. Even the more laconic headings in Balliol 354 presumably communicated more than enough information to identify their contents. The heading “The tale þat Catoun | tolde of the pye,” for example, most likely required no further introduction in order to prompt recognition or interest.⁸⁵ Indeed, it anticipates the modern scholarly practice of assigning these tales names using single Latin words pertaining to their contents; Catoun’s tale is known as simply as *Avis*.⁸⁶ Anticipating the precise function of the headings Hill has attached to each *Confessio* tale, these *Seven Sages* headings make it possible for a reader to easily recognize where a tale begins and then to identify which tale it is.

That Hill valued and prioritized such ease of identification and the non-linear reading it enabled is confirmed by the presence within this manuscript of a table of contents, also fashioned by Hill, and by the manner in which this table represents Balliol 354’s texts. In his table, Hill keyed the contents of Balliol 354 to his foliation, rendering his manuscript easily navigable. Still, Hill did not shy away from collective titles in his table of contents. The items in the table could be quite specific, even in reference to what were clearly quite brief texts—as in “Item a good prayer of seynt Augustine ff Clxxxj” or “Item a good oyle for harnes ff Cvj”—but in many cases Hill used

⁸⁴ Balliol 354, f. 36r.

⁸⁵ Balliol 354, f. 41r.

⁸⁶ All three editors of the Middle English *Seven Sages* adopt these Latin tale names in their own presentations of the text. See Campbell, *Seven Sages*; Brunner, *Seven Sages*; and Whitelock, *Seven Sages*.

more general designations to indicate clusters of related material, as in “Item dyueris good carolles ff ij C iij” or “Dyueris short tales ʒ balettes ff C xliij.”⁸⁷ The *Confessio* tales each receive individual mention in Hill’s table of contents, rather than this kind of collective designation. Indeed, in identifying the contents of the *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet, Hill employed titles almost or entirely identical to the headings that immediately precede these texts in the manuscript. Though Hill’s itemization of these tales may have hinged in part on their relatively lengthy nature—the first two in particular are quite substantial in length—his use of the same (or similar) headings within the booklet and the table reflects Hill’s desire both to distinguish these tales and to find particular tales with ease. This desire evidently extended as well to the tales in *Seven Sages*; Hill’s first entry pertaining to the poem refers to the whole work, to “the vij sages or wyse men of Rome,” but he followed it with a sequence of headings identifying the individual tales and their opening folios.⁸⁸ (See figure 6.) Equipped with this table of contents and the visually distinct headings that mark each tale’s opening, Hill and subsequent readers could easily find and read individual tales within *Seven Sages* with minimal regard to the poem’s frame narrative, or even, in the case of later readers, without necessarily ever having read said narrative straight through.⁸⁹ In other words, Balliol 354’s presentation and apparatus enable, and even promote, paratactic, non-linear reading.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ All of these contents appear in Balliol 354 on f. 4ar. It is worth noting that Hill often does specify individual tales and ballads. A quick glance down the page from the collective entry finds “Item a litill tale kepe well the shepe of Cristes fold ff C lvj” and “The balet of fortis vt mors dilectio ff C lxx” (f. 4ar).

⁸⁸ Balliol 354, f. 3av.

⁸⁹ Indeed, these captions would have been superfluous to the needs of one reading the poem from beginning to end; the tales’ prefatory dialogues, which consistently *precede* these headings, generally offer more extensive précis of what is to come.

⁹⁰ Not only does Hill appear to promote paratactic reading at the level of tales, but his taste for parataxis appears to extend within these tales to their poetic and syntactic structures. As noted by Harris, many of Hill’s edits to Gower involve “a kind of semantic end-stopping” that results in poetic lines that are more grammatically separable, lacking

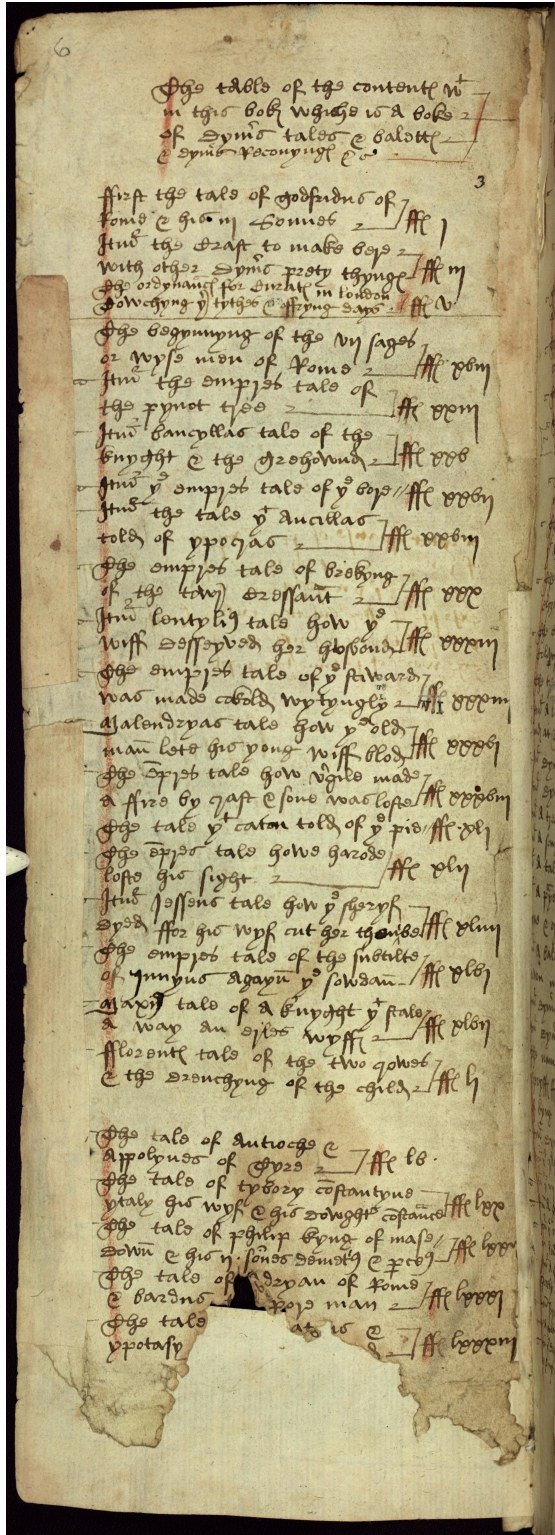


Figure 6. Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, f. 3av. By permission of Oxford, Balliol College.

“the fluent continuity of Gower’s syntax” (“Bad Texts,” 35). A cursory consideration of Hill’s adaptations within the Balliol *Seven Sages* leads me to believe that he may have been practicing a similar form of editing in that text.

Lending more force to this promotion, the table of contents also downplays the existence of any framing consideration uniting or separating these tales. It is worth noting that at least two apparently comprehensive descriptions of Balliol 354's contents, furnished by Roman Dybowski and Collier and deriving in both cases from the textual headings throughout the manuscript, completely exclude the *Seven Sages* tale headings from their lists of the manuscript's contents even though they both carefully enumerate the visually identical and structurally analogous headings attached to the *Confessio* tales that follow, noting parenthetically that these tales do all come from *Confessio*.⁹¹ Their treatment of *Seven Sages* as a complete text and the *Confessio* tales as fragments of a complete text makes tale-identification contingent on incompleteness and reflects our modern edition-driven understanding of these texts, while their insistent framing of the Gowerian tales as such speaks to the readiness with which a reader would otherwise approach these tales as wholly distinct, were they simply identified according to their headings. They create the illusion of two distinct text collections where the booklet and the table of contents clearly indicate collectedness, but only rarely and ambiguously hint at what bounds, if any, circumscribe the booklet's many collected tales.

As the engaged and careful scribal author of this booklet, Hill himself would have to have been familiar with the content of *Seven Sages* and aware of its narrative structure. The regularity of his tale demarcations suggests that he was not encountering the poem for the first time as he copied it—he had to have understood its structure, at the very least, in order to highlight its most

⁹¹ See Dybowski's "Table of the Contents of the Balliol MS. 354" in his introduction to *Songs, Carols, and Other Miscellaneous Poems from the Balliol MS 354, Richard Hill's Commonplace-book*, EETS, e.s. 101 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1908), xiii-lix: xxxiv-lix. Collier adapts her "Contents of MS Balliol 354" from that of Dybowski (see her first appendix in "Sources and Contexts," 197-213).

consistent feature so consistently from the outset—and the content of his headings indicates, in some cases, his familiarity with the tales’ outcomes as well as their premises, knowledge that could only have come from prior reading or from reading ahead. Hill sometimes lifted the content of his tale headings from the prefatory attempts of tale tellers to interest Diocletian in their tales, to seduce him with similes. Thus, for example, his heading for Bancillas’s tale, “The tale þat bancyllas tolde | of þe knyght ȝ þe grehownd” condenses and even excludes material from the foregoing text, where Bancillas warns Diocletian of the possibility that “On the shall ffall as it was / As beffell vpon a gentill knyght / That slewe his grehownd with owt right.”⁹² More often than not, however, Hill’s headings reveal his awareness of an outcome or a narrative element not hinted in tellers’ prefatory remarks, as in “Jesseus tale how þe sheryff | dyed for his wif cut her thombe,” which reveals the extreme consequences of the seemingly inconsequential act to which Jesse alludes in his earlier admonition: “That same chaunce ffall the vpon / Þat fell to the sheryff ȝ his wyff / That cutte her thombe with a knyff.”⁹³

For all that he must have read the whole poem and may well have read it before setting it down in his own booklet, Hill’s presentation of the text within both booklet and table of contents registers a valuation of the poem grounded in its identity as a repository of tales. In doing so, his valuation of the poem closely reflects his valuation of his own compilatory undertaking in Balliol 354. While the form and ordering of his texts mattered to him—recalling his sensitivity to the orderly arrangement of *workes conteynyng the same maters*—his book is first and foremost a searchable repository. The incipit and explicit with which he framed *Seven Sages* downplay (or

⁹² My transcription from Balliol 354, lines 17-19 on f. 25r (page 53 in the online facsimile).

⁹³ My transcription from Balliol 354, lines 22-24 on f. 44v (page 92 in the online facsimile).

disregard) the interrelationships, and thus the hypotactic potential, of the poem's layered narratives. Barely acknowledging the status of *Seven Sages* as a coherent narrative—much less a narrative whose meaning might depend on its constituent embedded narratives—these framing devices insist upon the poem's textual multiplicity, effectively promoting selective and excerptive reading over a sequential progress from incipit to explicit.

While Hill's incipit identifies the text with its familiar Middle English manuscript appellation, "Seuen(e) Sages (of Rome)," it does so in such a way as to suggest a narrower application for this title: "Here begynneth þe prologes of the vij sagis or | vij wise ~~men~~ masters which were named | as here followith."⁹⁴ Here the phrase *the vij sagis* functions less clearly as the title of a text. Instead, the incipit underscores a textual linkage between the sages and the significantly plural *prologes* that follow; the sages appear to be identified in connection to their respective prologues—miniature set-pieces portraying the physical appearance of the sages and establishing their credentials through narration and their own words—and not in respect to the text as a whole. The incipit's concluding segue into the text itself underscores this reading,

⁹⁴ Balliol 354, f. 18r. All but one of the manuscript copies in which the opening of *Seven Sages* is intact identify it as such in an incipit or a running page heading; CUL MS Ff.2.38 is the sole manuscript that does not follow this practice.

Hill's apposite title, "vij wise masters," and his correction within it from "men" to "masters" marks another instance of Hill's editing, and may also indicate an acknowledgement on Hill's part of the other contemporary title under which a version of this text circulated in English, namely the title employed by Wynkyn de Worde in his 1506 edition: "Here begynneth thystorye of ye [*sic*] .vii. Wyse Maysters of rome conteynyng ryghe [*sic*] fayre ȝ ryght ioyous narracions ȝ to ye [*sic*] reder ryght delectable" (*Seven Wyse Maysters*, sig. A2r; scanned version of the BL's copy accessed through EEBO). Hill definitely did not copy his text from either Pynson's or Wynkyn's edition—both printed English prose versions of the narrative and, according to Campbell, the Wynkyn de Worde edition was probably based on a different, Latin version, not the translation from Old French that circulated in all eight Middle English copies of *Seven Sages* (Campbell, *Seven Sages*, lxi)—but his incipit suggests that he could have been aware of the Wynkyn de Worde edition. Hill certainly appears to have shared Wynkyn's attitude towards the work as a repository for many tales, though, as I will discuss below, Hill exhibits far less interest in the moralizations of these tales.

particularly in light of Hill's presentation of the poem's opening. The poem opens with Diocletian's decision to provide his son with a superlative education and then introduces the seven sages, describing each one in succession. In a departure from his practice elsewhere in the poem, Hill frames each sage's name with red chalk and sets each sage's passage off from the preceding and following text by shifting indentation.⁹⁵ (See figure 7.) Given that Hill begins employing these demarcating practices on the very first page of the poem, his incipit's segue effectively prompts an association between these brief passages and the *prologes* it has already announced. Rather than gesturing towards a coherent textual identity in the poem that follows, Hill's incipit underscores the divisions within the text and facilitates the reader's discernment of the many prologues he has promised.

In the poem's explicit, Hill offers a description of the foregoing text that simultaneously acknowledges its unity and insists on its multitextuality. Having finished writing the poem itself just short of the bottom of his customary writing space on f. 54v, Hill filled the rest of that space with the following inscription, indented and bracketed with red chalk:

Thus endith of the vij. sages
of Rome which was drawen
owt of crownycles ʒ owt of
wrytyng of old men ʒ many
a notable tale is ther in
as ys beffore sayde
Quod Richard Hill

⁹⁵ Hill appears to have come up with this idea between beginning the lines on the first sage thus introduced, Bancyllas, and the second, Ancillas. A paraph and a framed marginal note, "Bancillas" (f. 18r), indicate his wish to highlight the beginning of this passage as well, but he only begins this indentation practice with Ancillas.

Here begynnethe y floges of the ny sagu. or
of wyse men that were wroght wroght namid
so geys as following

In olde days tger was a man
his name was Dyoctofan
of Rome & of all y gendry
he was lorde & Emperour
An Emperour he had first gent
that was called mylycent
A dygels tger had betwixt tger
The ffayrest y myght on ertge god
The emperours passed homid
The condud way of all man
The was he send by yys olde
wyse ffayre & oke bold
fflorentyne his name was
yobbenetys now a wondys chao
The emperour began to geys
he tgerdicht to sette his son to lye
he lott call & ~~offe~~ ~~offe~~ by come
Seven y wyse y wroght m Rome
he sayd to tger lerdynge font
after you y hand sent
ffor ys & y wyse men lerd
that he on all medyt orde
y son I will betake to you
to tger hym well for yo pdris
to geys of you shall I hym betake
to tger hym the lerdys blake
Sangillad tger had betake
The olde man with lott geys
Lott was he lerd & lorde
and with lerd tger amonge
Sp. ~~geys~~ ~~geys~~ ~~geys~~ ~~geys~~
and also of all tger ny are
he had first to tger Emperour
A ffayre word with myge gendry
he ge said take me yobbenetys
I will to hym be more & myld
I will geit tger very ffayre
all tger I can to hym saye
I will hym take on hond tger geys
that ge shall m by yys
Lerne mydys of my lerd
y lerd wroght wroght ys affe moys
Andon tger after tger
Spake a master of medyt state
Not with tger lerd no with y moys
But as it becom hym beys

at ducella

at ducella

at ducella

at ducella

Robert Lamb
Robert Lamb

Figure 7. Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, f. 18r. By permission of Oxford, Balliol College.

The opening of this explicit echoes the wording of Wynkyn de Worde's colophon to the 1506 *Seven Wyse Maysters of Rome*, and, as in Wynkyn's explicit, it evidently refers to the foregoing text in its entirety.⁹⁶ While the incipit remains ambiguous in how much of the coming text, and precisely what within it, should be designated *of the vij sagis*, this explicit appears to acknowledge a singular entity going by that name. Upon doing so, however, it pivots to a description of the foregoing text that is grounded in its multiplicity, both of sources and of contents. In fact, recalling the opening lines of Hill's treatise *On Graffying*, Hill's reference to sources, just lines before his self-identification, implies that *he* may be the compiler responsible for extracting material from these chronicles and other writings. Even if this is not the case, the explicit's reference to multiple sources and tales underscores the tales' independence from this particular poetic framework. Whether operating within the logic of the frame narrative or from a perspective closer to that of a textual historian, Hill acknowledges that the tales told within *Seven Sages* came from a variety of sources. Indeed, from the latter perspective, Hill could have been in a position to appreciate that these tales were deployed in multiple tale-collections, including, in several cases, *Confessio*.⁹⁷ In any case, Hill's concluding comment here is telling. In observing that *many a notable tale is ther in*, Hill implicitly acknowledges the poem's frame—there must be something, whether textual or

⁹⁶ In fact, this might explain the strange syntax of the Hill's first line. If he had been following the opening of Wynkyn de Worde's colophon—"Thus endeth the treatyse of the seuen sages or wyse maysters of Rome. Enprented in Flete strete in ye [*sic*] sygne of the sone. by me Wynkyn de worde" (*Seven Wyse Maysters*, sig. P2r)—or one like it, Hill might have skipped or excluded "the treatyse," an understandable exclusion in light of the care with which Hill appears to have used this term himself. Perhaps Hill, like many subsequent readers of *Seven Sages*, found himself at a loss as to the poem's genre.

⁹⁷ It is hard to know whether Hill copied his *Confessio* tales from the *Confessio* or from an intermediate collection of excerpted tales—though the two instances in which he copies adjacent tales continuously may argue for the former possibility (see note 67)—but it is worth noting that none of the *Confessio* tales he has copied duplicate the tales within *Seven Sages of Rome*.

conceptual, for these tales to be *in*—but reserves his commendation and his emphasis for the poem’s tales. Hill’s use of the word *notable* may indicate his literary judgment of these tales, as worthy of note or praise, but it also draws attention to the ease with which these tales can be noted and thus to the manner in which a reader would experience the tales in this volume.⁹⁸ Standing at a point of transition from one tale-collection to an assortment of further tales, this explicit asserts this booklet’s unifying preoccupation with tales and the possibility of choice available to both compiler and reader.

The Balliol table of contents upholds these values even as it blurs the textual borders between the framed tales of *Seven Sages* and the wholly extracted tales from *Confessio*. The table of contents marks the beginning of *Seven Sages* with a horizontal line dividing it from what has come before and a heading, “The begynnyng of the vij sages | or wyse men of Rome ff xxiiij,” that, like the incipit, draws attention to the ambiguity of what precisely is meant by *Seven Sages* and where this textual entity ends.⁹⁹ Hill followed this heading, as indicated above, with a sequence of headings identifying each of the tales within *Seven Sages*. These headings heighten the textual open-endedness of the first one by their very presence, and, more particularly, in their appearance, which is identical to that of the first heading; no distinction of spacing or script indicates that these tales constitute *Seven Sages* rather than following it, as the Gowerian tales follow it.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, the *Confessio* tale headings follow closely on the heels of the *Seven Sages* tale headings in

⁹⁸ See *MED* “nōtāble (adj.)”, particularly senses 1 and 2.

⁹⁹ Balliol 354, f. 3av.

¹⁰⁰The only noticeable difference between this first heading and those that follow is that there are visible paraps preceding every heading beginning with “Item the empres tale of the pynot tree ff xxiiij” (f. 3av). Since Hill continues to employ these paraps well beyond the headings for *Seven Sages*, and, in fact, throughout the rest of the table of contents, they do not visually suggest any kind of textual hierarchy or subdivision.

this table; only a slightly larger space between “Florentes tale of the two crowes | ʒ the drenchyng of the child ff lj” and “The tale of Antioche ʒ | Appolynes of Tyre ff lv” indicates the possibility that these tales could be regarded as more distinct than the *Sages* or *Confessio* tales are from one another, and the space suggests the possibility of a distinction without any indication of why this might be.¹⁰¹

The tale headings create a visual and textual continuity between *Seven Sages* and the Gowerian tales that follow, a continuity suggestive of a shared literary character subject to similar modes of reading. Though, as mentioned above, the boundaries of the booklet remain visually identifiable, indicated by blank spaces of a half page or more, the visual and textual distinctions between the end of *Seven Sages* and the *Confessio* excerpts are subtle; only a slightly greater number indented lines of red-highlighted text at the bottom of f. 54v (the explicit of *Seven Sages*) and the top of f. 55r (the tale heading for the the first *Confessio* tale) indicate an unusual transition. (See figure 8.) Without reference to this opening, the naming of tale-tellers in the *Seven Sages* headings remain the most noticeable distinguishing factor between the *Seven Sages* tales and the *Confessio* tales and even these names potentially counter this discontinuity with a kind of continuity, as they share the distinctly classical vintage of the characters named within the *Confessio* tale headings. Coming on the heels of *Seven Sages* and Hill’s explicit, the *Confessio* tales register as further *notable* tales, quite possibly calculated to cater to similar tastes.

In following the complete *Seven Sages* with a series of excerpted tales, Hill anticipates later methods of framing—and, for that matter, marketing—*Seven Sages* in print and the changed—or

¹⁰¹Both of these headings appear in the Balliol 354 table of contents on f. 3av.

112

for tge it was in my tge wgt
 that I wold hve to to dote hand b wgt
 by lorde on brood I p tge
 tge hilt v tge wlt for hds me
 may find v omptm by tge dlympt
 I shall wld for hds tge p ggt
 all tge knolng is for now ggt
 by gym that me dops hat b wgt
 by tge fuchs shall be tge puzment
 do tge to gym gaddes mnt
 tge dnt be knolng dffs v all
 tge for a fowls dote on tge shall fall
 tge omptm dalled tge tyncture
 and damedy v tge fuyvob
 do bynd tge fist to a staks
 and tge a frys a colt qz make
 and tge tge for tge tge
 tge dnt to my son at dnt tge
 tge was dnt wlt good wlt
 and tge tge dnt lous full
 tge made a frys dops v tge
 tge was in many a manne fgt
 a poste tge was in tge mrdward
 wlt tge was dnt to fnt garde
 tge tge tge foy d wgt
 tge tge v tge dnt tge dnt
 in wgt dnt v man dnt wnt
 tge falschode hat dnt dnt
 floynt was lade v tge tge
 wlt tge fnt tge in to v tge
 and tge tge tge lous
 in tge wlt v mpt v mouge
 tge mpt tge had for tge lous
 all tge tge wld dnt v mpt
 dnt tge fader tge was tge
 and had tge tge dnt
 food dnt tge v tge of tge
 in tge tge v man tge dnt
 v tge tge had floynt
 dnt dnt tge v tge v mnt
 and tge it may dnt so be
 Amen Amen fnt tge

tge dnt of tge v tge
 of tge wlt was dnt
 dnt of tge dnt v tge
 wlt of old mnt v man
 a notable tale is tge in
 do v tge tge

Wm. Richard Gilt

ff. 113

the tale of Antiochus
 Apollonius of Tyre

of a dnt in dnt tge
 tge wlt v dnt pnt
 of dnt dnt tge tge
 tge tge tge tge Antiochus
 of tge dnt tge
 tge fnt dnt tge v tge
 was dnt to a noble tge
 v had a dnt tge v tge
 tge fnt tge dnt to tge
 v dnt tge tge may wnt
 but only by gym mnt dnt
 tge wlt tge tge dnt
 tge tge tge made mnt
 tge tge do tge tge
 wlt dnt wlt dnt tge
 tge dnt tge wlt was
 of tge dnt dnt v tge
 but wnt a man tge wlt
 tge fnt v tge tge
 and tge tge tge tge
 wlt in tge tge dnt
 tge dnt tge of tge
 wlt dnt tge of tge
 tge fader was v tge
 tge tge tge tge tge
 tge dnt dnt tge tge
 tge tge tge tge tge
 tge was tge tge tge
 v tge dnt v tge tge
 dnt v tge tge tge
 tge fnt v tge tge
 dnt of tge tge tge
 v tge tge tge tge
 wlt in tge tge tge
 tge was no wlt v tge
 for tge of tge tge
 wlt tge cam in tge
 wlt from tge tge
 and dnt v tge tge
 and wlt tge tge was
 but tge wlt was so dnt

Figure 8. Oxford, Balliol College, MS 354, ff. 54v and 55r. By permission of Oxford, Balliol College.

at least diversified—modes of reading that these framing methods prompt and reflect. English versions of the *Seven Sages* story enjoyed a long life in print beginning with the aforementioned Pynson and Wynkyn de Worde editions and continuing into the nineteenth century, generally under some variation on the title *The Seven Wise Masters of Rome*. This long tradition merits closer and more comprehensive study in its own right, but here I will focus on a single eighteenth century edition that encompasses two significant trends in the print treatment of the *Seven Sages* story. Printed in 1754, *The History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome: Containing Seven Days Entertainment in Many Pleasant and Witty Tales, or Stories: Wherein the Treachery of Evil Counsellors is discover'd; Innocency clear'd; And, The Wisdom of Seven Wise Philosophers display'd* resembles earlier editions in most of its essentials, including the inclusion of a prefatory allegorizing moralization, but it reframes the text with five additional tales.¹⁰²

The textual frameworks afforded by this moral and added tales combine to polarizing effect, simultaneously insisting on a coherent, sequential moral understanding of the text's framing narrative and foregrounding the aesthetic pleasure afforded by its decontextualized and separable tales. The tales and their moralizations are carefully marked in the text, as is typical of printed editions of the text dating back at least as far as Wynkyn de Worde, but a preface to the whole narrative offers a moralization of the frame narrative in which the Emperor signifies the world, the Empress sin, the Prince man, and the sages the "seven liberal sciences."¹⁰³ This moralization not

¹⁰²Printed for J. Hodges on London Bridge and J. Johnston in St. Paul's Churchyard, this edition is identified as the twenty-fifth; scanned version of the BL's copy accessed through ECCO.

¹⁰³Here is the moral in its entirety:

The Emperor may signify the *World*, who having but one Son (who is *Man*) all his Care is to give him a good Education: But *Man* losing his *own Mother*, (who is *Reason*, or *Divine Grace*) and falling into the Hands of a *Step-Mother*, signifying *Sin*, who is an *Empress* of great Cunning, and One that

only offers a strict interpretation of the frame, but it asserts the text's moral rectitude and offers comforting reassurance that the reader will not be subjected to a narrative in which "the allurements of sin" can prevail. Gone are the ambiguities of Auchinleck's *Seven Sages* and the carefully ethical reading they beget.

At the same time, however, the printer of this particular edition has created a different kind of ambiguity framing the text, an ambiguity grounded in the manner in which, and ends to which, it can or should be read. This edition, in order to "give a relishing Taste of what is in the BOOK," adds a tale to the preface, an "*Instance of the cunning Contrivances, and ready Wickednesses of Lascivious Women.*"¹⁰⁴ This narrative amuse-bouche, placed immediately following the aforementioned moral, reframes *Seven Sages*, transforming it from an apparent moral allegory in which the villainous empress stands as a figure for sin into an entertainment where the narration of feminine villainy and its punishment, or evasion of punishment, can be aesthetically—or even viscerally—enjoyed. Four more stories, added at the end of the volume to "render this Book more Entertaining," furnish similarly lurid material without any attempt to integrate it directly within the main text, much less to reconcile it with the moral framework initially laid out in the preface.¹⁰⁵ As such, these added tales effectively occlude the guiding function inscribed within the

commands the *World*, She studies by all possible Means the *Confusion of Man*, and would prevail with his *Weakness*, but that a *Star* from *Heaven* (by which is meant *Goodness* from above) instructs *Man* how to avoid the *Allurements of Sin*, by not opening his *Mouth* to bid her *Welcome*. And the better to *prevent* her intended *Mischief*, he hath *Seven Wise Masters* (which are the *Seven Liberal Sciences*) to *instruct* him: So that being thus arm'd, *Man* liveth to *triumph* over *Sin*, figured in the *Death* of the *Empress* and her *Minion*, and in the *End*, to gain a rich *Crown of Glory and Happiness*, which is prepar'd for all those that in this *Life* labour to attain to *Heaven* by *Doing well*. (*Seven Wise Masters*, sig. A3v-A4r)

¹⁰⁴ *Seven Wise Masters*, sig. A4r.

¹⁰⁵ *Seven Wise Masters*, 133.

frame narrative. Aligned with the tales within the frame but placed outside of it, these sensationalizing tales supply the impression that even the tales within the frame might be read out of sequence, as similarly entertaining one-offs. The printer's deployment of these added stories as a selling point—the volume's title page proclaims, among other things, that the book is "Newly ... Enlarged"—suggests that while the long-preserved moral might have afforded a comfortable justification for reading and owning this book, the printer judged that its appeal lay chiefly in its "many Pleasant and Witty Tales."¹⁰⁶ The visibility and profusion of tales within the 1754 *Seven Wise Masters* drives a bifurcation of reading practice and motivation, wherein the *relishing Taste* afforded by textual division and mobility appears to hold the greater attraction.

While moral edification and aesthetic pleasure may have numbered among the factors driving Hill's gathering and partitioning of the *Seven Sages* and *Confessio* tales, his booklet wears its divisions with a difference. Markedly absent from any of Hill's framing remarks or apparatus are any overt moralizations of its contents. Hill does leave tale-tellers' interpretations in place within *Seven Sages* and in most of the *Confessio* tales, but his headings retain a notable neutrality. They may reenact the seductions of the tellers' prefaces, transmuting the tales into riddles—one

¹⁰⁶This is not a claim unique to this edition, but whereas earlier editions announced that they had been enlarged through the addition of pictures, here the book's enlargement is dissociated from illustration and linked by implication to the text itself. Seventeenth-century title pages repeatedly advertised a book "now newly corrected, better explained in many places, and enlarged with many pretty pictures, lively expressing the full history," whereas this edition and others containing the new textual additions share a common amendment to this advertisement: "Newly corrected and better explained and enlarged. Adorned with many pretty pictures, lively expressing the history." I find a total of three such editions, along with two more that share the prefatory addition but contain no pictures or references to them on its title page.

Perhaps reflecting this insight on the part of the printer, it would not be long before similarly augmented editions came to bear the title *Roman Stories*, with the seven wise masters relegated to a subtitle. The earliest edition in which I observe this change is the 1785 Berwick edition printed by W. Phorson. The title *Roman Stories* had been applied significantly earlier to *The Seven Wise Mistresses of Rome*, a text clearly inspired by *Seven Wise Masters*.

imagines a reader confronted with “The emprise tale howe þe | stiward was cocold wityngly” might well feel impelled to read the tale that follows, if only to know to discover how this comes to pass¹⁰⁷—but they do so without offering any kind of explicit interpretive or moralizing framework, unlike, say, many of the headings adopted in Harley 7333’s tales from *Confessio* or in Egerton 1995’s *Seven Sages*. Hill’s headings may promote the abstraction of tales from their complex narrative contexts, but they allow readers the space to formulate their own interpretations as they read. In contrast to the Monk’s audience, subjected to a reductive moral before they have even begun to hear or read his stories, a reader of this booklet could choose and read freely, without guidance ethical or otherwise.

That said, Hill himself makes use of this freedom, this textual mobility and the non-linear reading it enables, in order to create at least one juxtaposition of texts that enriches, rather than collapsing, the ethically and epistemologically freighted concerns of *Seven Sages*. Read within the context in which Hill has situated it, the first *Confessio* tale to follow *Seven Sages*, namely *Apollonius of Tyre*, echoes and amplifies many of the narrative and thematic elements prevalent within Florentine’s concluding tale and, by extension, the frame narrative of *Seven Sages*. Sharing with Florentine’s tale and *Seven Sages* a common orientation around conflicted fathers and the children who can read and resolve their conflicts, *Apollonius* enables an extension of the thematic reflections and self-reflexivity already present within *Seven Sages* as well as a more expansive narrative in which to track the implications of these issues. *Apollonius* also resonates with, and expands upon, the progressions through time and space present within Florentine’s narrative; long separations and

¹⁰⁷Balliol 354, f. 34v.

mishaps at sea abound. This shared element holds up a mirror to the mechanisms by which *Seven Sages* works; the temporal and spatial itineraries of the tales' protagonists, for all their repetitive nature, reflect the ethical necessity of the poem's linear progression through a quantity of repetitive tales and imperial vacillation. Read in this context, Apollonius furnishes an extended meditation on the issues of estrangement and acknowledgment, of falsity and truth, that supply the moral and interpretive core of *Seven Sages*.

From these textual remnants, Hill forges a new accord, albeit one he does not compel later readers to recognize. Recalling his earlier articulations of his compilatory project in *On Graffying*, this configuration exemplifies the meaningful potential of assembling *workes conteynnyng the same maters* and placing *euerything in ordre*. Through his compiling efforts, Hill's own non-linear reading—his decision to juxtapose *Seven Sages* and *Apollonius*, or even Florentine's tale and *Apollonius*—plots a new path through *dyueris tales*. Reading tales outside of their *usuall settinge*, out of context or out of order, may efface or evacuate meaning, as in the Monk's tales, but such excerpting may also create or enrich meaning. Indeed, this is one way of understanding what compilation is for. Allowing his readers the choice of reading through the booklet's texts, divided though they be, or reading non-linearly by way of this textual division, Hill allows his readers to read as he has read, like compilers.

CONCLUSION

This project argues that medieval lay readers read in the vernacular in sophisticated ways and that we may expose these readings in the manuscripts that survive them. Returning to the queries with which I began—How did medieval lay people read vernacular texts? How did they *think* about the ways in which they read? And what did it mean for them to read well in a vernacular context?—these questions find particular answers in the foregoing chapters. Scribe 3's collection of collections in Booklet 3 cultivate a readerly self-consciousness attuned to the spiritual and ethical value of the multiple modes of reading—from the memorative internalization of the Seven Deadly Sins and Commandments to the epistemologically sensitive suspense of judgment endorsed within *The Seven Sages of Rome*—encoded within the collections' material and textual frames. Hill's partitioning of stories within the *Seven Sages-Confessio* booklet encourages readers to range freely through a collection of excerptable tales while modeling how such narrative reconfiguration can create as well as efface meaning. Where Scribe 3's texts exhibit an investment in guidance, in helping readers prudently negotiate a heterovocal multitude of texts, Hill's booklet promotes readerly choice and its expansive, creative potential.

As their differences attest, the scribal productions of Scribe 3 and Hill express attitudes to reading whose particularities resist the formulation of a more general set of answers to the questions above. Yet this is a resistance worth celebrating, predicated as it is upon the availability of a plurality—rather than a dearth—of approaches to, and valuations of, reading in the vernacular. As readers in their own right—and, specifically, readers of the texts they copied—scribes like Scribe 3 and Hill were positioned to shape collections informed by, and even expressive of, their

own readings and of different ethics of reading. They are hardly unique in this respect. In drawing on both the codicological complexities and textual idiosyncracies of these collections, and particularly the confluence of these two dimensions of their work, my dissertation offers a means of approaching other such collections and other such scribes, a way of thinking about collection as process—of reading, of codicological creation, of textual fashioning and refashioning—as much as an enduring product preserving a particular configuration of texts within visual and textual guiding frameworks.

As the focal point of such inquiries, medieval text collections furnish valuable sources of potential insight into the particularities of medieval reading practices. They also provide a key to understanding the value and purposes of texts that have been dismissed by scholars as derivative or pedestrian. As my reading of the oft-overlooked *Seven Sages* attests, apparently simplistic and redundantly moralized narratives could be mobilized within a narrative framework to emblemize problematic modes of reading and to serve the frame's vision of an ethical approach to reading and reasoning towards truth. On its own, Catoun's tale may hew closely to an anti-feminist polemic common to many short tales of the era, but within the framework of *Seven Sages* the polemic itself becomes fascinatingly—and meaningfully—problematic. Similarly, Scribe 3's juxtaposition of the collected contents of *On the Seven Deadly Sins* and *The Paternoster*, neither of which has been received by scholars as unusual or interesting in its own right, highlights the decidedly uncatechetical dimensions of these apparently basic catechetical texts. If Chapters Two and Three show how ostensibly unsophisticated texts might be mobilized in service to readings of greater

complexity, Chapter Four gestures towards the possibility that Richard Hill was alert to these possibilities and engaged in creating such readings himself.

We never truly read texts in isolation—how we read what we read is conditioned by what we have already read and likewise shapes what and how we will go on to read—and that is even more clearly the case for medieval readers, whose textual encounters largely took place within the context of material and textual collections. Ultimately, this project argues for reading these collections with a heightened sensitivity to the dynamics of reading and interpretation that shaped them as much as—if not far more than—did the practical exigencies of supply and demand. These collections encode ways of reading in the interstices of their assembled texts and, in doing so, offer readers—medieval and modern—ways of penetrating the wilderness of what could be read and of navigating how it might be read meaningfully and well.

APPENDIX A: THE CONTENTS OF AUCHINLECK

TABLE 1. THE TEXTUAL CONTENTS OF AUCHINLECK (EDINBURGH, NLS, ADV. MS 19.2.1)

Booklet	Scribe	Quire number	Text by its modern name (and MS title)	Extant folios
1	1	1	<i>The Legend of Pope Gregory</i>	ff. 1r-6v, 6 ^a r
		2		
		3	<i>The King of Tars (De King of Tars)</i>	ff. 7ra-13vb
			<i>The Life of Adam and Eve</i>	E ff. 1ra-2vb, ff. 14ra-16rb
		4	<i>Seynt Mergrete (Seynt Mergrete)</i>	ff. 16rb-21ra
			<i>Seynt Katerine (Seynt Katerine)</i>	ff. 21ra-24vb
		5	<i>St. Patrick's Purgatory</i>	ff. 25ra-31vb
		6	<i>The Desputisoun bitven the Bodi and the Soule (De desputisoun bitven þe bodi 7 þe soule)</i>	ff. 31vb-35ra
			<i>The Harrowing of Hell</i>	ff. 35vb-37ra
			<i>The Clerk Who Would See the Virgin</i>	ff. 37vb-38vb
2	2	7	<i>Speculum Gy de Warewyke</i>	ff. 39ra-48ra
		8		
	1		<i>Amis and Amiloun</i>	ff. 48vb-61vb, 61 ^a ra
		9	<i>The Life of St. Mary Magdalene</i>	ff. 61 ^a vb, 62ra-65vb
		10	<i>The Nativity and Early Life of Mary (... leuedis moder)</i>	ff. 65vb-69va
3	3	11	<i>On the Seven Deadly Sins (... sinnes)</i>	ff. 70ra-72ra
			<i>The Paternoster (De pater noster vndo on englisch)</i>	ff. 72ra-72vb, 72 ^a ra
			<i>The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin</i>	ff. 72 ^a vb, 73ra-78ra
		12	<i>Sir Degare</i>	ff. 78rb-84vb, 84 ^a ra
		13	<i>The Seven Sages of Rome</i>	ff. 85ra-99vb
		14		
		15	<i>Seven Sages and Floris and Blancheflour?</i>	
		2	16	<i>Floris and Blancheflour</i>
	<i>The Sayings of the Four Philosophers</i>			f. 105ra-rb
List of Norman barons	ff. 105va-107rd			

TABLE 1, CONT.

Booklet	Scribe	Quire number	Text by its modern name (and MS title)	Extant folios						
4	1	17	<i>Guy of Warwick</i> in couplets	ff. 108ra-146vb						
		18								
		19								
		20								
		21								
		22								
	5	23	24	<i>Guy of Warwick</i> in stanzas	ff. 146vb-167rb					
						25	<i>Reinbrun</i> (<i>Reinbrun gij sone of warwike</i>)	ff. 167rb-175vb		
5	5	26	<i>Sir Beves of Hamtoun</i> (<i>Sir beues of hamtoun</i>)	ff. 176ra-201ra						
		27								
		28								
		29								
	1	30	31	<i>Of Arthur and of Merlin</i> (<i>Of arthur ʒ of merlin</i>)	ff. 201rb-256vb					
						32				
						33				
						34				
						35				
						36				
						37	<i>De Wenche þat Loved þe King</i> (<i>De wenche þat loued ...</i>)	ff. 256vb, 256 ^a ra		
									<i>A Peniworþ of Witt</i> (... <i>worþ</i> ... <i>tte</i>)	ff. 256 ^a vb, 257ra-259rb
6	1	37	<i>Lay le Freine</i> (<i>Lay le freine</i>)	ff. 261ra-262vb, 262 ^a ra						
			<i>Roland and Vernagu</i>	ff. 262 ^a vb, 263ra-267vb						

TABLE 1, CONT.

Booklet	Scribe	Quire number	Text by its modern name (and MS title)	Extant folios
7	6	38	<i>Otuel a Knight</i> (<i>Otuel a kniȝt</i>)	ff. 268ra-277vb
		39 (and others?)	<i>Otuel, Kyng Alisaunder</i> , and possibly others	
8	1	40	<i>Kyng Alisaunder</i>	L f. 1ra-vb, S A.15 ff. 1ra-2ra, 2vb, L f. 2ra-vb, ff. 278ra- 279rb
		41		
			<i>The Thrush and the Nightingale</i>	f. 279va-vb
			<i>The Sayings of St. Bernard</i>	f. 280ra
			<i>David the King</i> (<i>Dauid þe king</i>)	f. 280rb-vb
9	1	42	<i>Sir Tristrem</i>	ff. 281ra-299vb
		43		
		44		
			<i>Sir Orfeo</i>	ff. 300ra-303ra
	<i>The Four Foes of Mankind</i>	f. 303rb-vb		
10	1	45	<i>The Short Chronicle</i> (<i>Liber Regum anglie</i>)	ff. 304ra-317rb
		46	<i>Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild</i> (<i>Horn childe ȝ maiden rimnild</i>)	ff. 317va-323vb
		47		
			<i>Alphabetical Praise of Women</i>	ff. 324ra-325vb
11	1	48	<i>King Richard</i>	f. 326ra-vb, E f. 3ra- vb, S R.4 ff. 1ra-2vb, E f. 4ra-vb, f. 327ra- vb
		49-51 (and others?)	<i>King Richard</i> and possibly others	
12	2	52	<i>The Simonie</i> (<i>þe Simonie</i>)	ff. 328r-334v

APPENDIX B: THE TEXTS COPIED BY AUCHINLECK SCRIBE 3

The texts that follow offer partial editions of the six works copied by Scribe 3 in the Auchinleck manuscript. Working from my own transcriptions of these texts, I hew closely to the text as written, indicating expanded abbreviations with italics and indicating with brackets where I have made additions and with footnotes where I have made slight emendations. The placement of initials in the manuscript—uniformly blue with red pen decorations within these six texts—is indicated by the blue capitals, and I have used red to indicate the placement of highlighting in that color. I have also indicated the presence of paraphs in the left margins. In order to make these texts more accessible to their modern readers, I have capitalized proper nouns and included modern punctuation, partially adapted from that of the online facsimile edition cited above. The order of the texts follows their order in the manuscript.

1. ON THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

f.70ra // **finnes** ·¹

I **h**esu, þat for vs wold die ·
 And was boren of maiden Marie, ·
 Forziue vs, louerd, our misdede ·
 And help vs ate oure moſte nede. ·
 5 **T**o þo þat habben laifer to dwelle, ·
 Of holi writ ich wole 3ou telle, ·
 And alle þat taken þerto hede, ·
 God wille quiten al here mede. ·
 Þer bez dedli finnes feune, ·
 10 **Þ**at lettez man to come to heuene, ·
 And Ihesu Criftes heſtes ten,
Þa^r children and wimmen² and men ·
 Of twelue winter elde and more, ·
 After holi cherche lore, ·
 15 **E**uerichone þai ſſcholden knowe, ·
 But to lerne þai bez to ſlowe. ·
 And þe Pater noster · and þe Crede, ·
 Þeroffe 3e ſſcholden taken hede ·
 On Engliffch to ſegge what hit were, ·
 20 **A**ls holi cherche 3ou wolde lere; ·
 For hit is to þe foules biheue, ·
 Ech man to knowen his bileue. ·
 And alfo 3e ſſcholden habben *in* minde – ·
 Criftene men þat were kynde – ·
 25 **G**odes paſſion biter als galle, ·
Þa^r he þolede for vs alle, ·
 To ſturen out of dedli finne; ·
 Of þiſe þinges ich wille beginne ·
 Þat ich habbe here ifaid, ·
 30 **L**et hit in 3oure hertes be leid, ·
 Poure and riche, 3onge and old, ·
 And 3e ſſcholle here hit itold. ·
We ſſchulle beknowe to Ihesu Crift ·
 And to his moder Marie ·
 35 **A**nd to alle halewen, ·

And merci hem crie ·

Þat we habbez him agult, ·

In fleſſches luſte oure lif ipult. ·

f.70rb **I**n pride we habben lad oure lif ·

40 **A**nd þourgh hete³ imaked ftrif; ·

In glotonie oure lif ilad ·

And oþer men þarto irad. ·

Þourgh pride and þourgh glotonie, ·

We habben iliued in lecherie, ·

45 **B**oþe wi3 dede and wi3 þought, ·

Vnkyndeliche wi3 mi bodi wrought. ·

In nithe · and onde we habben lein ·

And wi3 oure tonges men iſlein, ·

To coueitife oure hertes 3iuen, ·

50 **I**n pride of richeſſe for to liuen. ·

In sleuthe we habben founden ofte ·

And loked þe foule bodi ſofte. ·

Þiſe bez dedli fennes feune, ·

Þat lettez man to come to heuene. ·

55 **H**erknez nou, wimmen · and men, ·

Iefu Criftes heſtes ten, ·

Þat we habben broken ofte ·

And loked þe foule bodi ful ſofte. ·

Nowt worſſchiped God af we ſſcholde, ·

60 **I**n couertife⁴ lad oure lif on molde, ·

Euele iloked oure haliday,

Litel don þat þerto lay. ·

In mo Godes leued þan in on. ·

In tales, · in fantomes mani on, ·

65 **O**n þe bok falſli sworn ·

And ofte falſ witneſſe boren; ·

Þeſliche we habben⁵ þing iſtole ·

And oþer mannes þeſte ihole, ·

Boþe in ernest and in game ·

¹ The rest of the original title has been cropped from the top of the upper margin.

² Here the manuscript reads “wimmen.”

³ Here the manuscript reads “here.”

⁴ Here the manuscript reads “couertife.”

⁵ The word “habben” has been written at the end of the line; an insertion mark indicates its place between “we” and “þing.”

70 In ydel nemned Godes name; ·
 Houre emcristene we habben iflawe ·
 And wiz oure tounge al todrawe; ·
 We habben in hoker and scorning ·
 Oure emcristene driuen to heying.⁶ ·

75 Þefe bez Godes heftes ten. ·
 Herknez, men and wimmen, ·
 f.70va And ze ffschulle here on Engliffch, iwis, ·
 What zoure Pater noster · is: ·
 Oure fader in heuene-riche, ·

80 Þi name be bleffed euere iliche. ·
 In þi kyngdom, louerd, ·
 Þat milde art and ftille,
 Boþe in heuene · and in erthe
 Fulfeld be þi wille. ·

85 Ihesu, ful of grace, ·
 Louerd, þat al do mai,⁷
 Oure eueriches daies bred ·
 Graunte vs, louerd, today, ·
 And forziue vs, louerd, ·

90 Þat we habbez agult,
 Als we forziueþ oþer men, ·
 In oure grace þa^t bez pult. ·
 In þe fendes fending, louerd. ·
 Ne let vs neuere dwelle. ·

95 Deliuere vs þourgh þi grace ·
 Fram þe pine of helle. A·M·E·N ·
 On Engliffch þis is ·
 Zoure Pater · noster, · iwis; ·
 Leftnez nou and taked hede, ·

100 And ich wille tellen zou zour Crede. ·
 We ffschulle bileue on Ihesu Crift, ·
 Fader alweldinde ·
 Sfcheppere of heuene and of erthe ·
 And of alle þinge, ·

105 And in Ihesu Crift, fader and fone, ·
 And oure louerd icoren. ·
 Ikenned of þe holi goft ·

And of a maiden iboren; ·
 Vnder Pounce Pilate ·

110 He þolede pines ftronge, ·
 Vpon þe rode he was idon ·
 And þolede dez wiz wronge; ·
 His bodi was iburied
 Amang þo Jues felle;

115 Als his swete wille was,
 f.70vb He lizte into helle. ·
 Þe foules þat were hife ·
 He browghte hem out of sorewe, ·
 And ros fram deþe to liue

120 Vpon þe þridde morewe.
 To heuene he fteyghz, þer he fit. ·
 Þa^t al þe werld ffschal dizte.
 Vpon his fader rizt hond, ·
 Oure louerd ful of mizte. ·

125 At þe dai of jugement ·
 He ffschal comen to deme ·
 Boþe þe quike and þe dede: ·
 Ech man take zeme. ·
 We ffschulle bileue on þe holi goft,

130 And holi churche bileue, ·
 And on alle halewen, ·
 Þa^t no þing mai greue, ·
 In remiffioun of oure finnes, ·
 Þa^t we ffschulle vprife ·

135 And come bifore Ihesu Crift, ·
 Þa^t ffschal be rizt justice. ·
 We ffschulle come biforen him ·
 Alle on domes dai. ·
 And after habbe þe lif, ·

140 Þa^t ffschal lasten ai. ·
 Gode men, fo God me spede, ·
 Þis is on Engliffch zoure Crede,
 And a while zif ze wulle dwelle, ·
 Þe Aue Marie ich wille zou telle: ·

145 Heil be þou, Marie, ·
 Leuedi ful of grace. ·
 God is wiz þe leuedi, ·
 In heuene þou haueft a place. ·

⁶ Here the manuscript reads “heying.”

⁷ Lines 85-86 have been written as a single line within the manuscript.

Ibleffed mote þou be, ·
 150 Leuedi, of alle wimmen, ·
 And þe frut of þi wombe, ·
 Ibleffed be hit. Amen. ·
 Amen is to feggen ·
 f.71ra “So mot hit be.”
 155 Þis [is] Pater · noster · and Crede ·
 And Marie Aue. ·
 Nou⁸ hadde 3e herd 3oure bileue. ·
 Þat is maked to foule biheue; ·
 Herknez a while, 3e þat mowen, ·
 160 And herknez Godes passiou, ·
 Þat he þolede for mankynde: ·
 For Godes loue, holde3 hit in minde. ·
 In holi writ hit is told, ·
 Þo Judas hadde Ihesu fold, ·
 165 Þe Jeues token alle o red, ·
 Þat swete Ihesu ffolde be ded, ·
 And comen armed wiz lanterne lizt ·
 And nomen Ihesu al be nizt ·
 And ladden him forht amang alle ·
 170 Into Cayfases halle, ·
 And þere he was wel euel idizt, ·
 Til on þe morewe al þat nizt. ·
 On morewe, þo þat þe dai sprong, ·
 Þei deden Ihesu Crift wrong, ·
 175 Bounden hife e3ghen and buffated him fore ·
 And 3it he þolede mochele more: ·
 Jwes, ful of pride and hete, ·
 In his vifage gonne spete. ·
 Ihesu, for þat foule despit, ·
 180 Þat hente þi bodi þat was so whit, ·
 3iue vs grace þis dai to ende ·
 In his seruife þe fend to ffolchende. ·
 ¶ In holi writ hit is ifounde, ·
 Þere Ihesu stod vpon þe grounde, ·
 185 Þo hit cam to prime of dai, ·
 Jwes dedin him gret derai: ·
 Bifore þe maiftres of þe lawe ·
 As a þef he was idrawe, ·

Here and þere he was ipult, ·
 190 And swete Ihesu, he ne hadde no gult, ·
 But al þe sorewe þat he was inne, ·
 f.71rb Al togidere was for oure finne. ·
 ¶ Ihesu, for þat foule derai ·
 Þat þou hentest at prime of dai, ·
 195 3iue vs grace of finne arife ·
 And enden in his swete seruife. ·
 ¶ Þous telle3 þife wife men of lore, ·
 Þat Ihesu þolede for vs more: ·
 Ihesu þolede for to binde ·
 200 At vndren hife honden him bihinde ·
 To a piler and beten faste, ·
 While þe fcourges wolden laste. ·
 Ihesu for þat mochele forewe ·
 Þa^r he tholedde oure foules to borewe, ·
 205 Brengre vs out of dedli finne, ·
 And alle þat liggen ibounden þerinne. ·
 ¶ In holi writ hit telle3 þous: ·
 Wel more þolede swete Ihesus; ·
 Ihesu þolede at middai, ·
 210 And nowt ones faide nai. ·
 Jwes nailen him on þe rode ·
 For oure gult and for oure gode, ·
 And wel mi[l]dliche he let ·
 Þurle hif hondes and hif fet. ·
 215 His heued was crowned – þat was fene – ·
 Wiz ffolcharpe thornes and wiz kene, ·
 Þat euerich þorn hadde a wonde; ·
 Þe stremes ronnen down to grounde. ·
 Ihesu, for þo harde stoundes ·
 220 Þat þou þoledest and bitter wondes, ·
 For3iue vs þat we hadde3 agult, ·
 And lete vs neuere in helle be pult. ·
 ¶ Als telle3 þe profetye, ·
 A litel er he ffolchde dye, ·
 225 Swete Ihesu, þo hit was non, ·
 To his fader he bad a bon, ·
 He ffolchde for3iuen hem þe gult,
 Þat him hadden on rode ipult.
 A bitter drinkke him was izoue

⁸ Here the manuscript reads “þ ou.”

f.71va **V**pon þe rode for oure loue, ·
Pourgh counseil of þe Jwes alle, ·
Aifil and swot menged wizalle; ·
Ihesu, þat was woned fore, ·
Tafted þerof and nolde nammore. ·
235 **A**t þat time, wizouten boft, ·
Swete Ihesu zald þe goft. ·
¶ His swete bodi þat was so whit, ·
3it þai deden hit more despit: ·
þe Jwes token hem to red, ·
240 **þ**o swete Ihesu Crift was ded, ·
At his herte þai maden a wounde ·
Wiz a spere ffcharpe igrounde; ·
In at his side þe spere rof, ·
Blod and water out þer drof; ·
245 **M**ofte no þing leue wizinne, ·
And al togidere for oure finne. ·
Ihesu, þat hanged vpon þe rode ·
And deide þeron for oure gode, ·
Nowt for his gult, but for oure finne, ·
250 **S**ende pees amang mankenne. ·
¶ Þise clerkes þat counne of lettrure ·
Finden in holi scripture ·
þa^t Ihesu, þat al þe werld had wrought, ·
Heue and erthe made of nowt, ·
255 **þ**o euenfongtime was icome, ·
Doun of þe rode he was inome ·
Wiz Ioseph and wiz oþer mo ·
Of hife desiples þat were þo. ·
þo oure swete leuedi seghz ·
260 **H**is bodi hangen on rode heghz, ·
His honden þurled and his fet, ·
Bittere teres and blodi he let. ·
For þe bittere teres and smerte, ·
þat comen fram his moder herte, ·
265 **B**ifeche we him, zif his wille be, ·
f.71vb **H**e ziue vs grace helle to fle ·
And in heuene to habben a place, ·
þat we moten sen his face. ·
¶ In holi writ hit is irad, ·
270 **I**hesu, þat on þe rode was sprad, ·

þo he hadde þoled his wo ·
And þe dai was al ago, ·
In holi writ hit is ifeid, ·
In sepulcre he was ileid, ·
275 **A**nd als we here þise clerkes telle, ·
He lizte adoun and herewede helle, ·
And tok out Adam and Eue ·
And alle þo þat him were leue. ·
þo he hadde browt hem out of sorewe, ·
280 **H**e ros fram deþe þe þridde morewe, ·
To heuene he steighz þourgh his miȝt, ·
þat al þe werld ffchal deme and dizt, ·
Eueremore þere to wone, ·
Sohtfaft God, fader and fone. ·
285 **¶** Bifeche we þanne God in heuene, ·
For hife blessed names feune,
þat made boþe mone and fterre,
Sende pees þere is werre, ·
And ziue Criftenemen grace, ·
290 **I**nto þe holi lond to pace
And fle Saraxins þat bez so riue, ·
And lete be Criftenemen on liue, ·
And faue þe pes of holi cherche, ·
And ziue vs grace so to werche, ·
295 **þ**at we mowen gode acountes make ·
Of þat God vs hauez itake, ·
At þe dom whan he ffchal ftonden ·
Wiz blodi fides, fet and honden, ·
And parten al þe werld atwo, ·
300 **þ**at on to wele, þat oþer to wo. ·
For, als we here clerkes telle, ·
f.72ra **þ**at o part, iwis, ffchal to helle,
And, forfothe, zif þai lie, ·
þanne liez þe profetie; ·
305 **A**nd þat oþer part ffchal wende ·
Into bliffe þat hauez non ende. ·
To þat bliffe bringe vs he
þat is · and was · and euer ffchal be. ·
· **AmeN** ·

2. THE PATERNOSTER

f.72ra · **Þe pater nofter vndo on engliffch**

Alle þat euer gon and riden ·

Þat willez Godes merci abiden, ·

Lewede men þat ne bez no clerkes, ·

Þo þat leuen on Godes werkes, ·

5 **L**eftez, and ze ffchollen here, iwis, ·

What zoure Pater · *noster* · is. ·

¶ **E**ch man hereof take hede. ·

Godiliche while Ihesu zede ·

In erthe wiz his apoftles twelue, ·

10 **I**hesu Crist made hit *him* felue, ·

And als hit tellez in þe bok, ·

Hife apoftles he hit bitok, ·

For þai ffcholden hebben hit in minde ·

And techen hit to al mankynde. ·

15 ¶ **O**f alle þe clerkes vnder fonne, ·

Þer nis non of hem þat conne ·

A beter oreifoun, iwis, ·

Þanne þe Pater · *noster* · is. ·

Þous feggez þife clerkes wife ·

20 **Þ**at mochel connen of clergife. ·

¶ **S**euen oreifouns þer bez inne ·

Þat helpez men out of dedli finne ·

And zif ze willez a while dwelle, ·

Al on Engliffch ich wille zou telle ·

25 **Þ**e skile of hem alle feune, ·

Wiz help of Godes mizt of heuene. ·

f.72rb **P**ater · *noster*, · qui es in celis, ·¹

Þat is to segge þis: ·

“Oure fader in heuene-riche, ·

30 **Þ**i name be bleffed euere iliche.” ·

Þis is þe ferfte oreifoun of feune. ·

We clepen oure fader þe kyng of heuene, ·

And zif he houre fader is, ·

Þanne be we hife children, iwis, ·

35 **A**nd Ihesu is ful of alle godneffe, ·

Wiz *him* nis no wikkedneffe. ·

Þanne mote we, fo mote ich þe, ·

3if we willen hife children be, ·

Fonden to liuen in god lif, ·

40 **W**izouten contek, wizouten ftrif, ·

Wizouten pride and enuye, ·

Coueitife and glotonye. ·

Þanne mowe [we] feggen, iwis, ·

Þat Ihesu Crist oure fader is. ·

45 ¶² **3**if we wile be clene iffchriue ·

And in clene lif liue, ·

Þanne mowe we whan we bez of age ·

Claymen oure fader heritage, ·

Þe bliffe þat laftez wizouten ende.³ ·

50 **S**aunctificetur nomen tuum, ·

Þat is to segge al and fum:

“Ihesu, God in *trinite*, ·

Þi name ibleffed mot hit be.” ·

Þat is to vnderftonde þis: ·

55 **W**han we bleffen his name, iwis, ·

We bifechen swete Ihesus ·

Þat his name mote be wiz ous ·

And we ben clene iffchriue ·

And out of finne þenken to liue. ·

60 **H**is name nel nowt wiz ous be, ·

To holden hit we ne habbez no pofte, ·

But zif we liuen in god lif, ·

f.72va **I**n loue and charite wizouten ftrif; ·

Þanne wille his name wiz ous dwelle ·

65 **A**nd sauuen vs fram þe fend of helle. ·

Ihesu þat boughte lewede and clerkes ·

Sfchilde vs fram þe fendes werkes. ·

Adueniat regnum tuum, · iwis, ·

Þat is to segge þis: ·

70 **“**Louerd, to þi kyneriche ·

Lat ous comen al iliche.” ·

¹ A cross has been drawn beside this line in the outer margin (not in Scribe 3's ink).

² Scribe 3's guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

³ Based on this poem's rhyme scheme, a line may have been omitted preceding or following this one.

Here we bifechen þe heuene-kyng ·
 Þat we moten comen to his wonyng⁴ ·
 And we be in gode liue inome; ·
 75 To his wonyng mowe we nowt come, ·
 Þanne is oure bidding for nowt, ·
 But zif we ben in god lif kaut; ·
 Þerfore ech man amende *him* here, ·
 Þat we moten wenden al ifere ·
 80 Into bliffē þat ne haue3 *non* ende; ·
 To þilke bliffē God vs fende.
 Þer noman come3, maiden ne wif, ·
 But he be nomen in god lif. ·
 P iat voluntas tua ·
 85 Sicut in celo ȝ in terra, ·
 Þat is to fegge þous:
 “We bidde3 to swete Ihesus,
 Þat his wille be ido ·
 In heuene and in erthe alfo.” ·
 90 Þat is to vnderftonden þous: ·
 Þat we ſſcholden feruen swete Ihesus
 To his paie and to his wille, ·
 Oure bidding to fulfillle. ·
 And zif we ne ferue *him* nowt arizt, ·
 95 Ihesu Crift, bi houre mi3t, ·
 Þanne do we in þat bidding
 Nowt bote ſcornen oure heuene-kyng. ·
 Þerfore ech man, zif he mai,
 Fonde boþe ni3t and dai ·
 f.72vb To ferue Ihesu Crift to wille, ·
 Oure bifeching to fulfillle; ·
 For, forſothe, Godef wille · is,
 Þat we ne ſſcholden nowt don amis. ·
 P anem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie ·
 105 Is to fegge, fo mot ich þe: ·
 “Oure bred ordeined for eche dai, ·
 Louerd, ziuet vs today.” ·
 Þat is to fegge þous: ·
 We bifechen swete Ihesus ·
 110 Þat he graunte vs alle þinges two: ·
 Soules fode and lif alfo. ·

⁴ Here the manuscript reads “womyng.”

Nammore mai þe foule liue ·
 But þe bodi hit mete ziue, ·
 Nammore þan þe [bodi] lif mai ·
 115 Wi3outen erthliche mete a dai. ·
 Þan is þis þe foule fode ·
 Almesdede and bedes gode, ·
 Loue and charite, wi3outen ſtrif, ·
 Þis mai holde þe foules lif, ·
 120 Als þe lif liue3 wi3 bred,
 For hunger þat hit nis nowt [ded].⁵ ·
 Þ e fixte bede is þis: ·
 Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, ·
 Sicut ȝ nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.⁶ ·
 Þis is þe fixte bidding, ·
 125 Þat we bidden oure heuene-kyng: ·
 “Forziue vs þat we habbe3 miſdo ·
 Als we forziuen oþer also ·
 Þat vs hebben here agult ·
 Þat in oure mercy · ben ipult.” ·
 130 ¶ 3if ani man þat is in londe ·
 Liue3 in nyht · oþer in onde ·
 Þourgh counſeil of þe fendes red, ·
 He bidde3 a3enes his owene hed ·
 And make3 *him* heiere in erthe ·
 135 Þan Ihesu Crift þat more is werthe. ·
 f.72^ara Þat w[tear in page]
 And w[tear in page]
 Þat w[tear in page]
 Þous [tear in page]
 140 Þerfore[tear in page]
 To liue[tear in page]
 And liu[tear in page]
 God gra[tear in page]
 Þ e fe[tear in page]
 145 Et [tear: ne nos inducas in tentationem]

⁵ A blot in the manuscript obscures this line-final word.

⁶ The poem’s rhyme scheme treats the Latin as a single line (and it has been lineated as such here).

⁷ Scribe 3’s guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

Set liber[tear: a nos a malo]
Here w[tear in page]
Sfchilde[tear in page]
And del[tear in page]
150 Fram þ[tear in page]
Þat is [tear in page]
To cache[tear in page]
For to br[tear in page]
155 Euere m[tear in page]
¶ Þise be3 [tear in page]
Þe befte[tear in page]
Wi3 help[tear in page]
To helpe[tear in page]
160 ¶ Ech ma[tear in page]

Who fo [tear in page]
3if þ[tear in page]
Þanne [tear in page]
Þerfor[tear in page]
165 3onge [tear in page]
3if [tear in page]
Ani [tear in page]
And [tear in page]
Ni3t [tear in page]
170 Þan [tear in page]
Þer [tear in page]
At þ[tear in page]
Þer [tear in page]// [end of f.72^ara]

3. THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

f.72^avb [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]e
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]at wo
 [tear in page]e
 [tear in page]o mai
 [tear in page] dai
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]e
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]gge
 [tear in page]e
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page] es þre
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]de
 [tear in page]nde
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]de
 [tear in page]n ende
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]wt
 [tear in page]wrowt
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]te
 [tear in page]
 [tear in page]

f.73ra ¶ Who fo bere3 palm, þe tokne is þis,
 Ðat in clene lif he is;
 Ðat is to vnderfonde

Hit is tokning of loue,
 5 Ðat God him haue3 wraththe for3oue,
 Ðat bere3 palm on honde.
 ¶ Þis is þe þridde þing
 Ðat palm bitokne3, wizouten leſing:
 Whan man had palm inome,
 10 Ðat man haue3 in his ri3t
 Þourgh þe vertu of Godes mi3t
 Hife enemis ouercome.
 ¶ Þe ferthe þing is to wite,
 Afe Godes clerkes finde3 iwrite,
 15 No leſing hit ne is:
 Þe man þat bere3 palm aboute,
 Alle hife enemis him ffchulle doute,
 Godes baner hit is.
 ¶ Ðat bitokne3, wizouten nay,
 20 Þe palm on palmes Sonenday,
 Ðat man is al aboue;
 3if a man is clene ifchriue
 And halt penaunce him is iziue,
 Ðan haue3 he Godes loue.
 25 ¶ 3if þi palm is ri3t inome,
 Ðan haueft þou ouercome
 Þe fend þourgh fleſſches fi3t;
 Ðanne bez þin enemis ouercome,
 And here mi3t hem is binome,
 30 And þou bere palm ari3t.
 ¶ Forfothe, we here clerkes telle
 Alle þe fendes þat bez in helle
 Bez in werre and wrake,
 Whan a Crifteneman in londe
 35 Bere3 trewliche palm on honde
 And haue3 hife finnes forſake.
 ¶ And Iheſu and his moder Marie
 f.73rb And alle here swete compaignie
 Ðat bez in heuene ifet
 40 Bez glade whan we bez idi3t
 For to beren oure palm ari3t,
 And habben oure fennes bet.
 ¶ For palm of alle flour is pris

Of rofe rode, of flour de lis,
 45 Þat to oure leuedi was fent;
 Þat oure leuedi was clene of lif,
 Clene maiden and clene wif,
 Bitokneʒ verraiment.
 ¶ And clene virgine ʒhe was also,
 50 Þat is heiere þan þe two:
 Wif oþer maidenhede.
 For womman mai lefe virginite
 Wiʒ wille and þout, fo mot i^c þe,
 Wiʒouten fleſſchlich dede.
 55 ¶ But maidenhod mai non bi lorn
 Of no womman þat is iborn,
 Wiʒouten mannes mone,
 Ne no maiden wiʒ childe gon,
 Ne neuer ʒite ne dede non,
 60 Saue oure leuedi al one.
 ¶ ʒe was maiden and virgine
 And bar a child wiʒouten pine,
 Þat men clepeʒ Iheſus,
 Þat in erthe man bicam
 65 And bataille vndernam
 Aʒen þe fend for ous.
 ¶ Þiſe bez þe toknes, wiʒouten leſing,
 Whi Iheſu, heuene-king,
 Sente here palm into erthe;
 70 For þere nas neuere womman bore,
 Neiþer after ne bifore,
 Þat was fo mochel wurthe.
 ¶ Oure swete leuedi milde and fre –
 Ihered and heghed mote ʒhe be –
 f.73va ʒhe makeʒ oure bliſſes newe;
 ʒhe tok þe palm þat God here fente,
 And into here chaumbre anon ʒhe wente
 And dede on cloþes newe.
 ¶ Oure swete leuedi, maiden briʒt,
 80 Knelede adoun anonriʒt
 And feide here bileue,
 And bad a bone to God in heuene,
 For hiſe dereworhte names ſeuene
 Þat no fend ffcholde hire greue.
 85 ¶ Wel owghte þanne al mankenne,

Þat habben ilein in dedli fenne
 Boþe dai and nyʒt,
 Of þe fend to ben adrad,
 Whan ʒhe swich a bone bad
 90 Þat bar þe king of miʒt.
 ¶ Þo ʒhe hadde bede þat bede,
 ʒhe wente anon in þe ftede
 To sibbe and fremde ek,
 And made hem come togedere anon,
 95 And to hem alle made here mon,
 And doelfulliche ʒhe ſpek.
 ¶ ʒhe faide, “Iheſu, mi swete ſone,
 Nelle no lengere ich here wone,
 Swich fonde he haueʒ me fent
 100 Bi an aungel þat cam fram heuene
 Wiʒ a ful milde ſteuene,
 And aʒen is went.
 ¶ And ich bifeche ʒou *par* charite
 Alle þat hider bez comen to me,
 105 Boþe heghe and lowe,
 ʒif ich habbe don vnriʒt,
 Let me amenden be mi miʒt
 And be mi geltes aknowe.”
 f.73vb ¶ Alle þat ſtouden here bi
 110 Of þo wordes were fori,
 For ʒhe was fo hende,
 And feide, “Leuedi, what is þi þowt?
 Haue merci on vs and leue vs nowt.
 Whi wiltou fram vs wende?
 115 ¶ In muchel forewe and muchel wo
 Sſchulle we liue whan þou art go,
 Boþe dai and niʒt.
 Ibleſſed be þou, swete leuedi,
 To vs þou haueft be ful redi
 120 To ſeruen vs day and niʒt.”
 ¶ Þous þai ſaiden alle wiʒ tonge,
 Þai wepen fore and honden wronge;
 In herte hem was ful wo,
 Þe poure þinges þat ſeke weren,
 125 Þo þai herden wiʒ here heren,
 Þat ʒhe wolde go.
 ¶ Þanne faide oure swete leuedi

To alle þo þat ftoden hire bi,
 Þat wopen and wrongen,
 130 “Ne wepeþ nowt. Holde þou stille.
 Ich mot do mi fones wille.
 I ne mai hit nowt wizftonde.”
 ¶ Hire herte armede oure leuedi brizt
 And gan to wepe anonrizt
 135 For pite þat 3he fegh3.
 Þo made þai alle reuliche mone
 And bigonne to wepe ech one,
 Alle þat ftoden hire negh3.
 ¶ Þo kam fone feint Jon
 140 And fegh3 oure leuedi make hire mon
 And feide, “Mi leuedi dere,
 Tel me, leuedi milde of mod,
 f.74ra Who haueþ feid þe ouwt bote god?
 Whi makeft þou swuche chere?”
 145 Marie anwerede wiz milde fteuene,
 “Johan, me kam a sonde fram heuene
 Bi an aungel brizt;
 Mi fone, þat bowghte man fo dere,
 Nelle no lengere þat ich be here –
 150 Ibleffed be his mizt.
 ¶ Þerfore ich wepe and mai nowt blinne;
 For we ffchullen parten atwinne,
 Min herte armeþ fore;
 And wel fawe ich wolde fee
 155 Mi fone – ibleffed mote he be –
 I ne faugh3 him nowt wel 3ore.”
 ¶ Þo Johan herde hou hit was,
 He fizte fore and faide, “Allas,
 Hou goþ þis worldes winne!
 160 Leuedi, what ffchal be mi red?
 Certes, nou ich wolde bi ded,
 Nou we ffchulle parten atwinne.
 ¶ Mi louerd, þat deide on rode tre,
 Into heuene is went fram me,
 165 Þat i ne mai wiz him fpeke,
 And þou wult, leuedi, wende me fro?
 Allas, allas, what me is wo,
 Whi nelle myn herte breke?”
 ¶ “Johan,” quad oure leuedi þo,

170 “Þerfore be þou no þing wo,
 To heuene 3if ich am nome.
 Ich wille bifeche mi fone dere.
 Þat þou ne ffchalt nowt longe dwellen here;
 To me þou ffchalt come.”
 175 ¶ Þous oure leuedi and faint Johan
 Either to oþer maden here mon,
 f.74rb Als 3he ftonden ifere.
 Hou aþer vpon oþer wep,
 Who fo tok þerof kep,
 180 Pite hit was to here.
 ¶ Alle þe apoftles weren went to preche,
 In diuerfe stedes þe poeple to teche,
 In bok als 3he moun here;
 And alle hem cam toknyng
 185 Fram swete Ihesu, heuene-kyng
 Þat þere þai comen ifere.
 ¶ Als God hit wolde for þe nones,
 Alle þai comen þider at ones,
 Afe manie als þere were,
 190 Sauue feint Thomas of Ynde –
 Wo was him, he was bihinde –
 He ne was nowt þere.
 ¶ Anon afe þe apoftles feghen,
 Seint Johan wep wiz his eghen,
 195 Þai weren amaid alle.
 “Johan,” quad Peter, “leue fere,
 Whi makft þous foule chere,
 What is þe bifalle?”
 ¶ “Peter,” quad Johan, “iwis,
 200 Formeft þou ffchalt telle me þis:
 Hou be 3he hider ilad?
 Hou was 3oure counfeil inome,
 Þat 3he bez alle hider icome,
 Þat were fo wide ifprad?”
 205 ¶ Peter and hife felawes echon
 Answereden feint Johan,
 Afe manie afe þere were;
 Þai feiden þai hadde wonder alle
 Of þe kas þat was bifalle,
 210 Hou þei comen þere.
 f.74va “Nou wolle ich telle,” quad feint Johan,

“Wharfore ich make mi mon
 And whi ich wepe fo fore:
 An aungel cam fram swete Ihesus
 215 And to oure leuedi feide þous:
 3he ne fſchal ben here nammore.
 ¶ For no þing þat mai bitide
 3he ne mot here no lengere abide
 Ne libbe but daies þre.
 220 Swich tiding hauez þe aungel brout
 Fram him þat al þe werld had wrout –
 Ibleffed mote he be.
 ¶ Þerfore 3he bez hider ifent,
 To ben at here enterement,
 225 Mi leuedi milde and fre.
 Nou mowe 3he counforte me *in* þis kare,
 Whan mi leuedi is fram me fare;
 Welcome mote 3e be.”
 ¶ Þo wifte þai Ihesu fente hem þider,
 230 And wenten forht alle togider
 To oure leuedi, and feiden þous:
 “We bez at þi comaundement,
 Hider to þe ous hauez ifent
 Þi fone swete Ihesus.”
 235 ¶ Þanne feide maiden Marie
 To Peter and to his *compaignie*,
 “Welcome mote 3e be.
 Ibleffed wurht he dai and nizt,
 Mi fone Ihesu ful of mi3t,
 240 Þat fente 3hou hider to me.
 ¶ And ich bifeche 3hou for his loue,
 Mi fone þat fit vs alle aboute
 Þat hider 3ou had ifent,
 Ne letez no Jwes ful of enuye
 f.74vb Do mi bodi no vilainye,
 Whan þe foule is went.”
 ¶ Þo oure leuedi þous hadde ifeid,
 In a bed 3he was ileid
 And held hire þere ful stille;
 250 Alle þe apoftles feten hire bi
 And lokeden oure swete leuedi,
 To abide Godes wille.
 ¶ Alle fillen aſlepe echone,

Sauue oure swete leuedi alone.
 255 No ſlep wi3 here þer nas;
 Drede of dez was in here þout,
 Þerfore 3he ne ſlep nowt,
 And no wonder hit nas.
 ¶ Of dez 3he moſte ben adrad;
 260 God þat on þe rode was ſprad,
 Als telle3 þe *profetie*,
 A3ens dez þat was to come,
 Er he was wi3 Jues nome,
 He was afered to die.
 265 ¶ Holi writ telle3 þous,
 Þat oure louerd, swete Ihesus,
 Þat is fo milde of mod,
 For al his power and his mi3t
 Of dez he was fo fore afri3t,
 270 Þat he swatte blod.
 ¶ Þerfore Ihesu, ful of mi3t,
 Sente adoun an aungel bri3t
 To his moder þer 3e lai;
 For he¹ wifte wel þourgh his mi3t,
 275 Þat 3he wolde ben afri3t
 A3en here dez dai.
 ¶ Þe aungle li3t down bi here bed
 And ſaide, “Marie, be nowt adred
 f.75ra Of deht, þat is negh3,
 280 For nowt þat þou fſchalt here fe.
 Þous fente þi fone word bi me,
 In heuene þat ſit on hegh3.”
 ¶ Quad oure leuedi milde and fre,
 “Ibleffed mote mi fone be,
 285 Þat me þat fonde fente.”
 And þe aungel þat was fo bri3t
 Tok his leue anon arizt
 And into heuene wente.
 ¶ A3hens oure leuedi fſcholde bi ded,
 290 Al þe erthe quok for dred
 And after cam a þonder;
 But oure leuedi dradde nowt,
 For tiding þat þe aungel had browt

¹ Here the manuscript reads “3he.”

Of al þat grete wonder.
 295 ¶ Sone after þat anon
 Þe apostles woken euerichon;
 Þanne feide oure leuedi bri3t,
 “Mi time come3 þat I ffchal fare
 Into bliffē out of þis kare.
 300 Wake3 a litel whi3t.
 ¶ Bi toknes þat ich hadde iherd and fein,
 On flepe while 3he habben lein,
 Ich wot mi de3 is negh3.
 Iheried and heighed mot he worthe,
 305 Swich tokne mi fone sente nouþe
 Out of heuene on hegh.”
 ¶ Boþe ni3t and eke dai
 Oure leuedi in here chaumbre lai,
 To bide here fones wille;
 310 And þe apostles were ful hende,
 Nolde neuer on fram here wende,
 But helden hem þere al stille.
 f.75rb ¶ Ihesu, þat þolede de3 on tre,
 For to maken vs alle fre,
 315 Vpon gode Fridai,
 A compaignie wi3 him he nam,
 And to his swete moder he cam
 In chaumbre þer 3e lai.
 ¶ Þo swete Ihesu ful of mi3te
 320 Was comen wi3 his angles bri3te.
 Þanne feide oure leuedi fre,
 “Sone, blessed be þat ffounde,
 Þat ich 3ede wi3 þe ibounde,
 And welcome mote þou be.”
 325 ¶ “Moder,” quad swet Ihesu þo,
 “Wi3 me to heuene þou moft go
 Wi3 al þis compaignie,
 And wone þere wi3outen ende
 In þe bliffē þat haue3 non ende,
 330 But forme3t þou moft die.”
 ¶ Þanne feide oure leuedi Marie,
 “Leue fone, let me nowt die,
 Ich beseche þe.
 Leue fone, for mi loue
 335 Let mi de3 be for3oue.

3if hit mai fo be.”
 ¶ “Leue moder,” quad swete Ihesus,
 “For sothe, hit mot nede be þous,
 Þi de3 maift þou nowt fle,
 340 For al þat liue3, al ffchal die,
 Oþer elles, moder, ich mošte lie,
 And þat ne mai nowt be.”
 ¶ “Sone,” quad oure leuedi þo,
 “Afe þou wult, ich wille also;
 345 But ich bifeche þe,
 Let me neuere be fo afri3t,
 f.75va Of þe fend to hadde no fi3t,
 For þe loue of me.”
 ¶ “Moder,” quad Ihesu, “ne doute þe nowt,
 350 Hit ne cam neuer in mi þout,
 Þat þou ffcholdest habben a fi3t
 Of no fend, 3if ich mai,
 But joie and murthe þat lefte3 ay,
 Boþe dai and ny3t.”
 355 ¶ Oure swete leuedi was glad þerfore
 And blessed þe time, þat he was bore
 And in hire bodi li3te;
 And mildeliche, wi3outen pine,
 Anon 3e deide, þat swete virgine,
 360 Þat bar þe king of mi3t.
 ¶ And as hit telle3 in þe bok,
 Þe soule out of here bodi he tok,
 Ihesu ful of mi3te,
 And wi3 murthe of aungeles fteuene
 365 Hit was ibore to þe bliffē of heuene,
 Þere alle murthes be di3te.
 ¶ Þo þe soule of maide Marie
 Wi3 al þat faire compaignie
 To heuene was iwent,
 370 Alle þe apostles þat þere were
 Leiden þe bodi vpon a bere
 Þourgh Godes comaundement.
 ¶ Þanne feide Ihesu anon,
 “Peter, tak þine felawes echon,
 375 And nime3 vp þe bere,
 And 3e ffchulle finde a redi paht3
 Into þe val of Jofephtaht3,

And buriez mi moder þere.
 ¶ And a palm þat ich here sente
 f.75vb **B**i an aungel þat to here wente,
 To warn here 3e fſcholde die,
 Johan, þat palm þou fſchalt bere,
 Mi moderes bodi for to were
 Fram Jwes ful of enuye.”
 385 ¶ **P**o Iheſu þous hadde ifeid,
 Þe bodi þat on þe bere was leid,
 Þere hit lai al ftille;
 Iheſu 3af hit his bleſſing
 And ftegh3 to heuene þer he was king,
 390 **A**s hit was his wille.
 ¶ **W**el oughte we þat ben in erthe,
 Were þai neuere fo litel wurthe,
 For to worfſchipen louerd oure,
 Whan swete Iheſu ful of mi3t
 395 **C**am into erthe fram heuene-li3t,
 His moder for to onoure.
 ¶ **A**nd whofo nelle nowt be war,
 To honoure þe moder þat him bar,
 And his fader at nede,
 400 **S**wete Iheſu, heuene-kyng,
 Haue3 graunted hem luther ending
 And fſchort lif to mede.
 ¶ **A**nd whofo honurez be his mi3t
 Hif fader and his moder arizt,
 405 **A**ls he fſcholde do,
 He fſchal habbe ate bygning
 Long lif and god endyng
 And heuene-bliſſe þerto.
 ¶ **P**o Iheſu was to heuene went
 410 **A**nd þe foule þider was ſent,
 Þanne feide ſeint Johan,
 “Ga we don af God vs het,
 f.76ra **G**a we forht3 vpon oure fet
 Wi3 þis cors anon.”
 415 ¶ **F**oure apoſtles þat þar were.
 Token vp anon þe bere,
 Þei nolde no lengere dwelle;
 Þei wenten þourghhout þe toun
 Wi3 a fair proceſſioun

420 **A**mang þo Jwes felle.
 ¶ **P**e Jwes þa^t weren Godes fon
 Herden þe apoſtles ſingen echon
 And ſenten for to enquere
 Of þe noiſe þat þai herde,
 425 **W**uche manere hit ferde,
 And wat noiſe hit were.
 ¶ **M**en tolde þe Jwes ful of enuie
 Þat hit was houre leuedi Marie
 Þat was boren þourgh þe toun
 430 **T**o buriing, richeliche idi3t
 And wi3 mani torches li3t,
 Wi3 fair proceſſioun.
 ¶ **P**an feide þe Jwes – ful mote hem falle –
 “Þis is a gret deſpit wihtalle,
 435 **P**at ani man fſchal here.
 Marie, þat bar þat foule traitour,
 Sſchal be bore wi3 swich honur
 Among vs alle here.
 ¶ **G**a we don hem fſchame inow
 440 **A**nd caſte þe bere amiddes þe ſlow.”
 And anonri3t
 A Jw laide hond vpon þe bare,
 And al faſt he cleuede þare
 Þourgh vertu of Godes mi3t.
 445 ¶ **O**þer þat comen to don hire fſchame,
 f.76rb **W**exen boþe blinde and lame –
 Foule mote hem falle.
 Bleſſed be þe king of mi3t,
 Þat fo ſauede his moder ri3t
 450 **A**mang þe Jwes alle.
 ¶ **P**e apoſtles hadde god game.
 Þat þai 3ede fo to fſchame,
 Al was here plei.
 Þei nere no þing agafte,
 455 **B**ut fongen euere iliche faſte
 And wenten forht here way.
 ¶ **P**e Jw þat cleuede vpon þe bere,
 Knew Peter, þat was þere,
 An[d] feide wizinne a ftonde
 460 **“**Bid þi lord þat is fo hende
 Deliure me vt of þis bende

Þat ich am inne ibounde.”
 ¶ Peter anfwereðe þo
 To him þat was ibunden fo
 465 And in forewe browt,
 “Þa^t Ihesu, mi louerd, is ful of miȝt,
 Nou þou miȝt fe bi fiȝt,
 Þa^t þi bileue nis nowt.
 ¶ 3if þou wilt bileue þis,
 470 Þat Ihesu almiȝti is,
 Þat deide vpon þe tre,
 Is Ihesu þat oure leuedi bar,
 Ich wille bidden him, als I dar,
 Habbe mercy on þe.”
 475 ¶ Þe Jw þat hangede on þe bere
 Amang alle þat þere were
 Turnede anon his þought
 And feide, “Ich bileue þis,
 f.76va Þat Ihesu almiȝti is,
 480 And al þe werld made of nowt,
 ¶ And was boren of Marie,
 And for þe poeple wolde die,
 For me and oþer mo;
 And bidde him, 3if his wille be,
 485 Þat he habbe pite of me
 And bringe me vt of wo.”
 ¶ Anonri[3]t in þat ftede
 Swete Ihesus herde his bede
 And liured him of bondes;
 490 And he held hiȝe hondes vpri[3]t
 And þonked Ihesu ful of miȝt
 Alle hiȝe swete fondes.
 ¶ Alle þe Jwes þat þere were
 On him þat hangede on þe bere,
 495 In weie þer he² zede,
 Spatten on him anonriȝt,
 For he leuede on Godes miȝt,
 And he ne tok non hede.
 ¶ Peter bad him gon and preche,
 500 And þat he ſſcholde þe Jwes teche,
 Which was Godes miȝt;

And he wente and was ful glad
 To do þat ſeinte Peter bad,
 And bileued ariȝt.
 505 ¶ His bileue was triȝt and god,
 And ful wel he vnderſtod,
 Who browte him out of wo,
 And prechede þat er þe þridde dai
 He made leuen on Godes lay
 510 An hondred Jwes and mo.
 ¶ Lete we nou þis miracle be
 And of oure leuedi telle we
 And of þe apoſtles echon,
 Hou þai wenten bi a pahtȝ
 515 Into þe val of Joſephtaȝ
 An[d] buriede oure leuedi anon.
 f.76vb ¶ Þo oure leuedi was buried þere,
 Alle þe apoſtles þat þere were
 To þe cite þai zede;
 520 And in þai wenten anon,
 And were ful fori euerichon,
 To murthe 3he toke non hede.
 ¶ For er 3he paſſe(n)den fram þe ſton,
 Þer cam to hem an aungel anon
 525 In þilke ſelue ftede
 And bad hem wende forht to preche
 And þe poeple for to teche,
 Als 3he ere dede.
 ¶ Litel mete þat dai 3he eten,
 530 But at þe mete longe þai feten
 And maden mourninde chere;
 Euerich to oþer made hiȝ mone,
 Þa^t oure leuedi was fram hem gone,
 Þa^t was hem leȝ and dere.
 535 ¶ While 3he feten in þat place,
 Swete Ihesu ful of grace
 Kam þilke ſelue dai
 Wiȝ cumpaignie of aungeles briȝte,
 And into Joſephtaȝ he liȝte,
 540 Þere oure leuedi lai.
 ¶ Ibleſſed be hiȝe names ſeuene.
 He browte here foule vt of heuene
 Into erthe amang mankenne;

² Here the manuscript reads “3e.”

Ihesu, as hit was his wille,
 545 **W**ente to þe bodi al stille
 And putte þe foule þerinne.
¶ Þous swete Ihesus wis of red
 Suffred his moder to be ded,
 To fulfulle þe profecie,
 550 **F**or in þe bok hit is told,
 Þat al þe world, 3ong and hold,
 Al þat liue3, fſchal die.
¶ Þerfore Ihesu ful of mi3t
 Brouwte here foule fram heue[ne] li3t
 f.77ra **W**hi3 murthe of aungles fteuene;
 And foule and bodi and fleſch and bon
 3he was boren vp anon
 Into þe bliffe of heuene.
¶ Þough a man mi3te dwelle,
 560 **Þ**er nis no man þat mai telle
 Þe ioie in heuene was di3t
 A3enes oure leuedi bri3t and fſchene,
 And þere 3he was corouned qwene
Wi3 Ihesu ful of mi3t.
 565 **¶** On of þe apoſtles þer was,
 Þat was ihoten ſeint Thomas
 And was boren in Hynde,
 Kam to þe buriing ward
 And brak hiſ felawes foreward –
 570 **H**e was to longe bihinde.
¶ And bi þe weie als he 3hede
 To Iofephaht3, Thomas tok hede,
 And wi3 is eghen he fegh3
 Oure swete leuedi, ſeinte Marie,
 575 **W**i3 Ihesu and his compaignie,
 To heuene where 3he ftegh3.
¶ ſeint Thomas was agaft anon
 Of hiſ felawes echon,
 For he nas nowt þare;
 580 **H**e was affchamed, feint Thomas,
 And ful fori þerfore he was
 And in muchele care.
¶ “Swete leuedi,” quad feint Thomas,
 “At þi buriing nowt i nas,
 585 **A**s ich fſcholde hadde be;

Þat ich bodiliche telle mai,
 Þat ich faugh þe here todai,
 Som tokne fend þou me.
¶ But þou fende me ſom tokning,
 590 **M**ine felawes wille leue no þing,
 Þa^t ich faugh þe here.
Help me, leuedi, leue liſ,
 Leſte þer wexe bitwene vs ſtrif,
Whan we comen ifere.”
 f.77rb **¶** Oure leuedi – bleſſed mote 3he be.
 Of Thomas hadde gret pite,
 In kare þat was ibounde;
 Þe gerdel of hire middel smal,
 Nowt a gobet þerof but al,
 600 **3**he let falle to grounde.
¶ And Thomas was war of þat,
 Vpon knowes þere he ſat,
 And þe gurdel he tok;
 And oure leuedi ftegh3,
 605 **A**nd nammore of hire he ne fegh3,
 As witneſſe3 holi bok.
¶ ſeint Thomas ne reſte neuere on gronde,
 Her he hadde hiſ felawes founde,³
 Þer þei feten on rowe;
 610 **A**nd anon as 3he were mette,
Wi3 feire wordes he hem grette
 And mekede *him* to *hem* lowe.
¶ Þe god apoſtel, feint Johan,
 He ſpak to Thomas anon,
 615 **Þ**o he tok of *him* hede,
 And feide to *him*, “Thomas of Hinde,
 Euere more þou art bihinde.
Where were þou at þis nede?”
¶ Þous þe apoſtel, ſeint Johan,
 620 **B**lamede ſeint Thomas anon
 For he nas nowt þere,
 And echon þat euer þer was,
 Alle blamede ſeint Thomas,
 Aſe manie als þer were.
 625 **¶** Thomas of Hinde ſtod al stille

³ Here the manuscript reads “founder.”

And let *hem* hebben al here wille
 And seggen al here þout:
 “Felawes,” quad Thomas, “fo mot ich þe.
 I saugh oure [leuedi] latter þan 3he,
 630 Þerfore ne chide3 me nowt.”
 ¶ “Thomas, Thomas,” quad seint Johan,
 “We laiden hire in a þrough of fton,
 And þere we here lete.
 Which manere mi3t hit be
 f.77va Þat þou here seghe latter þan we?
 We ne dede feththen but etc.”
 ¶ “Felawes,” quad Thomas þo,
 “Forsothe, 3he is þenne igo
 And went ellesware.
 640 Ich warne 3he wel, fo mot ich þriue,
 Þough 3he highen neuere fo bliue,
 3he ne sſchulle nowt finde hire þare.”
 ¶ “Þous þou ferdest,” quad Peter þo,
 “Þo swete Ihesus was ago
 645 And rifen þourgh his mi3t:
 Er þou haddeft þifelf ifounde
 Wi3 þin hond his bitter wonde,
 Þou noldest nowt leuen hit ri3t.”
 ¶ “Peter,” quad Thomas, “fo mot ich þe,
 650 Ich leue miſelf bet þan þe;
 Ich knowe oure leuedi ful wel.
 Wi3 boþe myn eghen ich hit fegh3.
 Into heuene where 3he ftegh3,
 Boþe fle[s]ch and fel.
 655 ¶ And ich or trowede in mi þought,
 Þat 3e nolden leue me nowt,
 And ich bad hire a bone:
 3he sſcholde ſende me fom toknyng,
 Þat ich was toward here burying.
 660 And 3he graunted me fone.
 ¶ Þer i ſat vpon mi kne,
 Leuedi, bleſſed mote 3he be,
 Flour of wommen alle,
 Þe gerdel þat 3he werede in herthe –
 665 Ihered and heghed mote 3he werthe –
 Bifore me 3he let falle.
 ¶ And 3if 3he nelle3 nowt leue me,

Here 3he sſchulle3 fone ife,
 I ne ſegge nowt amis.
 670 Þe gerdel þat 3he werede hereſelue
 3he fente tokne to 3ou twelue,
 And, lo, here hit is.”
 ¶ Þo ſeint Johan þe gerdel fegh3,
 He held vp boþe honden on hegh3
 f.77vb And knelede adoun ful lowe,
 And kufte þe gerdel anonri3t,
 Þo he hadde þeroffe a fi3t,
 And ſeide, “Þis gerdel ich knowe.
 ¶ Mi god felawes,” quad ſeint Johan,
 680 “In Joſephaht in þe fton,
 Boþe were buried ifere;
 Þo þe þrough was iſchut,
 Þe gerdel was aboute here knut.
 Hou hit euere kam here?
 685 ¶ I rede we wenden and enquire
 Wheþer þe swete bodi be þere
 Þat bar swete Ihesus,
 Oþer 3he is out of monument
 Irifen and to heuene went,
 690 Als Thomas telle3 vs.
 ¶ Wende we þider alle twelue
 And ſe we þe ſothe oure ſelue.
 Þanne mowe [we] be ful bold.
 3if 3he nis nowt in þe fton,
 695 Þanne hit is leſing non,
 Þat Thomas haue3 vs told.”
 ¶ Alle twelue were at on
 And wenten to þe þrough of fton
 Þere oure leuedi was leid.
 700 No þing in þe fton þer nas.
 Þo wiſte þai wel þat ſoht hit was
 Þat Thomas hadde ifeid.
 ¶ “Lo! felawes,” quad Thomas þo,
 “Þe ſwete bodi is ago
 705 Þat hider was ibrowt;
 For 3e nolde nowt leue me,
 Nou 3e mowen 3oureſeluen ſe
 Þat ich ne gabbed nowt.”
 Þo wenten alle þe apoſtles anon,

710 **A**lle abouten þe fton
And kouledyn adoun,
To honoure þer þe bodi lai;
Al an houre of a dai
Þei leien in oreifoun.
f.78ra ¶ **A**nd anon Ihesu Crift
Sente a fwithe gret⁴ mist
Aboute þe apostles twelue.
And echon in diuerse stede,
To prechen, afe þai here deden,
720 **W**as boren bi himselue.
¶⁵ **A**lle were awondred in here þowt,
Hou sone 3he were atwinne ibrowt,
And no wonder hit nas;
But fwete Ihesu ful of mi3t,
725 **Þ**at made boþe dai and ni3t,
Afe he wolde, also hit was.
¶ **I**bleffed be he, fwete Ihesus,
Þa^t swich a loue had kud vs
Þour[gh] his mochel mi3t,
730 **T**o crownen a womman of oure kinde
Qwene in heuene – habbez hit *in minde*,
And ferue3 God arizt.
¶⁶ **A** gret loue he kudde vs anoþer:
He bicam in erthe oure broþer,
735 **A**nd oure fader he is
And bowte vs out of feruage
And 3af ous to oure heritage
Heuenriches blis.
¶ **W**el owte we be blithe of mod:
740 **H**euene is oure þourgh kinde of blod,
Oure and oure childre;
Swete Ihesu deide þerfore
And bowte hit þo hit was lore
Þourgh trespas of oure eldre.
745 ¶⁷ **H**e were a fol þat mi3te chefe

And wolde þat heritage lefe
For loue of worldes winne.
Ech man, afe forht af he mai,
Þenk vpon domefdai
750 **A**nd ffchome dedli finne.
¶ **N**ou habbe 3e herd þe refoun
Of þe swete affumpfioun
Of oure leuedi hende.
Ihesu, þat is here swete sone,
755 **3**iue ous *grace* for to wone
In ioie þat neuere schal ende.

⁴ Here the manuscript reads “grest.”

⁵ Scribe 3’s guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

⁶ Scribe 3’s guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

⁷ Scribe 3’s guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

4. SIR DEGARE

- f.78rb **K**niz [excision from page]
Ferli fele wolde fonde
And fechen aentures bi nizt and [d]ai,
Hou zhe miȝte here ftrengethe afai.
5 **S**o dede a knyȝt, Sire Degarree.
Ich wille zou telle wat man was he.
In Litel-Bretaygne was a kyng
Of gret poer in alle þing,
Stif in armes vnder ffcheld
10 **A**nd mochel idouted in þe feld.
Þer nas no man, verraiment,
Þat miȝte in werre ne in tornament
Ne in juftes for no þing
Him out of his fadel bring
15 **N**e out of his ftirop bringe his fot:
So ftron[g] he was of bon and blod.
Þis kyng ne hadde non hair
But a maidenchild fre and fair;
Here gentireffe and here beaute
20 **W**as moche renound in ich countre.
Þis maiden he loued als his lif.
Of hire was ded þe quene, his wif;
In trauailing here lif zhe les.
And þo þe maiden of age wes,
25 **K**ynge's fones to him speke,
Emperours and dukes eke,
To hauen his doughter in mariage
For loue of here heritage.
Ac þe kyng anfwered euer,
30 **Þ**at no man ffchal here halden euer,
But zif he mai in turneyng
Him out of his fadel bring
And maken him lefen hife ftirope^s bayne.
f.78va [excision from page]
35 **I**n [excision from page]
[excision from page]
[excision from page]
- [excision from page]
[excision from page]
40 [excision from page]
[H]ire dirige do and maffe boþe,
Poure men fede and naked cloþe,
Offring brenge gret plente
And fede þe couent wiȝ gret daynte.
45 **T**owar[d] þe abbai als he com ride
And mani knyȝtes bi his fide,
His doughter alfo bi him rod.
Amidde þe foreft hii abod.
Here chamberleyn zhe clepede hire to
50 **A**nd oþer dammaifeles two
And feide, þat hii moſte alizte
To don here nedes and hire riȝte.
Þai alizt adoune alle þre,
Tweie damaifeles ȝ ffche,
55 **A**nd longe while þer abiden,
Til al þe folk was forht iriden.
Þai wolden vp and after wolde
And couþen nowt here way holde.
Þe wode was rough and þikke, iwis,
60 **A**nd þai token þe wai amys;
Þai moſte fouht and riden weſt
Into þe þikke of þe foreft.
Into a launde hii ben icome
And habbeȝ wel vndernome,
65 **Þ**at þai were amis igon.
Þai liȝt adoune euerichon
And cleped and criede al ifere;
Ac no man miȝt hem ihere.
Þai niȝt what hem was beft to don
70 **Þ**e weder was hot bifor þe non:
Hii leien hem doun vpon a grene
Vnder a chaſtein-tre, ich wene,
And fillen aſlepe euerichone
f.78vb **B**ote þe damaifele alone.
75 **Þ**he wente aboute and gaderede floures
And herknede ſong of wilde foules.
So fer in þe launde zhe goht, iwis,

¹ Scribe 3's guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

Þat 3he ne wot neuere whare 3e is.
 To hire maidenenes 3he wolde anon,
 80 Ac hi ne wifte neuer, wat wei to gon.
 Whenne hi wende beft to hem terne,
 Aweiward þan hi go3 wel 3erne.
 “Allas!” hi feide, “þat I was boren;
 Nou ich wot ich am forloren.
 85 Wilde beftes me wille3 togrinde,
 Or ani man me ffchulle finde.”
 Þan fegh hi fwich a fi3t:
 Towar^d hire comen a kni3t,
 Gentil, 3ong and iolif man;
 90 A robe of fcarlet he hadde vpon;
 His viſage was feir, his bodi ech weies;
 Of countenaunce ri3t curteis,
 Wel farende legges, fot and honde;
 Þer nas non in al þe kynges londe
 95 More apert man þan was he.
 “Damaifele, welcome mote þou be.
 Be þou afered of none wih3te.
 Ich am comen here a fairi-kny3te.
 Mi kynde is armes for to were,
 100 On horfe to ride wi3 ſcheld and ſpere.
 Forþi afered be þou nowt;
 I ne haue nowt but mi ſwerd ibroust.
 Ich haue iloued þe mani a 3er,
 And now we bez vf felue her.
 105 Þou beft mi lemman ar þou go,
 Weþer þe like3 wel or wo.”
 Þo no þing ne coude do 3he,
 But wep and criede and wolde fle;
 And he anon gan hire atholde
 110 And dide his wille what he wolde.
 He binam hire here maidenhod
 And feththen vp toforen hire ftod.
 “Lemman,” he feide, “gent and fre,
 f.79ra Mid ſchilde I wot þat þou ſchalt be;
 115 Siker ich wot hit worht a knaue.
 Forþi mi ſwerd þou ffchalt haue;
 And, whenne þat he is of elde,
 Þat he mai him ſelf biwelde,
 Tak him þe ſwerd and bidde him fonde

120 To fechen his fader in eche londe.
 Þe ſwerd is² god and auenaunt;
 Lo, af I faug[h]t wi3 a geaunt,
 I brak þe point in his hed,
 And fiththen, when þat he was ded,
 125 I tok hit out and haue hit [h]er
 Redi in min aumener.
 3it peraventure time bi3,
 Þat mi fone mete me wi3,
 Be mi ſwerd I mai him kenne.
 130 Haue god dai. I mot gon henne.”
 Þe kni3t paſſede af he cam.
 Al wepende þe ſwerd 3he nam
 And com hom fore likend,
 And fond here maidenenes al ſlepend.
 135 Þe ſwerd 3he hidde als 3he mi3te
 And awaked hem in hi3te
 And doht hem to horfe anon
 And gonne to ride euerichon.
 Þanne feghen hi ate laft
 140 Tweie ſquiers come prikend faft.
 Fram þe kyng þai weren ifent
 To white whider his doughter went.
 Þai browt hire into þe ri3te wai
 And comen faire to þe abbay
 145 And do3 þe ſeruife in alle þingges,
 Mani maſſe and riche offringes.
 And whanne þe ſeruife was al idone
 And ipaſſed ouer þe none,
 Þe kyng to his caſtel gan ride –
 150 His doughter rod bi his ſide –
 And he 3eme3 his kyngdom oueral
 Stoutliche, as a god king ffchall.
 ¶ Ac whan ech man was glad an[d] blithe,
 f.79rb His doughter fiked an forewed ſwithe.
 155 Here wombe greted more and more;
 Þer while 3he mi3te, 3e hidde here fore.
 ¶ On a dai as hi wepende fet,
 On of hire maidenenes hit vnderzet.
 “Ma dame,” 3he feide, “par charite,

² Here the manuscript reads “his.”

160 **W**hi wepe ze? Now tellez hit me.”
 ¶ **A**, gentil maiden, kinde icoren,
 Help me oþer ich am forloren.
 Ich haue euer zete ben meke and milde,
 Lo, now ich am wiȝ quike schilde.
 165 **Ȝ**if ani man hit vnderzete,
 Men wolde ſai bi fti and ſtrete,
 Þat mi fader þe king hit wan;
 And I ne was neuere aqueint wiȝ man.
 And ȝif he hit him ſelue wite,
 170 **S**wich ſorewe ſchal to him ſmite,
 Þat neuer bliȝe ſchal he be;
 For al his ioie is in me.”
 And tolde here altogeder þer,
 Hou hit was biȝete and wher.
 175 **M**a dame,” quad þe maide, “ne care þou nowt.
 Stille awai hit ſſchal be browt.
 No man ſchal wite in Godes riche,
 Whar hit bicomēȝ but þou and iche.”
 ¶ **H**er time come, ȝhe was vnbounde
 180 And deliured al mid founde.
 A knaue ſchild þer was ibore;
 Glad was þe moder þarfore.
 Þe maiden ſeruēde here at wille,
 Wond þat child in cloþes ſtille
 185 And laid hit in a cradel anon
 And was al preſt þarwiȝ to gon.
 Ȝhit [h]is moder was *him* hold:
 Four pound ȝhe tok of gold
 And ten of ſeluer alfo;
 190 **V**nder his fote ȝhe laid hit þo
 “For swich þinges hit mihoue.”
 And ſeththen ȝe tok a paire gloue
 Þat here *lemman* here ſente of fairi-londe,
 f.79va Þat nolde on no manne honde,
 195 **N**e on child ne on womman ȝhe nolde;
 But on hire ſelue wel ȝhe wolde.
 Þe glouen ȝe put vnder his hade,
 And ſiththen a letter ȝhe wrot and made
 And knit hit wiȝ a ſelkene þred
 200 **A**boute his nekke – wel God ſped –
 Þat who hit founde ſſcholde iwite.

Þan was in þe lettre þous iwrite:
 ¶ **P**ar charite, ȝif ani god man
 Þis helples child finde can,
 205 **L**at criſten hit wiȝ preſtes honde
 And bringgen hit to liue in londe,
 For hit is comen of gentil blod.
 Helpeȝ hit wiȝ his owen god,
Wiȝ trefor þat vnder his fet lis.
 210 **A**nd ten ȝer eld whan þat he his,
 Takeȝ *him* þif ilke glouen two
 And biddeȝ *him*, whareuere he go,
 Þat he ne louie no womman in londe,
 But þis gloues willen on hire honde,
 215 **F**or, ſiker, on honde nelle þai nere
 But on his moder þat *him* bere.”
 ¶ **Þ**e maiden tok þe chil[d] here mide
 Stille awai in auentide;
 Alle þe winteres longe niȝt
 220 **Þ**e weder was cler, þe mone liȝt.
 Þan war hiȝ ȝe war anon
 Of an hermitage in a ſton;
 An holi man had þer his woniyng.
 Þider ȝhe wente on heying
 225 **A**n fette þe cradel at his dore
 And durfte abide no lengore
 And paſſede forȝ anonriȝt.
 Hom ȝhe com in þat oþer niȝt
 And fond þe leuedi al drupni,
 230 **S**ore wepinde and was fori,
 And tolde hire altogeder þer,
 Hou ȝhe had iben and wher.
 ¶ **Þ**e hermite aros erliche þo,
 f.79vb And his knaue was vppe alfo,
 235 **A**n[d] ſeide ifere here matines
 And ſeruēde God and hiſe ſeins.
 Þe litel child þai herde crie
 And clepede after help on hie.
 Þe holi man his dore vndede
 240 **ȝ** fond þe cradel in þe ſtede.
 He tok vp þe cloþes anon
 And biheld þe litel grom.
 He tok þe letter and radde wel ſone,

Þat tolde him þat he fcholde done.
 245 **Þ**e heremite held vp boþe his honde
 An[d] þonked God of al his fonde
 And bar þat child into his chapel,
 And for joie he rong his bel.
 He dede vp þe glouen and þe trefour
 250 And criftned þe child wiȝ gret honur
 In þe name of þe *trinite*;
 He hit nemnede Degarre.
 Degarre nowt elles ne is
 But þing þat not neuer whar it is,
 255 O[r] þe þing þat is negȝ forlorn alfo;
 Forþi þe fchild he nemnede þous þo.
Þe heremite, þat was holi of lif,
 Hadde a fofter þat was a wif;
 A riche marchaunt of þat cowntre
 260 Hadde hire ifpoufed into þat cite.
 To hire þat fchild he fente þo
 Bi his knaue and þe filuer alfo.
 And bad here take gode hede
 Hit to forfter and to fede,
 265 And ȝif God almizti wolde
 Ten ȝer his lif holde,
 Aȝen to him [h]i fcholde hit wife;
 He hit wolde teche of clergife.
Þe litel child Degarre
 270 Was ibrount into þat cite.
 Þe wif and hire louerd ifere
 Kept hit, afe hit [h]ere owen were.
 Bi þat hit was ten ȝer old,
 f.80ra Hit was a fair child and a bold,
 275 Wel inoriffched,³ god and hende:
 Was non betere in al þat ende.
 He wende wel þat þe gode man
 Had ben his fader þat him wan,
 And þe wif his moder alfo
 280 And þe hermite his vnkel bo.
 And whan þe ten ȝer was ifpent
 To þe hermitage he was fent.
 And he was glad him to fe;

³ Here the manuscript reads "inoriffcher."

He was fo feir and fo fre.
 285 He tauȝte him of clerkes lore
 Oþer ten wynter oþer more.
 And he was of twenti ȝer,
 Sftaleworth he was, of swich pouer
 Þat þer ne was⁴ man in þat lond
 290 Þat o breid him miȝt aftond.
Þo þe hermite feȝ, wiȝouten les,
 Man for him felf þat he wes,
 Staleworht to don ech werk
 And of his elde fo god a clerk,
 295 He tok him his florines and his gloues,
 Þat he had kept to hife bihoues.
 Ac þe ten pound of ftarlings
 Were ifpended in his foftlings.
 He tok him þe letter to rede;
 300 And biheld al þe dede.
 "O leue em,⁵ *par* charite,
 Was þis letter mad for me?"
 "Ȝe, bi oure lord, vs helpe ffchal,
 Þus hit was." And told him al.
 305 He knelede adoun alfo fwize
 And þonked þe ermite of his liue,
 And swor he nolde ftinte no ffounde
 Til he his kinrede hadde ifounde.
 For in þe lettre was þous iwrite,
 310 Þat bi þe glouen he ffcholde iwite,
 Wich were his moder and who,
 Ȝhif þat fche liuede þo;
 For on hire honden hii wolde
 f.80rb And on non oþer hii nolde.
 315 Half þe florines he ȝaf þe hermite,
 And haluendel he tok him mide
 And nam his leue an[d] wolde go.
 "Nai," feide þe hermite, "fchaltu no.
 To feche þi ken miȝtou nowt dure
 320 Wiȝouten hors and god armure."
 "Nai," quod he, "bi heuene-kyng.
 Ich wil haue firft anoþer þing."

⁴ Here the manuscript reads "wan."

⁵ Here the manuscript reads "hem."

He hew adoun boþe grete an[d] grim
 To beren in his hond wiz *him*
 325 **A** god fapling of an ok.
Whan he þarwiz 3af a ftrok,
Ne wer he neuer fo ftrong a man
Ne fo gode armes hadde vpon,
Þat he ne scholde falle to grounde –
 330 **S**wich a bourdon to *him* he founde.
Þo þenne God he *him* bitawt,
ȝ aiþer fram oþer wepyng rawt.
Child Degarre wente hif wai
Þourgh þe forest al þat dai;
 335 **N**o man he ne herd, ne non he fe3,
Til hit was non ipaffed he3.
Þanne he herde a noife kete
In o valai an dintes grete.
Bliue þider he gan to te;
 340 **W**hat hit ware he wolde ife.
An herl of þe countre, ftout and fers,
Wiz a kni3t and four squiers
Hadde ihonted a der oþer two,
And al here houndes weren ago.
 345 **Þ**an was þar a dragon grim,
Ful of filth and of venim,
Wiz wide þrote and te3 grete
And wynges bitere wiz to bete;
As a lyoun he hadde fet,
 350 **A**nd his tail was long an[d] gret.
Þe fmoke com of his nofe awai
Afe fer out of a chimenai.
Þe kny3t and squiers he had torent,
 f.80va **M**an and hors to deþe chent.
 355 **Þ**e dragon þe erl affaile gan,
And defended *him* af a man
And ftoutliche leid on wiz his swerd
And fstronge ftrokes on *him* gerd;
Ac alle his dentes ne greued *him* nowt,
 360 **H**is hide was hard fo jren wrout.
Þerl flei fram tre to tre,
Fein he wolde fram *him* be,
And þe dragon *him* gan afail.
Þe doughti erl in þat batail

365 **O**ffegh þis child Degarre.
“Ha, help,” he feide, “*par* charite.”
Þe dragoun⁶ fe3 þe child com,
He laft þe erl and to *him* nom,
Blowinde and zeniend also,
 370 **A**ls he *him* wolde swolewe þo.
Ac Degarre was ful ftrong;
He tok his bat gret and long,
And in þe forehefd he *him* batere3
Þat al þe forehefd he tospatere3.
 375 **H**e fil adoun anonri3t
And frapte his tail wiz gret mi3t
Vpon Degarres fide,
Þat vp fo doun he gan to glide.
Ac he ftert vp afe a man
 380 **A**nd wiz his bat leide vpan
And al tofrufft *him* ech a bon
Þat he lai ded, stille as a fton.
Þerl knelede adoun biliue
And 3onked þe child of his liue
 385 **A**nd maked *him* wiz *him* gon
To his caftel ri3t anon
And wel at hefe he *him* made
And proferd *him* al þat he hade:
Rentes, trefor an eke lond,
 390 **F**or to holden in his hond.
Þanne anfwerede Degarre,
“Lat come ferft bifor me
Þi leuedi and oþer wimmen bold,
 f.80vb **M**aidenes ȝ widues, 3onge ȝ olde,
 395 **A**nd oþer damoifeles fwete.
ȝif mine glouen bez to hem mete
For to done vpon here honde,
Þanne ich wil take þi londe;
ȝ ȝif þai ben nowt fo
 400 **I**ch wille take mi leue and go.
Alle wimman were forht ibrowt,
Wide cuntreis and forht ifowt.
Ech þe glouen affaie bigan,
Ac non ne mi3te don hem on.⁷

⁶ Here the manuscript reads “dagroun.”

405 He tok his glouen and vp hem dede
 And nam his leue in þat ftede.
 Þe erl was gentil man of blod
 And ʒaf him a ftede ful god
 And noble armure riche and fin
 410 When he wolde armen him þerin.
 And a palefrai to riden an
 And a knaue to ben his man
 And ʒaf him a swerd briʒt,
 And dubbed him þer to knyʒt
 415 And swor bi God almiʒti
 Þat he was better worthi
 To vfen hors and armes alfo
 Þan wiʒ his bat aboute to go.
 Sire Degarre was wel blithe
 420 And þanked þe erl mani a fiþe
 And lep vpon palefrai hiis
 And doht him forʒ in his wai.
 Vpon his ftede riʒte his man
 ʒ ledde his armes als he wel can.
 425 Mani a iorne þai ride and fette.
 So on a dai gret folk þei mette,
 Erles and barouns of renoun,
 Þat come fram a cite-toun.
 He asked a feriaunt, “What tiding?”
 430 ʒ whennes hii come ʒ “What is þis þing?”
 “Sire,” he feide, “verraiment,
 We come framward a parlement.
 f.81ra Þe king a gret counfeil made
 For nedes þat he to don hade.
 435 When þe parlement was plener
 He lette crie fer and ner,
 ʒif ani man were of armes fo bold
 Þat wiʒ þe kinge iufti wold,
 He ffolde haue in mariage
 440 His dowter and his heritage,
 Þat is [a] kingdom god and fair;
 For he ne had non oþer hair.
 Ac no man ne dar graunte þerto;

For mani hit affaiez ʒ mai nowt do,
 445 Mani erl ʒ mani baroun,
 Kniʒtes and fquiers of renoun.
 Ac ech man þat him iufteʒ wiʒ, tit,
 Haþ of him a foul despit:
 Some he brekeʒ þe nekke anon
 450 And of some þe rig-bon,
 Some þourgh þe bodi he girt;
 Ech is maimed oþer ihirt.
 Ac noman mai don him no þing:
 Swich wonder chaunce haþ þe king.”
 455 Sire Degarre þous þenche gan
 “Ich am a ftaleworht man,
 And of min owen ich haue a ftede,
 Swerd and fpere and riche wede;
 And ʒif ich felle þe kyng adoun
 460 Euere ich haue wonnen renoun;
 And þei þat he me herte fore,
 No man wot wer ich was bore.
 Wheþer deʒ oþer lif me bitide,
 Aʒen þe king ich wille ride.”
 465 In þe cite his in he takeʒ
 And refteʒ him and meri makeʒ.
 On a dai wiʒ þe king he mette
 And knelede adoun and him grette.
 “Sire king,” he faide, “of muchel miʒt,
 470 Mi louerd me fende hider nou riʒt
 For to warne ʒou þat he
 Bi þi leue wolde iufte wiʒ þe
 f.81rb And winne þi dowter, ʒif he mai,
 As þe cri was þis enderdai;
 475 Justes he had to þe inome.”
 “De par deus,” quaþ þe king, “he is welcome.
 Be he baroun, be he erl,
 Be he burgeis, be he cherl.
 No man wil I forsake;
 480 He þat winneʒ al sschal take.”
 A morewe þe iustes was iset.
 Þe king him purueid wel þe bet,
 And Degarre ne knew no man;
 Ac al his trust is God vpon.
 485 Erliche to churche þan wente he,

⁷ The word “on” has been added in what appears to be a slightly different hand.

Þe masse he herde of þe trinite.
 To þe fader he offrez hon florine
 And to þe sone an oþer also fine
 And to þe holi gost þe þridde.
 490 Þe prest for him ful 3erne gan bidde.
 And to þe seruise was idon,
 To his in he wente wel son
 And let him armi wel afin
 In god armes to justi in.
 495 His gode stede he gan bistride;
 His squier bar his sschaft biside.
 In þe feld þe king he abide gan,
 As he com ridend wi3 mani a man
 Stoutliche out of þe cite-toun,
 500 Wi3 mani a lord of gret renoun.
 Ac al þat in þe felde be3,
 Þat þe iustes ise3,
 Seide þat hi neuer zit ise3e
 So pert a man wi3 here eg3e,
 505 As was þis gentil Degarre;
 Ac no man wiste whennes was he.
 B oþe þai gonne to iusti þan,
 Ac Degarre can nowt þeron;
 Þe king haþ þe gretter schaft
 510 And kan inowgh of þe craft.
 To breke his nekke he had iment;
 In þe helm he set his dent,
 f.81va Þat þe schaft al tosprong.
 Ac Degarre was so fstrong
 515 Þat in þe fadel stille he fet
 And in þe stiropes held his fet.
 For soþe I feie, wi3oute lesing,
 He ne couþe nammore of iusting.
 “Allas!” quaþ þe king, “Allas!
 520 Me ne fil neuere swich a cas,
 Þat man þat ich mi3te hitte
 After mi strok mi3te fitte.”
 He take3 a wel gretter tre
 And swor, so he mošte iþe,
 525 “3if his nekke nel nowt atwo,
 His rigg sshal ar ich hennes go.”
 He rod eft wi3 gret raundoun

And þought to beren *him* adoun
 And girt Degarre anon
 530 Ri3t a3ein þe breft-bon.
 Þe schaft was stef and wonder god,
 And Degarre stede aftod,
 And al biforen he ros on hegh3,
 And þo was he ifallen negh3.
 535 But, af God almi3ti wold,
 Þe schaft brak and mi3t nowt hold,
 And Degarre his cours outritte
 And was agramed out of his witte.
 “Allas!” quaþ he, “for vilaynie;
 540 Þe king me haþ ifmiten þrie,
 And I ne touchede *him* nowt 3ete.
 Nou I sshal [a]vife me bette.”
 He turned his stede wi3 herte grim
 And rod to þe king and he to *him*,
 545 And togider þai gert ful ri3t
 And in þe scheldes here strokes pi3t,
 Þat þe speres al toriue3
 And vpri3t to here honde fliue3,
 Þat alle þe lordings þat þer ben,
 550 Þat þe iusting mi3te sen,
 Seiden hi ne fe3e neuer wi3 eg3e
 Man ^{þat} mighte so longe dregh3e
 f.81vb In wraþþe for no þing
 Sitten a strok of here king:
 555 “Ac he his doughti for þe nones,
 A fstrong man of bodi and bones.”
 Þ e king wi3 egre mod gan speke
 “Do bring me a schaft þat wil nowt breke.
 A, be mi trewþe, he ffchal adoun,
 560 Þai he be ftrengere þan Sampfon;
 And þei he be þe bare qued,
 He ffchal adoune maugre his heued.”
 He tok a schaft was gret and long,
 Þe schild anoþer also fstrong;
 565 And to þe king wel euene he rit.
 Þe king faile3, 7 he *him* fmit.
 His schaft was fstrong and god wi3al
 And wel fcharped þe coronal.
 He smot þe kyng in þe lainer;

570 He miȝt flit noȝer fer ne ner.
 Þe king was ftrong and harde fat;
 Þe ftede rof vp biforn wiȝ þat,
 ȝ fire Degarre fo þrifte him þan,
 Þat, maugre whofo grochche bigan,
 575 Out of þe fadel he him caft,
 Tail ouer top riȝt ate laft.
 Þan was þer long houting and cri;
 Þe king was for affchamed forþi.
 Þe lordinges comen wiȝ miȝt and mein
 580 And broughte þe king on horfe aȝein
 An[d] feide wiȝ o criing, “Iwis,
 Child Degarre haȝ wonne þe pris.”
 Þan was þe damaifele fori;
 For hi wifte wel forwhi:
 585 Þat hi fcholde ifpoufed ben
 To a kniȝt þat fche neuer had fen,
 And lede here lif wiȝ swich a man,
 Þat fche ne wot who him wan
 No in what londe he was ibore.
 590 Carful waf þe leuedi þerfore.
 Þ an feide þe king to Degarre:
 “Min hende fone, com hider to me.
 f.82ra And þou were alfo gentil a man,
 As þou femeft wiȝ fiȝt vpan,
 595 And afe wel coupeft wiȝdomes do,
 As þou art ftaleworht man þe[r]to,
 Me þouwte mi kingdom [i]s wel bifet.
 Ac, be þou werfe, be þou bet,
 Couenaunt ich wille þe holde.
 600 Lo, her biforn mi barons bolde
 Mi douwter I take þe bi þe hond
 And feife þe her in al mi lond;
 King þou fchalt ben after me.
 God graunte þe godman forto be.”
 605 Þan was þe child glad and bliȝe
 And þonked þe kyng mani a fithe.
 Gret purueaunce þan was þer iwrouȝt;
 To churche þai were togidere ibrouȝt;
 ȝ spoufed þat leuedi, verraiment,
 610 Vnder holi facrement.
 Lo, what chaunfe and wonder ftrong

Bitideȝ mani a man wiȝ wrong,
 Þat comeȝ into an vncouȝe þede
 And fpoufeȝ wif for ani mede
 615 ȝ knowes no þing of hire kin
 Ne fche of his neiȝer more ne min
 And beȝ iwedded togider to libbe,
 Par auenture, and beȝ neghȝ fibbe.
 So dede fire Degarre þe bold,
 620 Spoufed þere [h]is moder []⁸;
 And þat hende leuedi alfo
 Here owene fone was fpoufed to
 Þat fche vpon here bodi bar.
 Lo, what auenture fil hem þar.
 625 But God, þat alle þingge mai ftere,
 Wolde nowt, þa[t] þai finned ifere.
 To chirche þai wente wiȝ barouns bolde.
 A riche fefte þai gonne to holde,
 And wan was wel ipaffed non
 630 And þe dai was al idon,
 To bedde þai ffcholde wende, þat fre
 Þe dammaifele and fire Degarre.
 f.82rb He ftod ftille and biþouwte him þan,
 Hou þe hermite, þe holi man,
 635 Bad he fcholde no womman take
 For faired ne for riches fake,
 But ȝhe miȝte þis gloues two
 Liȝtliche on hire hondes do.
 “Allas, allas!” þan faide he,
 640 “What mefchaunce is comen to me.
 Awai! witles wrechche ich am.
 Ich hadde leuere þan þis kingdam,
 Þat is ifeifed into min hond,
 Þat ich ware faire out of þis lond.”
 645 He wrang his hondes and was fori;
 Ac no man wifte þer forewi.
 Þ e king parceyued and faide þo,
 “Sire Degarre, wi fareft þou fo?
 Is þer ani þing don ille,
 650 Spoken or feid aȝen þi wille?”

⁸ The rhyme word appears to be missing from this line.

“3a, fire,” he faide, “bi heuene-king.
 Ichal neuer for no spoufing,
 Þerwhiles I liue, wiz wimman dele,
 Widue, ne wif, ne dammeifele,
 655 But 3he þis gloues mai take and fonde
 And liztlich drawen vpon hire honde.”
 His zonge bride þat gan here,
 And al for þout chaunged hire chere,
 And ate lafte gan to turne here mod,
 660 Here viſage wex afe red afe blod.
 3he knew þo gloues þat wer hire,
 “Schewe hem hider, leue fire.”
 Sche tok þe gloues in þat ftede
 And liztliche on hire hondes dede
 665 And fil adoun wiz reuli cri
 And feide, “God, mercy, merci!
 Þou art mi fone haft spoufed me her,
 And ich am, fone, þi moder der;
 Ich hadde þe loren, ich haue þe founde.
 670 Bleffed be Iheſu Crift þat ftounde.”
 S ire Degarre tok his moder þo
 And helde here in his armes two,
 f.82va Keſte and clepte here mani a fiþe;
 Þat hit wa[s] ſche, he was ful bliþe.
 675 Þe kyng gret wonder hadde,
 What þat noiſe [was] þat þai made,
 And meruaile[d] of hire crying
 And feide, “Doughter, what is þis þing?”
 “Fader,” 3he feide, “þou ſchalt ihere.
 680 Þou wenefþ þat ich a maiden were,
 Ac certes nay, fire, ich am non.
 Twenti winter nou hit is gon,
 Þat mi maidenhed I les,
 In a foreſt as I wes.⁹
 685 And þis is mi fone, God hit wot;
 Bi þis gloues wel ich wot.”
 3he told him al þat foþe þer,
 Hou þe child was geten and wher,
 And hou þat he was boren alfo.

690 To þe hermitage 3he fente him þo
 And ſeþthen herd of him no þing.
 “But þanked be Iheſu, heuene-king,
 Ich haue ifounde him oliue.
 Ich am his moder and ek his wiue.”¹⁰
 695 “Leue moder,” feide ſire Degarre,
 “Telle me þe ſothe, par charite,
 Into what londe I mai terne,
 To ſeke mi fader ſwithe and 3erne.”
 “Sone,” 3he faide, “bi heuene-kyng,
 700 I can þe of him telle no þing;
 But þo þat he fram me rau3t,
 His owen ſwerd he me¹¹ bitau3t
 And bad ich ſcholde take hit þe forþan,
 3if þou liuedeſt and were a man.”
 705 Þe ſwerd ſche fet forht anonri3t,
 And Degarre hit outpli3t.
 Brod and long and heui hit wes,
 In þat kyngdom no ſwich nes.
 Þan feide Degarre forþan,
 710 “Whofo hit au3t, he was a man;
 Nou ich haue þat I kepe,
 Ni3t ne dai nel ich ſlepe
 Til þat I mi fader ſee,
 f.82vb 3if God wile þat hit fo be.”
 715 In þe cite he reſte al ni3t.
 Amorewe, whan hit was dai-lit,
 He aros and herde his maſſe.
 He di3te him and for3 gan paſſe.
 Of al þat cite þan moſte non
 720 Neiþer wiz him riden ne gon
 But his knaue to take hede
 To his armour and his ftede.
 For3 he rod in his wai
 Mani a pas 7 mani iurnai.
 725 So longe he paſſede into weſt,
 Þat he com into þeld foreſt,
 Þer he was bi3eten ſom while.

⁹ This line and the previous one have been written as by a vertical mark.
 a single line separated by a faint slash-mark.

¹⁰ Both “am” and “ek” in this line have been preceded

¹¹ Here “me” has been altered from “mi.”

Þerinne he ride3 mani a mile;
 Mani a dai he ride gan,
 730 No quik beft he fond of man.
 Ac mani wilde beftes he fegh3,
 And foules fingen on hegh3.
 So longe he drouw3 to þe ni3t,
 Þe fonne was adoune ri3t.
 735 Toward toun he wolde ride,
 But he ni3t neuer bi wiche fide.
 Þenne he fe3 a water cler
 And amidde a riuier
 A fair caftel of lim and fton;
 740 Oþer wonyng was þer non.
 To his knaue he feide, “Tide wat tide,
 O fote forþer nel I ride,
 Ac here abide wille we
 And afke herberewe *par* charite,
 745 3if ani quik man be here on liue.”
 To þe water þai come als swiþe.
 Þe bregge was adoune þo
 7 þe gate open alfo
 And into þe caftel he gan fpede.
 750 Firft he stabled vp his ftede.
 He taiede vp his palefrai;
 Inou3 he fond of hote and hai.
 He bad his grom on heying¹²
 f.83ra Kepen wel al here þing.
 755 He paſſed vp into þe halle,
 Biheld aboute 7 gan to calle;
 Ac neiþer on lond ne on he3
 No quik man he ne fe3.
 Amidde þe halle flore
 760 A fir was bet ftark an ftore.
 “Par fai,” he faide, “ich am al fure,
 He þat bette þat fure
 Wil comen hom 3it to ni3t.
 Abiden ich wille a litel wi3t.”
 765 He fat adoun vpon þe dais.
 And warmed *him* wel eche wais,
 And he biheld and vndernam,

Hou in at þe dore cam
 Four *dammaifeles* gent and fre.
 770 Ech was itakked to þe kne;
 Þe two bowen an[d] arewen bere,
 Þe oþer two icharged were
 Wi3 venefoun riche and god.
 And Degarre vp ftod
 775 And gret *hem* wel fair, apli3t.
 Ac þai anfwerede no wi3t,
 But 3ede into chaumbre anon
 And barred þe dore after fon.
 Sone þerafter wi3alle
 780 Þer com a dwerw into þe halle.
 Four fet of lengthe was in *him*,
 His viſage was ftout and grim;
 Boþe his berd and his fax
 Was criſp an[d] 3halew as wax;
 785 Grete fſcholdres and quarre;
 Ri3t ftoutliche loked he.
 Mochele were hife fet and honde
 Aſe þe meſte man of þe londe.
 He was iclothed wel ari3t,
 790 His fſchon icouped af a kni3t;
 He hadde on a forcot ouert,
 Iforred wi3 blaundener, apert.
 Sire Degarre *him* biheld and lowg3
 f.83rb And gret *him* fair inowg3.
 795 Ac he ne anfwerede neuere a word,
 But fette trefles and laid þe bord;
 And torches in þe halle he li3te
 And redi to þe ſoper di3te.
 Þan þer com out of þe bour
 800 A *dammeifele* of gret honur.
 In þe lond non fairer nas;
 In a diapre cloþed 3he was.
 Wi3 hire come maidenenes tene,
 Some in ſcarlet, ſome in grene,
 805 Gent of bodi, of ſemblaunt swete.
 And Degarre *hem* gan grete.
 Ac hi ne anfwerede no wi3t,
 But 3ede to þe ſoper anonri3t.
 “Certes,” quaþ ſire Degarre,

¹² Here the manuscript reads “heþing.”

810 **I**ch haue hem gret and hi nowt me;
But þai be domb, bi and bi
Þai schul speke firft ar I.”
Þe leuedi þat was of rode so brizt;
Amidde 3he fat anonrizt,
815 **A**nd on aiþer half maidenen fiue.
Þe dwerw hem feruede alfo bliue
Wi3 riche metes and wel idi3t;
Þe coppe he fille3 wi3 alle his mi3t.
Sire Degarre couþe of curteisie.
820 **H**e fet a chaier bifore þe leuedie
And þerin him felue fet
ȝ tok a knif and carf his met.
At þe foper litel at he,
But biheld þe leuedi fre
825 **A**nd fe3 afē feir a wimman,
Als he heuere loked an,
Þat al his herte and his þout
Hire to loue was ibrowt.
And þo þai hadde fouped anow3,
830 **Þ**e dwerw¹³ com, and þe clo3 he drou3.
Þe leuedis weffche euerichon
And zede to chaumbre quik anon.
Into þe chaumbre he com ful fone.¹⁴
f.83va **Þ**e leuedi on here bed fet
835 **A**nd a maide at here fet
And harpede notes gode and fine;
Anoþer brou3te spices and wine.
Vpon þe [bedde] he fet adoun
To here of þe harpe foun.
840 **F**or murthe of þe notes fo ffchille
He fel adoun on flepe ftille;
So he flep al þat ni3t.
Þe leuedi wrei3 him warm, aplizt,
And a pilewer vnder his heued dede
845 **A**nd zede to bedde in þat ftede.
Amorewe whan hit was dai-lizt,
Sche was vppe and redi di3t;

¹³ Here the manuscript reads “drew.”

¹⁴ Judging from this poem’s rhyme scheme, a line appears to have been omitted before or after this one.

Faire fche awaked him þo.
“Aris,” fche feide, “graiz þe an[d] go.”
850 **A**nd faide þus in here game,
“Þou art worþ to suffri fchame,
Þat al ni3t af a best slepteft
And non of mine maidenen ne kepteft.”
“O gentil leuedi,” feide Degarre,
855 **“F**or Godef loue for3if hit me.
Certes, þe murie harpe hit made;
Elles misdo nowt [I] ne hade.
Ac tel me, leuedi fo hende,
Ar ich out of þi chaumber wende,
860 **W**ho is louerd of þis lond,
And who þis castel haþ in hond,
Wether þou be widue or wif
Or maiden 3it of clene lif,
And whi her be so fele wimman
865 **A**llone wi3outen ani man.”
Þe dameifele fore fi3te
And bigan to wepen anonrizte.
“Sire, wel fain ich telle þe wolde,
3if euere þe better be me ffcholge.
870 **M**i fader was a riche baroun
And hadde mani a tour and toun.
He ne hadde no child but me.
Ich was his [h]air of þis cuntre.
f.83vb **I**n mene ich hadde mani a kni3[t]
875 **A**nd squiers þat were gode and lizt,
An[d] ftaleworht men of mester
To ferue in court fer and ner.
Ac þanne is þar herebifide
A fterne kni3t iknawe ful wide;
880 **I**ch wene in Bretaine þer be non
So ftrong a man fo he is on.
He had iloue me ful 3ore;
Ac in herte neuere more
Ne mi3te ich louie him a3ein.
885 **B**ut whenne he fegh3e þer was no gein,
He was aboute wi3 maiftri
For to rauiffe me awai.
Mine kni3tes wolde defende me,
And ofte fow3ten hi an[d] he:

- 890 Þe beft he flowgh þe firfte dai
 And feþen an oþe[r], *par* ma fai,
 And feþen þe þridde and þe ferþe,
 Þe befte þat miȝte gon on erthe.
 Mine squiers, þat weren fo stoute,
 895 Bi foure, bi fiue þai riden oute
 On hors armed wel anowȝ
 His houen bodi he *hem* slough.
 Mine men of mefter he slough alle
 And oþer pages of mine halle.
 900 Þerfore ich am fore agaft,
 Left he wynne me ate laft.”
 Wiȝ þis word fche fil to grounde
 And lai afwone a wel gret ftounde.
 Hire maidenenes to hire come
 905 And in hire armes vp hire nome.
 He beheld þe leuedi wiȝ gret pite;
 “Loueli madame,” quaþ he,
 “On of þine ich am here.
 Ich wille þe help be mi pouere.”
 910 “Ȝhe, sire,” Ȝhe faide, “þan al mi lond
 Ich wil þe ȝiue into þin hond
 And ^{at} þi wille bodi mine,
 Ȝif þou miȝt wreke me of hine.”
 f.84ra Þo was he glad al for to fiȝte,
 915 A[c] wel gladere þat he miȝte
 Hauē þe leuedi fo briȝt
 Ȝif he slough þat oþer kniȝt.
 And als þai ftod and fpak ifere
 A maiden cried wiȝ reuful chere:
 920 “Her comeȝ oure enemi fafte vs ate.
 Drauwe þe bregge and ffchet þe ȝate.
 Or he wil ften ous euerichone.”
 Sire Degarre ftirt vp anon,
 And at a window *him* feȝ,
 925 Wel i-armed on hors hegh,
 A fairer bodi þan he was on,
 In armes ne fegh he neuer non.
 Sire Degarre armed *him* bliue
 And on a ftede gan out driue
 930 Wiȝ a fpere gret of gayn.
 To þe kniȝt he rit aȝein.
- Þe kniȝte spere al tofprong.
 Ac Degarre was fo ftrong
 And fo harde to *him* þraft.
 935 But þe kniȝt fat fo faft,
 Þat þe ftede rigge tobrek
 And fel to grounde and he ek.
 But anon ftir[t] vp þe kniȝt
 And drouȝ out his swerd briȝt.
 940 “Aliȝt,” he faide, “adoun anon.
 To fiȝt þou ffchalt afote gon.
 For þou haft slawe mi ftede,
 Deȝ-dint fchal be þi mede.
 Ac þine ftede fle I nille;
 945 Ac on fote fiȝte ich wille.”
 Þan on fote þai toke þe fiȝt
 And hewe togidere wiȝ brondes briȝt.
 Þe kniȝt ȝaf sire Degarre
 Sterne ftrokes gret plente,
 950 And he *him* aȝen alfo,
 Þat helm and fcheld cleue atwo.
 Þe kniȝt was agreued fore,
 Þat his armour toburfte þore.
 f.84rb A ftrok he ȝaf sire Degarre,
 955 Þat to grounde fallen is he.
 But he ftirt vp anonriȝt,
 And swich a ftrok he ȝaf þe kniȝt
 Vpon his heued fo harde ifet
 Þat helm and heued and bacinet,
 960 Þat ate breft ftod þe dent.
 Ded he fil doun, verraiment.
 Þe leuedi lai in o kernel
 And biheld þe batail eueri del.
 Ȝhe ne was neuer er fo bliþe;
 965 Sche þankede God fele fithe.
 Sire Degarre com into caftel;
 Aȝein *him* com þe dammaifel
 And þonked *him* swiþe of þat dede.
 Into chaumber fche gan *him* lede
 970 And vnarmed *him* anon
 And fet *him* hire bed vpon
 And faide, “Sire, *par* charite,
 I þe prai dwel wiȝ me;

And al mi lond ich wil þe 3iue
 975 And mi felue, whil þat I liue.”
 “Grant merci, dame,” faide Degarre,
 “Of þe gode þou bedest me.
 Wende ich wille into oþer londe
 More of hauentours for to fonde.
 980 And be þis twelue moneþ be go
 A3ein ich wil come þe to.”
 Þe leuedi made moche mourning
 For þe kniztes departing
 And 3af him a ftede god and fur,
 985 Gold and filuer an[d] god armur
 And bitauzt him Ihesu heuene-king;
 And fore þai wepen at here parting.
 Forht wente sire Degarre
 Þurh mani a diuers cuntre;
 990 Euermor he rod weft.
 So in a dale of o forest
 He mette wiz a dou3ti knizt
 Vpon a ftede god and lizt
 f.84va In armes þat were riche and fur
 995 Wiz þe ffcheld of afur
 And þre bor-heuedes þerin,
 Wel ipainted wiz gold fin.
 Sire Degarre anonrizt
 Hendeliche grette þe knizt
 1000 And faide, “Sire, God wiz þe be.”
 And þous a3ein anwerede he
 “Velaun, wat doft þou here
 In mi forest to chafe mi dere?”
 Degarre anwerede wiz wordes meke
 1005 “Sire, þine der noug[h]t I ne feke;
 Iich am an aunterous knizt
 For to feche werre and fizt.”
 Þe knizt faide, “Wizouten fail,
 3if þou comest to feke batail,
 1010 Here þou haft þi per ifounde.
 Arme þe swiþe in þis ffounde.”
 Sire Degarre and his squier
 Armed him in riche atir,
 Wiz an helm riche for þe nones;
 1015 Was ful of preciouf ftones,

Þat þe maide him 3af, faun fail,
 For whom he did raþer batail.
 A ffcheld he keft aboute his fwere,
 Þat was of armes riche and dere,
 1020 Wiz þre maidenes heuedes of filuer bri3t,
 Wiz crounes of gold preciouf of fizt.
 A ffchaft he tok þat was nowt smal,
 Wiz a kene coronal.
 His squier tok anoþer spere,
 1025 Bi his louerd he gan hit bere.
 Lo, swich auenture he gan bitide:
 Þe sone a3ein þe fader gan ride,
 And noiþer ne knew oþer no wizt.
 Nou beginnez þe firfte fizt.
 Sire Degarre tok his cours þare,
 A3en his fader a ffchaft he bare.
 To bere him doun he hadde imint;
 Rizt in þe ffcheld he fet his dint.
 f.84vb Þe ffchaft brak to peces al,
 1035 And in þe ffcheld fat þe coronal.
 Anoþer cours þai gonne take.
 Þe fader tok for þe fones fake
 A ffchaft þat was gret and long,
 And he anoþer alfo ftrong;
 1040 Togider þai riden wiz gret raundoun,
 And aiþer bar oþer adoun.
 Wiz dintes þat þai smiten þere
 Here ftede-rigges toborften were.
 Afote þai gonne fizt ifere
 1045 And laiden on wiz swerdes clere.
 Þe fader amerueiled wes,
 Whi his swerd was pointles,
 And feide to his sone, aplizt
 “Herkne to me a litel wizt.
 1050 Wher were þou boren, in what lond?”
 “In Litel Bretaigne, ich vnderftond,
 Kingges doughter sone, witouten les;
 Ac I not wo mi fader wes.”
 “What is þi name?” þan faide he.
 1055 “Certes, men clepez me Degarre.”
 “O, Degarre, sone mine,
 Certes, ich am fader þine.

	And bi þi swerd I knowe hit here.	[tear in page]
	Þe point is in min aumenere.”	[tear in page]
1060	He tok þe point and fet þerto.	1090 Þ?:[tear in page]
	Degarre fel ifwone þo,	T[tear in page]
	And his fader, fikerli,	A[tear in page]
	Alfo he gan swony.	M[tear in page]
	And whanne of swone arifen were,	A[tear in page]
1065	Þe sone cride merci þere	1095 Þ[tear in page]
	His owen fader of his mifdede.	A[tear in page]
	And he him to his castel gan lede	F[tear in page]
	And bad him dwelle wiz him ai.	A[tear in page]
	“Certes, fire,” he faide, “nai.”	T[tear in page]
1070	Ac, 3if hit 3oure wille were,	1100 H[tear in page]
	To mi moder we wende ifere;	T[tear in page]
	For 3he is in gret mourning.”	Þ[tear in page]
	“Bleþelich,” quaþ he, “bi heuene-kyng.”	Þ[tear in page]
f.84 ^a ra	[tear in page]	H[tear in page]
1075	[tear in page]	1105 Si?:[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Gr?:[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Op?:[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Op?:[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Of[tear in page]
1080	[tear in page]	1110 Þe[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Of[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Ty[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Org[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Þer[tear in page]
1085	[tear in page]	1115 God[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	And[tear in page]
	[tear in page]	Gad[tear in page]// [end of f.84 ^a ra]

5. THE SEVEN SAGES OF ROME

- f.85ra //For þe mede of mi feruife
 Tac me þi fone to loke and lore;
 Of mi feruife kep I nammore;
 And I þe wille þonke conne,
 And al þe clergie vnder fonne
- 5 Ich wille into his bodi diȝt,
 Boþe bi dai and bi niȝt.”
 Dioclician þe maiftres herde,
 He ftrok his berd and fchok his ȝerde,
 And on hem made milde chere
- 10 And ſpak þat hi alle miȝte ihere,
 “þonke I ȝou kan, gode lordingges,
 Of ȝoure gentil anfweringes
 I kan ȝou þonke of ȝoure ſpeche,
 þat ȝe defire mi fone to teche,
- 15 ȝoure compaignie is fair and gent,
 Nel ich hit departe verraiment.”
 He tok hiſ fone bi þe hond anon,
 An[d] bitauȝte him to hem euerichon.
 þai vnderfengen him wiȝ cher blithe
- 20 And þonged him a þouſand fithe.
 þe feuen wiſe wiȝ gret glorie,
 þa^t child ladde to confistorie,
 þa^t is a ftede wiȝinne Rome,
 þer men makeȝ wiſe dome.
- 25 þiſ feuen wiſe men in boke
 Here conſeil þere togider toke
 þa^t he ſcholde nowt in Rome bilaue,
 For burgeis, maiden, oþer knaue
 Miȝte him in fom riot fette
- 30 þat al his lore he ſcholde lette.
 þer þai toke togideres alle
 þai wolde make a riche halle
 Wiȝouten Rome in on verger
 A mile þennes bi o riuer -
- 35 Tiber hit hatte wiȝouten dout
 A mile long al about.
 Alle tres þerinne were,
 þat ani frut an erthe bere.
 Amideward þai founden a ſpace,
- 40 An euene and a grene place,
 þerinne þai ſet an halle anon
 Boþe of lim and of fton.
 Quaire hit was wiȝ chaumbres feuene,
- f.85rb Was non fairer into heuene.
- 45 þe halle was a midewerd
 þe faireſt of þis midelerd.
 þerinne was paint of donet þre pars,
 And eke alle þe feuen ars.
 þe firſte ſo was grammarie,
- 50 Muſike and aſtronomie,
 Geometrie and ars metrike¹
 Rettorike and ek fiſike.
 þe ſegh was in þe halle
 þe ars to bihelden alle.
- 55 Whan o maifter him let anoþer him tok,
 He was euer vpon his bok,
 And to his lore tok gret kepe,
 But whan he ete oþer he flepe.
 þe ferȝe ȝer, hit was no dout,
- 60 Wiȝ his maifter he gan to deſpout,
 þe fiſte ȝe[r] he gan argument
 Of þe ſterre and of þe firmament.
 þei wolde proue in þe fexte ȝer
 ȝif he ware wiſ and wer.
- 65 Leues þai tok fextene
 Of juy þat were grene.
 Vnder ech ftapel of his bed
 þat he niſte four þai hid.
 þe child ȝede to bedde aniȝt
- 70 And ros arliche amorewen, apliȝt.
 Hiſe maiftres him bifore ftode,
 Open hefd, wiȝouten hode.
 þe child lokede here & tar,
 Vp and doun and eueri whar.
- 75 Hiſe maiftres aſkede wat him was.
 “Par fai,” he feide, “a ferli cas.
 Oþer ich am of wine dronke,

¹ Here the manuscript reads “mutike.”

Oþer þe firmament is ifonke,
 Oþer wexen² is þe grounde
 80 Þe þiknes of four leues rounde.
 So muche to niȝt heyer I lai
 Certes þanne ȝifterdai.”
 Þe maiftres þo wel vnderftode
 He coude inow of alle gode.
 85 Þe feurende ȝer fo tok he on,
 He paſſede hiſ maiftres euerichon.
 Togider þai made gret ſolas,
 f.85va Ac ſone hem fil a ferli cas.
 Dioclician þat was in Rome,
 90 A riche man and wiſ of dome,
 Hiſe barons comen to him on a dai,
 And, “Sire, *par noſtre fai*,
 Ȝe libbez an alenge liſ;
 Ȝe ſcholde take a gentil wiſ
 95 Þat ȝou mi[3]t fom ſolas do,
 And biȝeten children mo.
 Inow Ȝe habben of werldes won,
 To make hem riche euerichon.”
 Þemperour was wel ipaied
 100 Wiȝ þat þemperour³ had ſeid,
 Sone he let him puruai
 An emperice of gret noblai.
 He went him ſelf and ſent his fond
 Widewhar into fele lond
 105 Fort þat þai ani founde
 A dammeiſele of gret mounde.
 Þai brouwte here tofore þemperour.
 He ſegh ſche was of feir colour,
 He wot ſche was of hegȝ parage;
 110 Anon þai aſked þe mariage.
 Þai weren iwedded bi *commun dome*
 Anon in þe giſe of Rome,
 And louede hem þourg alle þing.
 Herknez nou a fellu tiding.
 115 Þing ihid ne þing iſtole,
 Ne mai nowt longe be forhole.

Ne þing mai forhole be
 But Godes owen priuete.
 Som ſquier or fom ſeriant nice
 120 Had itold þemperice
 Al of þemperoures ſone,
 Hou he wiȝ þe maiftres wone.
 And hire ſchildre ſcolde be baſtards
 And he ſchal haue al þe wardes
 125 Vnder heft and vnder hond
 Of þempire and al þe lond.
 Þan couþe ſche boþe qued an[d] god
 And ſone ſche gan to pekke mod,
 And þoughte, fo ſtepmoder doþ
 130 Into falſeneſſe [to] torne foþ
 And brew swich a beuerage
 f.85vb Þat ſcholde Florentin bicache.
 Ac mani wenez oþer to herte
 And on hem ſelue falleȝ al þe ſmerte.
 135Þ emperour and his wiſ
 Þat he louede als his liſ
 In chaumbre togidere þai ſete.
 Gladliche þai dronke and ete;
 “Sire,” ȝhe ſaide, “gentil emperour,
 140 I þe loue wiȝ fin amour
 And þou nowt me ſike[r]li.
 Sire, ihc wil telle þe whi.
 Seue ȝer hit is þat þou me nome
 And made me emperice of Rome,
 145 Þi make at bord and at bedde,
 And o þing þou haſt fram [me] hedde.
 Þou haſt a ſone to ſcole itauȝt;
 Lat me him ſe, warn me him nauȝt.
 Hit is þi ſone and þin air,
 150 A wiſ child and a fair.
 Þi moſt time þou haſt ben kyng
 Þou draweſt faſt to þin e[n]ding.
 Fond we, fire, in joie libbe
 And haue joie of oure ſibbe.
 155 For þi ſone I tel mine
 Alſe wel als tou doſt þine.
 Parauenture hit mai falle fo
 Þat neuer eft ne tit vs mo.

² Here the manuscript reads “weren.”

³ Most of this word has been effaced.

3if þou me loueft ani wizt
 160 Let me of *him* han a sizt.”
 “Certes, dame,” feide þemperour,
 “Hit ne schal nowt be long foieur.
 Tomorewe ar vndertide of dai
 Þou schalt *him* fen, *par* ma fai.”
 165 And sche feide wiz chere blithe,
 “Graunt merci, sire, a þounfed⁴ fithe.”
 A morewe þemperour gan rise,
 And cloþed *him* in riche gifē.
 Meffagers he clepede [to]⁵
 170 And quik þai com toforn *him* bo.
 He scharged *hem* wiz his meffage
 And bad *hem* grete þe feuen sage,
 “And feiez *hem*, wiz wordes bonair,
 Mi fone þat þai atire fair,
 175 And brenge *him* hom in faire manere,
 f.86ra For ich wil quik of *him* here,
 Hou he had fped þis feue zer
 Me þinkez longe þat ner er.”
 Þe meffagers anon forht sprong
 180 I not bi waie 3if þai song
 Til þai come to þat inne
 Þer þe maiftres woned inne.
 And af we finden writen in bok,
 Aiþer oþer be þe hond tok
 185 And in þai wente rizt euene
 And founde þe maiftres alle feue
 Difputend in hire latyn
 Wiz þat child Florentyn.
 Þe meffagers on knes *hem* fette
 190 And þe feuen wifē þai grette
 In þemperours bihelue,
 And þe child be *him* felue,
 And feide þat emperour het
 His fone þat þai bringge *him* fket
 195 To Rome toun to his *prefens*.
 “3our trauail and 3oure despens

⁴ Here the manuscript reads “þounfed.”

⁵ A blot in the manuscript obscures this line-final word.

He wil aquite for ech a zer
 After þat 3he worthi wer.”
 Þe meffagers were welcome,
 200 And bi þe hond quik ynome
 And at þe mete tales *hem* telde
 What þe sonne gan to helde.
 Hout wente þe maiftres feue
 And bihelden vp toward heuene.
 205 Þai seghe þe constillacioun
 Þe wifest in þat so was Katoun;
 He gan to loke in þe mone,
 And feide þat *him* þoughte fone.
 “Lordinges,” he faide, “for Godes fond,
 210 To mi telling vnderfond.
 Þemperour to ous had sent
 To brenge *him* his fone gent.
 3if we *him* bring biforn our lord,
 He fteruez ate ferfte word
 215 Þat he schal in court speke.
 Þanne he wil of ous be wreke,
 To drawe ous oþer to hongi fone,
 Þis I fe wel in þe mone.”
 Þe oþer faide wizouten oþ
 f.86rb Þat Catoun *hem* faide foht.
 S child Florentin was lered in boke
 And in a fter he gan to loke
 Whiche þat fat next þe mone,
 And faide þat *him* þoughte fone
 225 Þat he wift þourgh alle þing
 Of þat fterre þe toknyng.
 Þanne faide þe maiftres to Florentin
 “What fextou, leue child, þarin?”
 He faide, “Maifter, I schal wel liuen,
 230 3if I mai, þis daies feuen;
 Kepe me fram anfwering,
 I mai liue to god ending,
 And sauue me to warifoun
 And 3ou fram destruccioun.”
 235 Þe maiftres han wel devise
 Þ[e] childes tale was god and wife.
 Þan feide maifter Bancillas,
 “Her is now a ferli cas.

Counfeil we al her vpon
 240 Hou þat we mai beft don.”
 Þan faide þe ſchild, “Saun3 fail,
 Ich 3ou ri3t wil counfeil.
 Þis feuen daies I nel nowt ſpeke
 Nowt o word of mi mowht breke.
 245 And 3e bez maiftres gode and wife,
 In al þis werld of meft priſe.
 Litel 3e conne, *par* ma fai,
 But echon of 3o mai faue me a dai.
 Þe aizteden dai ich me ſelue
 250 So þe ax pelt in þe helue
 Þat ſchal hewe þe wai atwo
 Þat had wrout me þis wo.”
 Þan faide maifter Bancillas,
 “So God me helpe and feint Nicholas,
 255 I ſchal þe waranti o dai.”
 “And I,” quap Catoun, “*par* ma fai,
 Schal þe warant anoþer alfo.”
 Alle þe maiftres ſpeken þo;
 Þai wald [wi3] wit and refoun,
 260 Saue þe child fram deſtruccioun,
 Fram ſchame and fram vilani.
 “Maiftres,” he faide, “graunt merci.
 Certes, hi[t] bihoue3 fo
 f.86va For I ffchal þoli mochel wo
 265 Gret deſpit and ſtrong *turment*,
 But 3e be queinte of argument.”
 Wi3 þis word þai ben alle
 Departed and comen to halle
 And maked at eſe þe meſſagers
 270 Wi3 god ſemblant and glade chers.
 And whan hit com to time of ni3t,
 To riche bed þai were idi3t,
 And Florentin þe ſchild alfo
 To his bed he gan to go;
 275 And þou3t al ni3t her and tar,
 Hou þat he mi3t be wis and war
 To ouercome þe emperice
 Þat he nere nowt iholden nice.
 Þe ni3t paſſe3, þe dai comen is,
 280 Þe feuen maiftres arifen iwis.

Þe maiftres and þe meſſagers
 Habbe3 greiþed here deſtre[r]s
 And þat ſchild wel fair idi3t
 And went hem forht anonri3t.
 285 Þai dede hem out of þat gardin,
 Þat is icleped þe bois of feint Martin
 And here way toke to Rome.
 Þe maiftres here wai a3en nome.
 Tiding had þemperour
 290 His fone com wi3 gret honur.
 Anon he let a ſtede di3t
 ȝ rod him a3en wi3 mani a kni3t;
 Whan he him ſegh3 þan was he bli3e
 ȝ keſt him wel mani a fiþe.
 295 Kni3t and erl and mani baroun
 Kiſte þe emperours foun
 And ladde him wi3 gret noblais
 To þemperour palais.
 Þe emperice him wil honur,
 300 Do him fende into hire bour;
 Scho ladde fram bour to bour
 And dede here mene make retour.
 3e ffchette þe dore and ſet him on benche.
 Wil 3e nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?
 305 Þe emperice was queinte in dede,
 And [in] hire wrenche and in hire fafhede.
 3he and þe ſchild alone wer þan,
 f.86vb Was wi3 hem non oþer man.
 Be his ſide 3he fet hire faſt,
 310 On him ſche gan her egzen kaſt
 And faide, “Mi leue ſuete grom,
 Swiþe welcome be þou hom.
 I haue icaſt to þe mi loue
 Of al worhtlich þing aboue.
 315 Þi louerd þe emperour is old,
 Of kinde, of bodi he is cold.
 I ſwere, bi ſonne and bi mone,
 Wi3 me ne hadde he neuer to done.
 But for ich herde telle of þi priſ,
 320 Þat þou were hende, gentil, and wis.
 For to haue wi3 þe acord,
 Ich am iwedded to þi lord.

Kes me, lemman, and loue me,
 ȝ I ȝi foget wil ibe.
 325 So God me helpe, for he hit wot,
 To ȝe ich haue ikept mi maidenhod.⁶
 Sche keft here armes aboute his swere,
 Ac he made lourand chere
 And drowȝ awai wiȝ al his miȝt;
 330 He wold his lord don non vnriȝt.
 Whan ȝe emperice ȝat vnderftod,
 Al achaunged was hire blod,
 And faide to *him*, “Sweting fre
 Whi nel tou nowt ſpeke wiȝ me?”
 335 For no þing ȝat ſche miȝtte do,
 O word nolde he ſpeken her to.
 Þan ȝe emperice wex wroþ,
 Sche tar hire her and ek here cloþ,
 Here kirtel, here pilche of ermine,
 340 Here keuerchefs of ſilk, here ſmok o line,
 Al togidere, wiȝ boþe feft,
 Sche torent bineþen here breft.
 Wiȝ boþe honden here ȝaulew here
 Out of ȝe trefſes ſche hit tere,
 345 And ſſche tocragged hire viſage,
 And gradde, “Harow!” wiȝ gret rage.
 In halle was ȝemperour,
 “Who had ȝe don þis defonur?”
 “Bot þis deuel ȝat her is,
 350 Hadde me ner ihoniſſcht, iwis.
 Hadde ich ben a while ſtille
 f.87ra Wiȝ me he hadde don his wille.
 And but ȝe hadde ȝe raþer icome,
 Par force he hadde⁷ me forht inome.
 355 Lo hou he [h]ad me torent,
 Mi bodi ȝ mi face iſſchent.
 He ne was neuere of þi blod;
 Lat *him* binde, for he his wod.
 A fend he is in kinde of man;
 360 Binde *him*, fire, and lede han,
 For wod of wit iſchal be,

ȝif ich lengere on *him* fee.”
 “He ſſchal abigge,” faide ȝemperour,
 And cleped forht a turmentour.
 365 Quik he het hiȝ ſone take,
 ȝ ſpoili *him* of cloþes nake,
 ȝ beten *him* wiȝ ſcourges ſtronge,
 ȝ afterward *him* hegȝe anhonge.
 “Bleþeliche,” ȝe boies quaþe,
 370 ȝ tok ȝe ſchild ſwithe rathe,
 And ladde *him* forht þourgh ȝe halle
 Among þerles and barons alle.
 Euele þai gonnen *him* biſen,
 Gentil ronnen hem bitwen,
 375 And aſked anon of þis cas.
 Þai faide here lordes hefte hit was.
 Anon þai ronnen into ȝe bour,
 Biforn here lord ȝe emperour,
 And blamed *him* he dede ȝat dede,
 380 Wiȝouten counfeil ȝ rede,
 ȝ bad *him* ȝat þilke forewe
 Moſt be reſpit til amorewe,
 “And þanne faue *him* oþer ſlen,
 Bi conſeil of þi gentil men.”
 385 Þe emperour þan ſpared his ſone,
 ȝ het *him* caſte in his priſone.
 Þe emperice was fol wroȝ,
 Þat ȝe child was ſpared, for ſoht,
 And wel mochel hit here traid,
 390 Sche þought wel more þanne ȝhe ſaid.
 An euen late ȝe emperour
 Was browt to bedde wiȝ honur
 Þe emperice his worhtli fere
 To *him* cam wiȝ lourand chere
 395 And ȝe emperour aſked why
 f.87rb ȝhe made ſemblant ſo fori.
 “O fire,” ȝe faide, “no wonder nis,
 For now to londe icomen is
 He ȝat ſchal, in þin eld age,
 400 Binime ȝe þin heritage.”
 “Pais, dame, who ſſchal ȝat be?”
 “Þin howen ſone, I fegge ȝe.”
 “Min owen ſone? Dame, nay,

⁶ Here the manuscript reads “maidenhod.”

⁷ Here the manuscript reads “dhadde.”

Ne schalt tou neuere se þat dai
 405 Þat he schal haue ani miȝt
 Me for to don vnriȝt.”
 “Pais, fire, what halt hit heled
 Todai þo haft *him* fram deþ ispeled,
 Afe wel mot hit like þe
 410 Als dede þe pinnote tre
 Of his ympe þat he forht browte.”
 Þe emperour lai & more þougȝte
 ȝ bad hire wiȝ semblaunt fre
 Tellen *him* of þat ilche tre,
 415 And of þe ympe al þe cas.
 “Whilom a riche burgeis was
 And woned her in Rome toun,
 A riche man of gret renoun.
 He hadde bihinden his paleys
 420 A fair gardin of noblays
 Ful of appel-tres and *and*⁸ of pirie,
 Foules songe þerinne murie.
 Amideward þat gardyn fre,
 So wax a pinnote tre,
 425 Þat hadde fair bowes and frut
 Þervnder was al his dedut.
 He made þervnder a grene bench
 And drank þervnder mani a ffcench.
 Certes þerinne was al his plaiȝng
 430 In time of solas ȝ⁹ and his resting.
 S o bifel vpon a dai,
 Þe burgeis fram home tok his wai,
 He bouȝte marchaundise ȝ his chaffare
 And bileued oute al a zare.
 435 Also sone fo he miȝte
 Homward he gan *him* diȝte.
 Whan he was liȝ[t] at his in,
 Quik he wente to his gardin,
 His fair tre for to fen.
 f.87va Þanne fegȝ he wexe a litel ftren,
 A ȝong ympe vt of his rote;

Fair hit *him* þougȝte and swote.
 Ac þat ympe þat fo fprong,
 Hit was ffchort ȝ noþing long.
 445 Þe burgeis cleped his gardiner.
 ‘Lo!’ he faide, ‘lo, me her.
 Sefte[]¹⁰ þou þis ympe of gret mounde?
 Kanst þou me telle, gode bounde,
 Whi hit is fo fchort wering?’
 450 ‘ȝa, fire,’ he faide, ‘be heuene-king,
 Þe grete bouȝ þat ouer *him* is
 So *him* biffchadeweȝ, iwis,
 Þat hit mai haue no þedom.’
 ‘Steȝe vp,’ he faide, ‘mi gode grom,
 455 ȝ hak awai þe grete bouȝ,
 Þat hit ne do min ympe no wouȝ.’
 Þe gardiner, as his louerd het,
 Hew awai þe bouȝ al swet,
 And asked ȝif hit was wel ido.
 460 Anoper he bad *him* kit þerto,
 ‘Þan mai, wiȝouten letting,
 Min himpe iolifliche fpring.’
 Nou ben hife bowes awai iffchore,
 And mochel of his beaute forlore.
 465 Þe ympe had roum and wexeȝ faft.
 Þe olde tre his vertu gan acaft.
 For no wonder hit nis:
 Of þe maifter rote hit is
 Out ifpronge ȝ out iffchet.
 470 And his bowes awai iket,¹¹
 Þarfore þat olde tre les his pride,
 ȝ afered bi þat o fide.
 Þe gode burgeis on a dai,
 His ympe þriuende he fai,
 475 Fair iwoxe and fair ifprad,
 But þe olde tre was al abrad.
 He clepid his gardener þo
 And asked whi þe olde tre verd fo.
 He answerede, als he wel couȝe,
 480 ‘Sikerliche, ich telle þe nouȝe,

⁸ The “d” of “and” here appears to have been written over another letter.

⁹ The “ȝ” here has been effaced.

¹⁰ Something has been effaced here.

¹¹ Here the manuscript reads “ikeft.”

Þe 3onge impe þat wide fpringes,
Had large roum in alle þingges,
And for þe elde tre is fo ihewed,
 f.87vb **H**it [is] fo wikked and fo fſchrewed.
 485 **Þ**e burgeis feide, ‘Seþþe þe elde
Biginnez fo to vnbelde,
Hewe *him* to þe grounde doun riȝt,
Lat þe 3onge tre atire, apliȝt.’
Þous was þe olde tre doun iþrawe,
 490 **A**nd þe 3onge tre forht idrawe.
Gode fire, gent and fre,
Þat olde tre bitoknez þe.
Þe 3onge bitoknez þi ſone wode,
Þat is iſpronge out of þi blode.
 495 **H**e fſchal be ſone forht idrawe,
And maifter, and þou his knaue.
Hit wil wel ſone ben ido,
But þou take kep þerto;
And but þou do, þou ne haft no miȝt.
 500 **Þ**at I biſeke to oure Driȝt,
Þat als hit mote fare bi þe,
As dede bi þe pinnote tre.”
 “**C**ertes dame, þou feift for nowt,
 I ne fſchal neuere fo ben bicauȝt.
 505 **I**ich þe bihote, ſikerliche,
He ſchal tomorewe erliche,
To deȝ be don, and þat is riȝt.”
And þous paſſede þe fe’fte niȝt.
Amorewe aros þe emperour,
 510 **A**nd mani baroun of gret honur.
Men vndede þe gates of þe paleis,
In com goende mani burgeis.
Sone was fild paleys and tour,
In com goind þemperour.
 515 “**G**oht,” he feiȝ, “to þe priſone,
And fechchez forht mine ſone,
And quik þat he ware anhonge
On heghe galewes and on ſtronge.”
Þe boies ȝede anon doun,
 520 **A**nd feſched þe child out of priſoun
And ladde *him* forht þour þe halle,
Among þe erles and barouns alle.

For þat ſchild þat naked was
Mani bede þemperice euel gras.
 525 **Þ**an com ridend Bancillas,
Þe childes firſte maifter he was,
And ſegȝe his deciple¹² harde biſtad;
 f.88ra **Þ**erfore he was in herte vnglad.
He rod to þemperours halle,
 530 **A**nd liȝte and paſſede þe kniȝtes alle,
ȝ fint ſone þemperour,
And, “**S**ire,” ſaide, “**D**eu vous doint boniour.”
Þemperour ſaide, “**G**od þe defende,
Fram god dai and fram god ende.”
 535 **Þ**an feide maifter Bancillas,
 “**W**hi artou wroht and for what cas?
Wiltou fle þin owen child?
Ne were þou wone be god and mild?”
 “**H**it nis no wonder,” ſaide þemperour,
 540 “**Þ**ou fſchalt ben anhonged, þou loſeniour.
For to þe and þine fere
I bitok mi ſone to lere,
For to han itauȝt *him* god,
And ȝe han imad *him* wod.
 545 **M**i wif he wolde haue forleyn;
Hit nis no wonder þough I haue trayn.
He ſchal þerfore ben iſlawe,
And afterward al todrawe.”
Þan feide maifter Bancillas,
 550 “**S**ire, þat were now a fori cas.
Þei he had iwraththed ȝour wif,
ȝit he had nowt agelt his lif.
Sauue ȝoure grace, wene ich hit nowt,
Hit euere com in his þout.”
 555 **Þ**emperour ſaide, “**I** fond hire torent,
Hire her, and hire face iſchent;
And who is founde hond habbing,
Hit nis non nede of witneſſing.”
Saide Bancillas, “**H**it nis non hale
 560 **T**o leue ſtepmoderes tale.
ȝif þou *him* ſleft bi hire purchas,
On þe falle swich a cas

¹² This word has been altered from “deciphe.”

As fel vpon a gentil kniȝt
 And of his graihond þat was fo wiȝt.”
 565 “O maister, for Godes mounde,
 Hou bifel þe kniȝt of his grehonde?”
 “Per while, sire, þat I tolde þis tale,
 Þi fone miȝte þolie dethes bale;
 Þanne were mi tale forlore.
 570 Ac offende þi fone þerfore,
 And ȝif him respit of his bale,
 f.88rb And þou sƿichalt here a foul fair tale.”
 Þemperour saide, “Respit I graunt.
 Fech *him* hider a seriaunt.”
 575 Quik ran þe messager
 Wiȝ god femblant and glade cher,
 He louted his maister þat *com* him bi,
 As he was lad to *prisoun* fti.
 “Maister,” seide þemperour, “tel þis cas.”
 580 “Blebeliche,” saide sire Bancillas.
 “Sire, whilom was in þis cite
 In a dai of þe *trinete*
 A swiþe noble strong burdis,
 Of men þat were of noble pris.
 585 In a mede was þis *turney*,
 Of men þat were of gret noblai.
 Þe knyȝt in þe mede hadde o maner,
 Al biclofed wiȝ o riuier,
 Of chaumbres and of hegȝe halle
 590 Of old werk, forcrafed alle.
 Þe kniȝt hadde a fair leuedi,
 A wel fair child sƿche hadde *him* bi.
 Hit hadde of þre norices keping:
 Þe ferste ȝaf hit soukeȝing,
 595 Þat oþer norice *him* sƿholde baþe
 Whan hit was time late and raþe,
 Þe þridde norice *him* sƿcholde waffche;
 Þe child was keped tendre an[d] neffche.
 Þe kniȝt hadde a graihond,
 600 Þ[er] nas no better in lond ifound.
 Alle þe bestes þat ran to
 He tok, boþe hert and ro.
 He was fo hende and wel itauȝt,
 He nolde ȝiue *him* for non auȝt.

605 Þe kniȝt was lopen on his ftede,
 And armed wel in iren wede,
 Þe sƿcheld aboute hif nekk þe spere on hif hond
 And burdifed wiȝ þe kniȝtes of þe lond.
 Þe leuedi ftod in pointt tournis,
 610 For to bihelde þe burdis.
 Þe norice went out of þe halle,
 ȝ fet þe cradel vnder þe walle.
 Mani ftede þer ran and lep,
 To hem men toke gode kep.
 615 An Addre was noriffched in þe wal
 f.88va And herde þe riding and þe noise al,
 And pelt out here heued to fe þat wonder,
 ȝ fegh þat sƿchild ligge þervnder.
 He crep to grounde quik anon,
 620 In þe cradel þe child to flon.
 Þe graihond feghȝ þe adder red,
 Griflich, rough, strong, and qued.
 Anon he gan hire to afail,
 And hente here in his mouþ faun fail.
 625 Þe adder fo þe grehound strong,
 ȝ he feled þe bite fo strong.
 Anon he let þe adder gon,
 Vpon þe cradel ȝhe fleiȝ anon,
 ȝ was aboute þe child to strong,
 630 ȝ þe greihond com ȝerne flingging,
 ȝ hente þe adder in strong ger
 ȝ flapped here al aboute his er.
 Bitwene þe adder and þe grehound
 Þe cradel turnd vp fo down on ground.
 635 Vp fo down in hire feghȝting,
 Þat þe child lai diueling.
 Þe stapeles hit vp held al quert,
 Þat þe child nas nowt ihert.
 Þaddre fo þe greihoun bot,
 640 Bi þe fide, God hit wot.
 He cried and on þe cradel lep,
 ȝ bledde þeron a wel gret hep.
 ȝ whan þe smert was al igon,
 To þat addre he sterte anon,
 645 And bi þe bodi he *him* hent
 And al to peces here torent.

Þe grehound wolde nowt feffed be
 Til þat adder ware toren of þre,
 And al þe place þeraboute,
 650 Was wel blodi wi3outen doute.
 Þe burdis to3ede, þe folk gan hom tee,
 And þe norices alle þre
 Þe cradel and þe child þai found
 Vp fo doun vpon þe ground;
 655 Þe greihoun[d] criede for his smert.
 Þe norice was fori in hert,
 7 ech of hem vnderftode
 Þat þe greihond was wod
 And hadde þat faire child iflawe;
 f.88vb Awai þai gonne fle and drawe,
 Als hit were wode wimmen.
 Þe leuedi com hom a3en
 And asked hem what hem was.
 Anon þai telde here al þe cas.
 665 Þai lowen on þat greihond hende:
 ‘Hit was pite, fo God m’amende.’
 Þe leuedi, when fche herde þis,
 Aswone fche fil adoun, iwis.
 Þe kni3t com fram þe iusting fare,
 670 Anon asked hem what hem ware.
 ‘Sire,’ quad3 zhe, ‘ich wille bi ded,
 I nelle neuer ete bred,
 For þi greihond þat is fo wilde,
 Haþ iflawe oure faire childe.
 675 7 but ze willen *him* flen anon,
 Ri3^t now ich wille mi lif forgon.’
 Þe kni3t for rage into halle fet,
 His hende graihond þer he met,
 Þat him welcomed wi3 fot and tail.
 680 Þe kni3t drow3 his swerd faun3 fail,
 Þe graihond on þe rigge he hit,
 Into þe grounde he *him* flit.
 Þe greihound is ded, þe kni3t goþ forþ
 Into his halle grim an^d wroþ.
 685 Of þe adder he fond mani tronfoun
 And þe cradel vp fo doun.
 He turne3 þe cradel and fint þe child quik,
 Hol and fond, and haþ ferlich.

He fegh3 þe adder þe graihound flow3,
 690 He hadde flawen his greihond wi3 wou3.
 He cride 7 made mochel forewe,
 ‘Ne be þat man neuere iborewe,
 But in euel water adreint
 Þat euer leue wimmannes pleint.’
 695 Eft he make3 a gret cri,
 And he clepez þe leuedi,
 7 on þe kni3tes and sweines also,
 7 pleined *him* of his mochel wo,
 7 fſchewede his child hol and found,
 700 7 slawen was his gode graihond,
 For his proueffe and his god dede,
 Al for his fole wiues rede.
 ‘O grehound,’ he feide, ‘wi3t and ftrong,
 f.89ra I fchal mi felue abigge þat wrong,
 705 7 tache oþer kni3tes saun fail,
 To leue here leuedis confeil.’
 He fet *him* doun in þat þrawe,
 Als quik he dede his fſchon of drawe,
 And karf hiſe vaumpes fot-hot,
 710 And wente *him* forht al barfot,
 Wi3outen leue of wif and child,
 And wente into a Foreft wild,
 Into defert fram alle men;
 Wolde he neuer come a3en.
 715 He þolede mani a biter ftounde
 For þe wrong of his greihonde.
 So falle on þe, sire emperour,
 Swich arm and fſchame 7 desonur,
 3if þou do þi fone vnri3t,
 720 Als to þe greihound dede þe kni3t.
 Þourg3 þe counfeil of hiis wif
 He flough3 his greihond nowt geltif.”
 “O maifter, bi Peter þat ich haue fou3t,
 So fchal hit bifalle nowt.
 725 Nou bi God þat I fchal ferue
 Todai more ne fchal he fterue.”
 Þe court wente, þe maifter tok leue,
 Hit gan fone to wexen eue.
 Þemperour com to chaumbre anon,
 730 Þemperice *him* loured vpon.

Pemperour faide, “Dame, artou wro3?”
 “**3**e, fire,” 3e faide, “for foht.”
 “**T**el me now, swetin^g fre.”
 “**P**ou woft wel, fo mot ich fe,
 735 **F**or I þe warni of þine fon,
 And þou ne kanft me þank non.
Pou clepeft þi fone, he is þe deuel,
He fſchal þe do wel mochel iuel.
But þou me of him wil awreke,
 740 **A**l folk mot hit wite and speke.
He mot þe bringge to swich ending,
Als hadde þe bor for his cracheing.”
 “**P**e bor, dame, tel þat me,
Whi for cracheing deied he?”
 745 “**S**ire nou þou wilt wite þat cas,
Ich wille þe telle hou hit was.”
 “**S**ire,” quaþ þe leuedi, “here bi weft
 f.89rb **P**er was a fair riche foreft.
A bor was noriffcht þarinne,
 750 **F**ram a pig to a swine.
Of þe bor was swich los
To gon þerinne ech man agros.
Ne dorft þer come kni3t ne swein.
In þe foreft was a plein,
 755 **A**nd in þe pleyn a tre of hawes
Pat ripe were be þo dawes.
Pe bor hem gan ful fone afmelle,
Ech [dai] he het þerof hiſ felle.
In þat foreft woned an herd,
 760 **P**at of beſtes loked an[d] fterd.
O beſt him was arau3t,
Widewar he hit hadde ifou3t.
Be þe hawe tre he gan come
 7 þou3te to haue þerof ſome.
 765 **F**ul he gaderede his barm,
3et ne þou3t he of non harm.
In his oþer lappe he gaderede ſome,
Pe felle bor bicam to come.
Pe herde him fegh3 and was ofdrad,
 770 **H**e dorft nowt fle, he was ſo mad.

Vp¹³ to þe hawe tre he ſtegh3,
Pe bor him com ſwi3e negh3.
And he ne finde3 hawe non,
Af he was iwont to don.
 775 **H**e loked vp and ſeg3 þe herd
He criede and makede rewli rerd.
He wette his toſſches and his fet,
Pe erthe wi3 his ſnowte he bet.
Pourh þe mouht þe fom was wi3t,
 780 **P**e tuſſches in þe tre he ſmit.
Pe tre arefede af hit wold falle,
Pe herde was fori adrad wi3alle.
And he gan ſone on knes to falle.¹⁴
P[o] iſeþ3 þe herd man
 785 **P**at þe bor falle bigan,
He keft þe bor doun hawes anowe
And com him ſelf doun bi a bowe.
Wi3 þe left hond he heng,
And wi3 þe ri3t hond on þe bor he feng.
 790 **H**e clew þe bor on þe rigge,
And he bigan adoun to ligge.
 f.89va **H**e clewe him eft vpon þe wombe,
He fil adoun als a lombe.
He lek his eghen and gan to flape,
 795 **P**e knif drou3 þe herde knape.
Out he drou3 ſcharp an long,
Pe bor to þe herte he ſtong.
Pe herd¹⁵ þous wi3 his long knif
Biraft þe bor of his lif.
 800 **H**e went him forþ and let him ligge.
Lo! fire emperour, I þe ſigge,
Pou art þe bor, þi maiſter þe clawes,
Wi3 fals refoun and wikkede ſawes,
And on þe he whette3 his te3,
 805 **T**il þai þe bringge to þi de3.

¹³ The “p” of “Vp” was apparently added after the rest of the line was copied, having been written between the column of red-highlighted initials and the column of text.

¹⁴ Based on this poem’s rhyme scheme and collation with other copies of the Middle English *Seven Sages*, one or more lines may have been omitted preceding this one.

¹⁵ Here the manuscript reads “bor.”

Wiz clawing þai sculle þe defceiue,
 Til þai þe fle wiz deþes glaiue.”
 “Certes, dame, I figge no,
 Hit schal neuere bifalle fo.
 810 For soþe he ffchal tomorewe dai,
 Wizouten ani more derai.”
 And sche faide ones oþer twiis,
 “Gentil fire, graunt mercys.
 God 3if þe þerto ftrengþe¹⁶ and mi3t
 815 To de3e him do er hit be ni3t.”
 Þe ni3t¹ passede, þe dai com,
 Þe heghe emperour of Rom
 Went adoun of his tour,
 Wiz herte wroþ and gret irour.
 820 Men vnlek¹⁷ gate and halle dore,
 Barouns entrede in a store.
 Sone was filt paleys and tour,
 In com gon þemperour,
 Biforen hem alle, in grete traye.
 825 He het mani a wikke boie
 His son lede toward þe hangging;
 Hit was ido wizouten letting.
 And ri3t amideward þe pres
 Com ride maifter Ancilles,
 830 Þat þe childes oþer maifter was,
 And ife3 þat ferli cas.
 Toward þe halle he gan driue,
 7 highede þider fast and bliue,
 And fond sone þat emperour,
 835 7 gret him sone wiz honur.
 f.89vb Þemperour likerliche
 On him loked litherliche,
 And to þe maifter he faide þore,
 “Maugre haue þou for þi lore.
 840 Þou haft iferued wikked mede,
 Þou schalt hit haue, fo Crist me spede.”
 Þan¹⁸ faide maifter Ancilles,
 “For Godes loue, fire, hold þi pes.

¹⁶ Here the manuscript reads “ftrengye.”

¹⁷ Here the manuscript reads “unkek.”

¹⁸ Here the manuscript reads “þ þan.”

Wiltou fle þin owen fone?
 845 To ben milde hit was þi wone.”
 “Hit nis no wonder,” faide þemperour,
 “Þou schalt ben anhonged, þou vile lofeniour.
 Ich tok þe mi fone to lore
 For to teche him wisdom more
 850 And 3e han him bitreid;
 His speche is loren, ich am desmaid.
 Mi wif he wolde haue forht itake.
 To de3,” he feide, “he schal ben don wiz
 wrake.”
 Þan feide þe maifter, “Hit is non hale
 855 To leue ftepmoderes tale,
 For here bolt is sone ifchote,
 More to harm þan to note.
 3if þou him [sle] bi hire purchas,
 On þe falle swich a cas,
 860 Als fil on Ypocras¹⁹ þe gode clerk
 Þat flow his neuue wiz falf werk.”
 “Maifter,” he faide, “tel me þat cas
 Of þe scoler and of Ypocras.”²⁰
 Ancilles said als-fo tit,
 865 “Þi sone todai mak þou quit,
 Til tomorewe hit be dai-li3t,
 And I þe scha[l] telle anonri3t,
 Wiz gret felonie and wiz wouh3
 Hou Ypocras²¹ his neuuen slow3.”
 870 “I schal him respite,” faide þemperour,
 And het anon, wizouten foieur
 Men scholde a3en fechche his sone
 And cafte him into prifone.
 Þe child was brout into þe toun
 875 Wiz a fair proceffioun
 And into prifoun pilt he was.
 Nou ginnez þe tale of Ypocras.²²
 “Sire Ypocras²³ was maifter here,

¹⁹ Here the manuscript reads “þpocras.”

²⁰ Here the manuscript reads “þpocras.”

²¹ Here the manuscript reads “þpocras.”

²² Here the manuscript reads “þpocras.”

²³ Here the manuscript reads “þpocras.”

Of lechecraft was non his pere.
 f.90ra **H**e hadde wiȝ *him* his neuue
 Þat schild lere of his vertu.
He fegh þe child so queinte of lore,
He wolde techen *him* nammore.
He þouȝte wel, at a score,
 885 **H**e ffcholde passi *him* bifore.
 Þe child aparceiued wel þis
 ȝ held hit in his herte, iwis.
His emes werk he gan aspie
Til he couȝe al his maiftrie.
 890 **Þ**o Ypocras²⁴ wel he fond
Bi craft of þe childes hond,
 Þat he couȝe al his maiftrie,
 ȝ braft neȝ for onde ȝ vie.
So bifel vpon a time [a] þing:²⁵
 895 **O**f Hongrie þe riche king
Hadde swich a fone gent,
To Ypocras²⁶ anon he sent,
 Þat he fcholde come his fone to hale,
 And habbe gold ful a male.
 900 **Y**pocras²⁷ wende ne miȝt
But cleped his neuue anonriȝt,
 And bad *him* wenden to þat lond,
 And þat schild take an hond.
 And whan he hadde so ido,
 905 **H**e fcholde aȝen comen *him* to
 Þe schild was fet on a palefrai
 And forht he tok þe riȝte way.
 And whan he com to þat lond
 Þe king *him* tok bi þe hond
 910 **A**nd ladde *him* to his fike childe –
Now Crist of heuene be ous milde.
 Þe ȝonge man feȝ þe childes peyne
 ȝ tafted his fenewe and his veyne,
He takeȝ an vrinal for to fen.
 915 **H**e ne feȝ nowt of þe kyng, but of þe quen.

²⁴ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

²⁵ Here the manuscript reads “ȝing.”

²⁶ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

²⁷ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

And of þe child, God hit wite,
He feȝ hit was amis biȝete.
He gan þe leuedi afide drawe.
 ‘**D**ame,’ he faide, ‘be aknawe
 920 **W**hat man had biȝete þis child?’
 ‘**W**hat,’ ȝe faide, ‘artou wild?’
Who ffschulde *him* biȝete but þe kyng?’
 ‘**D**ame,’ he faide, ‘þat is foht no þing.’
 f.90rb **H**it nas neuere of kinges ftren.’
 925 ‘**L**et,’ ȝhe faide, ‘fwich wordes ben
Oþer I fchal do bete þe fo
 Þat þo fchalt neuere ride ne go.’
 ‘**D**ame,’ he faide, ‘bi fwiche tale
 Þi fone fcha[l] neuere more ben hale.
 930 **A**c tel me, dame, al þe cas,
Hou þe child biȝeten was.’
 ‘**B**elami,’ ȝhe faide, ‘fo.’
 ‘**P**ar fai, dame,’ he faide, ‘no,’
 And fchok his heued vpon þe quen.
 935 ‘**D**ame,’ he faide, ‘þai ȝhe wille me flen,
I ne mai do þi fone no bot,
But ȝif I wite þe fothe rot,
Of what man hit was biȝete.’
 ‘**M**aifster,’ ȝhe faide, ‘þat mai no *man* wite.
 940 **Ȝ**if mi conseil were vnhele,
Ich were ifflawe bi riȝte fkele.’
 ‘**D**ame,’ he feide, ‘fo mot ich þe,
I nelle neuere biwraie þe.’
 ‘**O** meifster,’ ȝhe feide, ‘fo hit bifel,
 945 **Þ**is enderdai in on Aueril,
 Þerl of Nauerne com to þis þede,
Wel atired in riche wede,
Wiȝ mi louerd for to plai,
 And fo he dede mani a dai.
 950 **Þ**at ich erl I gan to loue
Al erthliche þing aboue,
 And fo, *par* gret druri,
I let þat erl ligge me bi,
 And þous hit was on me biȝete.
 955 **A**, leue maifster, let no man wite.’
 ‘**N**ai, dame, for fothe, iwis,
But for he was biȝeten amis,

Hit mot boþe drink and ete
 Contrarius drink, contrarius mete.
 960 **B**eues fleſch ȝ drinke þe broþt,
He ȝaf þe child anon þerof,
Þe child wariffcht fair and wel.
Þe kyng ȝaf *him* mani a juel,
To þe leche, of filuer and goold,
 965 **A**ls mochel als he nime wold.
He wente hom wiȝ þat eiȝte.
And Ypocras²⁸ anonriȝt,
 f.90va **H**e asked ȝif þat þe ſchild was found.
 ‘**Þ**e fire,’ he faide, ‘bi feint Simond.’
 970 **H**e asked, ‘What was his Medicine?’
 ‘**B**ef and broþ gode a[nd] fine.’
 ‘**W**hat þan was he an auetrol?’
 ‘**Þ**ou feift ſoht, fire, be mi pol.’
Quaþ Ypocras,²⁹ ‘Bi þe gode dome,
 975 **Þ**ou art bicomel al to wiȝ a grome.’
Þer he þouȝte, aȝen refoun,
To don *him* ſtrong trefoun.
So bifel vpon a dai,
 He and his neuue ȝede to plai
 980 **I**n a fair grene gardin,
Þerin wex mani an herbe fin.
On þei feȝen in þe grounde,
Þat was an herbe of gret mounde.
He tok and ſchewid hit Ypocras³⁰
 985 **A**nd he feide a better þer was
For he wald his neuue bikeche.
Þe child ſtoupede swich on to reche,
Þer while Ypocras³¹ wiȝ a knif
Binom þat ſchild his swete lif,
 990 **A**nd let *him* birie fikerliche,
Als he were ſtoruen ſodainliche.
And ſone þerafter swithe ȝerne
He let alle hiȝe bokes berne.
Ac God almiȝti, heuene-kyng,

²⁸ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

²⁹ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

³⁰ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

³¹ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

995 **H**e ouerfeȝ alle þing.
He ſent Ypocras³² for his trefoun
Sone þerafter þe menefoun.
Wel wiȝt Ypocras³³ for his qued,
Þat he ſcholde ſone be ded.
 1000 **F**or al þat heuer he miȝte do
His menefoun miȝt nowt ſtaunche þo.
He let offende, moche and lite,
Hiȝe neyebours *him* to viȝite,
And tolde al riȝt anon,
 1005 **H**ou his deȝ wa[s] comen *him* on,
Wiȝ gret riȝt and nowt wiȝ wouȝ,
For his neuue þat he ſlowȝ.
An empti tonne he let fet
And of water of a pet
 1010 **H**e let hit fille to þe mouþe,
For he walde hiȝe werkes were couþe.
Þe trefoun he gan hem alle reherfe.
 f.90vb **I**n a þoufand ſtede he let þe tonne perce,
ȝ þo he hadde mad holes ſo fele,
 1015 **I**n ech he pelt a dofele
And ſmerede þe holes al aboute,
And euerich dofeil he braid oute,
No drope of water vt com þan,
Meruaile hadde mani a man.
 1020 ‘**L**o!’ he faide, ‘water hi can ſtop,
Þat hit ne mai nowt bi bores drop,
Ac I ne mai nowt ſtop mi menefoun
And þat is al for mi trefoun,
Wiȝ gret riȝt and nowt wiȝ wouȝ
 1025 **F**or mi neuue þat I ſlow.
Ich *him* ſlow fikerliche,
For he was wiȝer man þan iche.
Ich ne no man vnder ſonne
Me ȝif help nou ne conne,
 1030 **B**ut mi neuue aliuue ware.
Riȝt is þat ich hennes fare.”
‘Lo!’ faide þe maifter, “hou Ypocras³⁴

³² Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

³³ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

³⁴ Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”

Destrued his lif and folas.
 Sire emperour, tak hede and loke,
 1035 He flow his neuue and brent his boke,
 Miȝt hit *him* ani þing profite?"
 "Nai," faide þemperour, "moche ne lite."
 "No," faide þe maifter, "verraiment.
 I bifeke God omnipotent,
 1040 Þat ȝif þou do þi sone to ded
 And hife maiftres, be þi wiues red,
 Þat on þe falle swich a cas,
 As dede on maifter Ypocras."³⁵
 Þe maifter had so ifped,
 1045 Þemperour sone was his frend.
 Þe maifter was owai inome
 Þemperour was to chaumbre icome.
 Þer he fond his emperice,
 Wiȝ lourand chere and wiȝ nice,
 1050 Hond wringging and loude koupe,
 And here viſage al biwope.
 "Dame," he faide, "pluk vp þi cher,
 Oþer tel me whi þou makeſt swich cher."
 "Sire," ȝhe faide, "hit is wonder non;
 1055 Hi fe þi honur al igon.
 I se þe wede waxe ouer þe corn,
 Allas! allas! þat I was boren,
 f.91ra And þat I ſchal þis dai ife,
 Þat we ſſchulle departed be."
 1060 "What, dame, is hit comen þerto
 We ſſcholle be departed fo?"
 "Ȝe, fire, bi Adam ȝ bi Eue,
 For þou nelt nowt me ileue
 Of *him* þat þou clepeſt þi sone.
 1065 Certes he had þe deueles wone.
 He þe procureȝ niȝt and dai,
 Al þe ſſchame þat he mai.
 Þine barouns and þine gentil men,
 Alle þai holden þe aȝen.
 1070 Þai ſſchal wel sone for nithe an hete,
 Put þe out of þi kinges fete,
 And ſette *him* ſtede inne þine;

³⁵ Here the manuscript reads "þpocras."

Þat ware mi deȝ and mi pine.
 Ich hadde leuere to ben anhonge,
 1075 Þan þat I ſcholde liue fo longe."
 A! hou *wimmen* conne hit make,
 Whan þai wil ani man lake.
 "Ac, fire, ȝif hit falle fo,
 Þat þempire is diȝt *him* to,
 1080 On þe falle swich a cas,
 As dede on *him*, þat his heued was
 Of his sone icaſt in a gong,
 Wiȝ felonie and wiȝ wrong."
 "O· dame, who miȝt þat be
 1085 Wolde do his fader swich vilte?
 Tel hit me, for God aboute."
 "Lat be, fire, for mi loue,
 Þou ne loueſt nowt of mi telling,
 Hit ſchal þe rewe bi heuene-kyng."
 1090 "Ȝis, dame," he faide, "lat here þe ſpeke,
 And ich wil sone þe awreke.
 Sei on, dame." ȝ ſſche bigan
 To tellen als a fals *wimman*.
 "A emperour was in þes toun,
 1095 A riche man of gret renoun,
 Octouien was his name,
 Wide ſprong his riche fame.
 Gold and filuer to wille he wan,
 And more he hadde þan ani man.
 1100 He made Creffent, þat riche tour,
 Þerinne he pult his trefor.
 Seue wiſe men þer were in Rome,
 f.91rb Þe fiue out of londe he³⁶ nome,
 And þe twaie left at home,
 1105 To kepe Rome wiȝ riȝtful dome.
 Þat on was boþe curteis an hende,
 Lef to ȝiue and lef to ſpende;
 And þat oþer lef to pinche,
 Boþe he was ſcarf and chinche.
 1110 ȝ als we finden writen in boke,
 Þemperour *him* tauȝt his trefor to loke,
 ȝ he hit kept bi al his miȝt,

³⁶ Here the manuscript reads "ȝhe."

Boþe bi daies an bi niȝt.
 For þe wrecche man, faun fail,
 1115 Wende þe erthe ſſcholde *him* fail.
 Þe large wiſe wiſte wel
 Of þis trefor eche a del.
 He ſaide to his ſone, ‘Tak a pike,
 Toniȝt þou ſchalt wiȝ me ſtrike.’
 1120 ‘Whider,’ ſeide his ſone.
 ‘Þerof haue þou noþing to done.
 Ariſe vp quik, and wiȝ me go,
 And do als tou feſt me do.’
 For[þ] þai went wiȝoute foioſur,
 1125 To Creſſent þat riche tour,
 An hole þai bregen al wiȝ ginne,
 And boþe þai wenten þerinne,
 ȝ token trefor, I ȝou ſwere,
 Als þe moche als þai miȝt bere,
 1130 And beren hit hom wel on haſt,
 And maden *hem* large whiles hit laſt.
 Amorewe aros þat ſinatour,
 And ſithen tobregen his louerdes tour,
 And beren was awai þat trefour;
 1135 Þerfore he made gret dolour.
 He ne made no pleint to no man,
 But ſtopped þe hole anon aȝen,
 For he þouwte wel þat hit left,
 Wolde come aȝen eft.
 1140 For þeſ of ſteling wil nowt blinne,
 Til he honge bi þe chinne.
 Niȝ euene bi þe hole,
 Þer þe catel was iſtole,
 Þe wiſe man dede make a dich
 1145 Ful of lim and of pich,
 Þat ȝif he aȝen wald come,
 Þat þe *trattur* ſſcholde bi nome.
 f.91va Þe ſtolen catel iſpended is,
 Þe wiſe bi comeȝ a fol, iwiſ.
 He tok hiſ ſone, aȝen he went
 To þat tour þat hiȝt Creſſent.
 An hole þay broken al biſtore,
 Þe fader lep in biſtore,
 Into þe limed diche.

1155 Loude he gan to crie and ſkriche,
 And ſaide, ‘Sone, com her þou nowt,
 For ich ham nomen and bicauȝt.’
 ‘Hou ſo, fader, ich wil ſechche help.’
 ‘Nai, ſone, mak þerof no ȝelp.’
 1160 Her ne geȝ help ne red,
 For fikerliche ich am ded.’
 ‘A, leue fader, what ſſchal I do?’
 ‘Sone, wiȝ þin hond þi ſwerd tak to
 And haſtiliche gird of min heued.’
 1165 ‘Nai arſt mi liſ ſcholde me bi bireued,
 Ar ich mi fader ſcholde ſle.’
 ‘Sikerliche, ſone, hit mot ſo be,
 Oþer ich and tou and alle mine
 Beȝ iſchen^t wiȝouten fine.
 1170 Bettere hit is þat ich on paſſe,
 Þan al mi ken, more and laſſe.
 Smit of min heued wiȝ þi ſword,
 Schalt tou neuer here þerof no word.
 Hit ginneȝ to dawe, highe þe henne,
 1175 Forȝiue I þe al þat ſinne.’
 His fader heued he ſmot of þare,
 And awai wiȝ *him* hit bare.
 Ac he ne wiſte for *non* nede,
 Whar he miȝte hit beſt ihede.
 1180 But als he com bi a gong
 Amidde þe pit he hit ſlong,
 And wente hom and made wo,
 His brethren and his ſuſtren alſo.
 Amorewe aros þat ſinatour,
 1185 And ſegh tobroken his louerdes³⁷ tour,
 And ſeȝ þer ſtonde an³⁸ heuedles man;
 Knowe *him* nowt he ne can.
 He loked biſore and bihinde,
 Knowleching ne couthe he finde.
 1190 He let *him* drawe out of þe pit,
 And his fet³⁹ faſte iknit,
 Wiȝ trais an two ſtronge hors,

³⁷ Here the manuscript reads “loruedes.”

³⁸ Here the manuscript reads “and.”

³⁹ In the manuscript “fet” has been written twice.

f.91vb **A**nd hete to Rome drawn his cors,
 ȝ ȝif ani weped oþer cride,
 1195 **H**e het *him* nime þat ilche tide.
 ‘Quicliche breng *him* me bifore,
 For of þat kyn he was ibore.’
Þe heuedles bodi alfo skete
Was idrawe þourgh eueri strete.
 1200 **F**ort he come aȝen þe paleis
Þat auȝte þe ded burgeis.
Þere was cri an[d] wail a wo,
 Of broþer and of fufter alfo.
Þe fone þat wifte of al þat dede
 1205 **S**tirt *him* in · in gret drede;
He braid out his knif on heghȝ
And smot *him* selue þourȝhout þe þegȝ.
Þe kinges seriaunt fafte hide
 To nime þat folk þat fafte cride.
 1210 **Þ**ai ffeched iwonded here broþer,
Þai feide þai wepte for non oþer.
Þai feghen alle þe wonded man,
And leued *hem* wel and went oȝan.
Lo! fire, swich a foul wille,
 1215 **A**ȝen refoun and riȝt skille;
Was nowt þe boi of wit bireued
Whan he tok his fader heued,
In a vil gonge flong hit inne?
He miȝ[t] han don a better ginne,
 1220 **I**biried hit ower priueliche.”
Þou faift soþ, dame, fikerliche,
An vnkynde boi hit was.”
Þa, on þi heued falle þat cas!
Þi fone, þe deuel *him* mote anhonge,
 1225 **B**ut he caft þin heued in a gonge.”
Dame, I ſchal ȝeme me fram care,
 Certes tomorewe he ffechal forht fare.”
Sire, I leue þe nowt, fikerliche.”
Þis, dame, hardiliche.”
 1230 **G**raunt merci,” ȝhe faide, “fire gent,”
An^d kift *him* to acordement,
And let here word swithe fone,
And ȝede to bedde mididone.
Dioclician, þemperour,

1235 **A**morewe wente out of his tour,
And let offende his gentil knaue,
No man ne moft *him* faue,
 f.92ra **A**nd het *him* lede forht fikerlik⁴⁰
And bidelue *him* alfo quik
 1240 **Þ**at he neuer, for no þing,
Herde of *him* more tiding.
He was forht lad wiȝ boies felle.
Þe burgeis and þe dammeifele,
Þai gunne arere swich a cri,
 1245 **Þ**at hit ſchillede into þe ſki,
And faide, “Wailawai! whi wiȝ wronge
Schal þemperours fone ben anhonge?”
Þan com ridende Lentilioun,
A wis maifter and a fair fazoun.
 1250 **Þ**e childes þridde maifter hadde iben,
For reuþe he ne miȝt *him* nowt iſen.
And þemperour wel fone he fond,
He gret *him* faire, ich vnderftond.
Þemperour faide, “So God me ſpede,
 1255 **T**raitour, þe ffechal be quit þi mede.
For mi fones miſlerning
Þhe ffechulle hadde euel ending.”
O fire emperour of pris,
In dedes þou ffecholdeſt be war and wis.
 1260 **Þ**if þou wilt þi fone ffechende,
Wiȝouten aſſent of barouns hende,
And doſt vs qued for oure godneſſe,
On þe falle swich a deſtreſſe,
So dede on þe riche gome,
 1265 **Þ**at wiȝ his wif was ouercome.”
O tel me, maifter, hou ani wimman
Miȝte bigile ani man?”
Bleþeliche, fire, fo God me amende,
Þif þou wilt þi fone offende,
 1270 **F**or ȝif he were þerwiles iflawe,
For nowt I telde þe mi tale.”
Þe riche emperour alfo ſket
His fone aȝen fechche he het.
Þe child was don þe prisoun in,

⁴⁰ Here the manuscript reads “fikerklik.”

1275 Þe maifter his tale he gan agin.
 “Þer was a burgeis in þis toun,
 A riche man of gret renown,
 Þat wolde spouse no neyhebour⁴¹ schild,
 But wente fram hom af a moppe wild.
 1280 He let his negheboures child for o vice,
 And wente fram hem als moppe and nice,
 f.92rb And browzte hom a dammaifele,
 Was ful of vices fwithe fele.
 He feghz hire fair and auenaunt,
 1285 And wiz here fader made couenant
 For to habben hire to wiue
 And euere more to rizte liue.
 He spoufed hire and ladde hire hom,
 Hire forme lemman hire after com,
 1290 Þat hire ferued mani a stounde,
 Whan on flepe was þe [hus]bounde.
 Þan was þe lawe in Rome toun,
 Þat wheþer lord or garfoun,
 Þat after corfu bi founde rominde
 1295 Faſte men ſcholden hem nimen and binde
 And kepen him til þe ſonne vprifing,
 And þan bifore þe folk⁴² him bring
 And þourgh þe toun him villiche driue.
 Þe burgeis aparfeiued of his wiue
 1300 Fele niztes was gon him fram,
 And in þe dawiyng azen zhe cam.
 He faide nowt wel longe while
 But euer he fouchede him of gile.
 O nizt he him afe dronke made
 1305 And zede to bedde blithe and glade,
 And lai ſtille als he flepe ſone.
 Sche ftal awai mididone
 And wente to here lotebi,
 And he hit aparfeiued fikerli,
 1310 And went him out and fegh an[d] herd
 Al togider hou fche miſſerd,
 And wente him in out of þe ſtrete
 And ſchet þe dore ſwiþe ſkete,

⁴¹ Here the manuscript reads “neþhebour.”

⁴² Here the manuscript reads “fokk.”

And ſpak out ate windowe
 1315 And faide, ‘Dame, God ziue þe howe,
 Þis þou ne miȝt forfak for non nede,
 Ich haue inome þe in þis dede
 Wiz þi lechour, wiz him þou go,
 Of þe ne kep I neuere mo.’
 1320 ‘A, lat me in, fire, par amour,
 Men ffchal ſone ringe corfour.’
 ‘Nai, dame, ich þe forfak,
 In þi foli þou worft itake.
 Al þi ken fchal witen and ſen,
 1325 What meſter womman þou haueft iben.’
 f.92va ‘Nai, God almizti þat iſſchilde,
 Ich wille bicom wod and wilde;
 But þou me in lete, ich wille telle,
 Ich wille me drenchen in þe welle.’
 1330 ‘Drenche þi ſelue oþer anhonge,
 For here þou haueft liued to longe.’
 Ze tok vp a gret ſton
 And wente to þe welle anon,
 An[d] faide after a wommanes wrenche,
 1335 ‘Her now, fire, I fchal me adrenche.’
 Ze let þe ſton falle in þe welle
 And ſferte vnder þe dore wel ſnelle.
 Þe ſeli man bigan to grede,
 ‘Allas! Wat ffchal me to rede?’
 1340 Anonriztes he wente him owt,
 And ſoughte his wif in þe welle about,
 And ſwiþe loude he bigan to crie,
 And zhe ſfert in wel an hiȝe,
 And ffchitte þe dore ſwithe faſt,
 1345 And he gan vp his heued caſt,
 ‘What,’ he faide, ‘who is þare?’
 ‘Ich,’ ze faide “God ziue [þe] kare.
 Is hit nou time, bi þi ſnoute,
 For to ben þous longe þeroute?’
 1350 ‘A, dame,’ he faide, ‘ich was aſſchreint,
 Ich wende þou haddeſt ben adreint.
 Lat me in, dame, par amour,
 Men ffchal ſone ringe corfour.’
 ‘Þe deuel honge me þanne bi þe toþ,
 1355 Þe waites ffcholle wel ſe þe ſoþ

Þat þou art an⁴³ hold lechour
 And comest hom after corfour.
 Þou schalt suffre kare and howe,
 And drinke þat þou haft ibrowe.⁷
 1360 Wiz þat þe waites come ride,
 And hi herden hou þai gon schide
 And corfour belle ringge gan.
 Inomen was þat feli man,
 And neuer of him no qued ne herde,
 1365 Þai wift ful wel hou hit ferde.
 Þai beden his wif, as 3e was hende,
 Leten him [in] ar corfu ende.
 3e anfwere[d] as malicious,
 ‘He come3 nou fram þe hore hous.
 f.92vb Þous he is wonet me to ferue,
 On euele deþe mot he fterue.
 Ich haue ihid his schame er þis,
 I nel nammore nou, iwis.’
 Corfour belle no lenger rong,
 1375 Þe burgeis was lad forht wiz wrong.
 What helpez hit lenger tale,
 Þat nizt he fat wel fore akale,
 And his wif lai warme abedde,
 And solas of hire lemman fredde.
 1380 Amorewe þe burgeis was forþ ifet,
 And his honden biforen him knet,
 And þourgh þe toun he was ilad,
 Lohtliche driuen and bigrad,
 Afe a þef. Þis meschaunce,
 1385 Gelteles he suffred þis penaunce.
 Sire, couþe þis woman of gile?”
 “3a, fche was a traitour vile,
 And wel werfe þan an hound.”
 “Sire, mo swiche þer bez ifound,
 1390 And þi self had on swich.
 3e wil þe traie fikerlich,
 3if þou doft after her red,
 Þat þou doft þi sone to ded.
 Þat chaunce falle þe iliche,
 1395 Þat bifel þe burgeis riche.”

⁴³ Here the manuscript reads “and.”

“Par fai, maifter, þat ware god rizt,
 I nel nowt do bi here tonizt.”
 Þe child bileft stille in prisoun,
 Þe maifter went out of þe toun
 1400 And hadde mani a blessing,
 For his difciple deliuering.
 Whan men leke windowe and gate
 Þemperour com to chaumbre late.
 Þemperice bigan to loure
 1405 Lohtliche on þemperoure.
 “Dame,” he faide, “what haileþ þe,
 Swich femblaunt for to make me?”
 “3it ffchal hit falle ous fo bitwene
 Þat mani a man hit ffchal hit sene
 1410 As bitwene þe leuedi and þe stiward,
 And þe king in o foreward.”
 “What forward was þat? Telle hit me
 As þou wilt to me lef be.”
 f.93ra “Nai, fire,” 3e faide, “hit his nowt worþ,
 1415 Mi tale ne mot nowt forþ;
 Telle ich þe enfaumple neuer fo god,
 Þou me haldest of wit wod.
 Þefore ich wille holde me stille,
 And suffri wel þat man þe spille.”
 1420 “Nai, dame, lat here þe speke,
 And ich þe wille ful wel awreke,
 So ich hit finde profitable,
 7 soþ I feie, wizouten fable.”
 “Nou ben sene, fire, and ihere.
 1425 A king was whilom of gret powere.
 Al Poile and Calabre lond
 Al he held hit in his hond.
 Wimmen he louede⁴⁴ swiþe lite,
 7 vfede sinne sodomizte.
 1430 So long he pleiede wiz zong man,
 A swele in his membres cam þan.
 Þe skin mizt hit nowt helde,
 Ne he ne mizte him selue welde.
 He fil fik in Godes wreche,

⁴⁴ In the manuscript “he louede” has been written twice.

- 1435 **H**e let offenden *him* a leche.
In vrine he segh he miȝte libbe,
He laide a plafre vnder his ribbe.
Barli bred he et for gode,
And barli water þat was ifode,
1440 **T**il he hadde of his membres bote.
Þan faide þe leche, ‘Ar ȝe mote
Hauē womman to pleie ariȝt
Ȝif ȝe wil be hol, apliȝt.’
‘I ſchal wel,’ ȝ cleped his ſtiward,
1445 **A**nd he com als a leopard.
‘Lo me her, fire, what wil ȝe?’
‘But a lemman fech þou me,
Þat I miȝt toniȝt wiȝ [hire] plai.’
‘I ne wot non, fire, in þis contrai,
1450 **Þ**at be þi bodi ligge dar,
For⁴⁵ þi los is boren ſo far,
Þat þine membres ben to swolle.’
‘Bihote hem pans an handfolle.
Bihot twenti mark ſom leuedi
1455 **O** niȝt for to ligge me⁴⁶ bi.’
Þanne þout þat ſtiward coueitous,
‘Þat ſiluer ſchal bileue wiȝ ous.’
f.93rb **T**o his wif he went anon
And faide ſche moſt on his arnede gon.
1460 **‘B**letheliche, fire, ac whiderward?’
‘To þe king,’ faide þe ſtiward.
‘Þou ſchalt plaie wiȝ *him* in derk,
And winne ous gode twenti mark.’
‘A, fire,’ ſche faide, ‘fi! fi!
1465 **H**it is foul man to liggen bi,
And þat wot euerich womman wel.’
‘Þou ſchalt, bi feint Michel.
Who þat ſeluer winne nelle,
Leſe he mot wiȝ riȝt ſkille.
1470 **Þ**ou ſſchalt ous þe penies winne,
- Oþer I þe ſſchal driue out of min inne.
O nedes he ſſchal, þat nedes mot;
Hit nis nowt mi wille, God hit wot.
But hit is ſkil, riȝt and lawe,
1475 **T**o do bi me as bi þin awe.’
To þe kinges chaumbre he went azain,
And drof out boþe kniȝt and swayn,
Blewe out þe torches and let in his wif.
To þe king ſche wente bilif.
1480 **Þ**e fals ſtiward to bedde went,
Þe king þe leuedi in armes hent.
What helpez hit ani more feid?
Þat niȝt he was ful wel apaid.
Þe wrecche ſtiward ne miȝt nowt ſlape,
1485 **A**c in þe morewening he gan v[p]rape.
To þe kingges chaumbre he went faun fail;
Þe king þat niȝt hadde ben in trauail,
In trewe loue witouten arm,
And ſlep in þe leuedis arm.
1490 **Þ**e ſtiward made moche forewe,
Til hit were half-wai midmorewe.
He held *him* ſelf mochel wrechche,
Þous þe king bigan to wechche,
And faide, ‘Sire, vp, vp, hit is dai.
1495 **L**at þat leuedi wende awai.’
Þe king faide, ‘I ne haue no rape,
For me left ȝit ful wel ſlape,
ȝ pleie twies and ones,
For to hele mine bones.’
1500 **‘N**ai, fire, hit is mi leuedi,
Þat⁴⁷ al niȝt haþ laien þe bi.’
f.93va **‘B**elamy,’ he faide, ‘is hit þi wif?’
‘Ȝea, fire,’ he faide, ‘be mi lif.’
‘O traitour fiȝ a puteyn.
1505 **W**hi had þi wif bi me lain?’
‘Sire, for þe winn[i]ng of þi mone.’
‘Þerfore,’ he faide, ‘yuel mote þou þe.

⁴⁵ The “or” in “For” may have been added after the rest of the line was copied, having been written within the column of red-highlighted initials; the text column begins with “þi.”

⁴⁶ Here the manuscript reads “þe.”

⁴⁷ The “at” in “Þat” may have been added after the rest of the line was copied, having been written within the column of red-highlighted initials; the text column begins with “al.”

Pou haft bitraid þi wif and me.
 Dwelle þou, wil ich arifen be,
 1510 I fchal þi vile falſe cors
 Do todrawe wiȝ wilde hors.
 Out of mi lond I rede þou flee,
 Þat I þe neuer eft ifee.
 For abide þou min vprift,
 1515 Pou be honged bi Iheſu Crift.⁷
 Sire, þous þe ſtiward les his wif
 And fley awai wiȝ mochel ftrif.
 Iwis, he was al forlore,
 He com aȝein neuere more.
 Þe king aros whan him liſt
 And kep þe leuedi wiȝ þe beſt,
 And held hire two ȝer oþer þre,
 And fiþen ȝaf hire, wiȝ riche fe,
 To a riche erl of þat lond;
 1525 Sche was nowt bicauȝt, ich vnderftond.
 Sire, and ſo wil hit fare bi ȝou
 Whan ȝe han loren ȝoure vertu.
 Out of londe þou beſt idriue
 Schal ich þe neuere ife whil⁴⁸ I liue.
 1530 No forſe on me; after an emperour
 Mai me wedde a vauaſour.
 I mai liue a wel god liſt,
 Þai I be nowt an emperours wif.
 Ac falle chaunce afe hard,
 1535 As dede þe couaitous ſtiward,
 Þat folde his wif for mone,
 But þou do als I rede þe.”
 “Par fai, dame, þat is ſkil,
 I wil do bi þe, ȝif God wil.”
 1540 “Sire,” ȝhe faide, “wiȝouten fail,
 Pou doſt bi a god counſeil.”
 Morewe cam, af ȝhe mowe here,
 Þemperour aros wiȝ foule chere,
 Into his palais he wente ȝare,
 1545 And his barouns he fond þare.
 f.93vb Biforen hem alle in grete traye
 He het mani a wikke boye

⁴⁸ Here the manuscript reads “til.”

His fone toward þe deþe bringge.
 Hit was ido wiȝouten letting;
 1550 Toward deȝ he was ibrouȝt.
 Mani a man hit ofþout.
 Þourgh Rome ſtretes, wide and fide,
 Þe ferthe maifter þer com ride.
 Malquidras was his name,
 1555 In his herte was no game.
 His diſciple louted him to,
 Þe maiftres hert braſt neȝ for wo.
 He went into þe halle-flet,
 Þemperour wel faire he gret.
 1560 Þemperour him miſfaide þan.
 “Merci, fire,” faide þe wiſe man.
 “Sire what haue we þe miſgelt?
 Oure gode dede ſchal ben iuel izelt.”
 “Sire,” quaþ þemperour, “be min hed,
 1565 Worthi art to ſuffri ded,
 For to þe and þine fere,
 I bitok mi fone to lere,
 For to han itauȝt him god,
 ȝ ȝe han imade him wod.
 1570 Mi wif he wolde haue forlai;
 Þerfore ȝe ffchulle al dai.”
 “O, fire emperour of pris,
 In dedes þou ffcholdeſt ben war and wiſ.
 ȝif þou wilt þi fone ſlo,
 1575 Wiȝouten aſſent of⁴⁹ barons mo,
 And for oure godneſſe do vs qued,
 Swich a cas fal on þin heued,
 As hadde þe olde wiſe of his wiue,
 Er þou parte out of þis liue.”
 1580 “O maifter þat was wel ifaid,
 Hou was þat olde man itraid?”
 “He was nowt bitraid, for he wiſ was.”
 “A! leue maifter, tel me þe cas.”
 “Bleþeliche, wiȝouten ftrif,
 1585 So þou reſpite þi ſones liſt,
 Til to morewe þat hit be dai,
 Þan I þe ſchal þe tale fai.”

⁴⁹ Altered from “oþ.”

Pemperour Dioclician
 His fone azen hizt fechche þan,
 f.94ra **A**nd into *prisoun* he was icaft.
Þe maifter ginnez his tale in haft:
 “Whilom was a man old [ʃ] wis
 And hadde inow of worldes *pris*.
 In his zouþe, in middel of his liue
 1695 **H**e hadde iwedded two iolif wiues.
 He liuede and boþe hem ouerbod
 And was longe in his wideuhod.
 He liuede so longe þat he hor was,
 And hadde of womman no folas.
 1600 **H**is feriauntz ofte to *him* come,
 And of alangenes *him* vndernome,
 And [bad] *him* take a wif iolif,
 To folace wiz his olde lif.
Bi⁵⁰ her rede he tok a ʒong womman,
 1605 **A**fe wone is of old man
 ʒong womman for to ſpoufe
 ʃ þanne be wraw an^d geloufe.
 Litel þai mai do, wizouten gabbe,
 Þat ʒong womman wolde habbe.
 1610 **A**lfo ferde þat olde wifē,
 He dede his wif wel smal seruiſe.
 Þe ʒonge wif, vpon a dai,
 Com to chirche, *par* ma fai,
 ʃ fond hire moder þare,
 1615 ʃ tolde hire al of here kare.
 ʃ faide, ‘Moder, I þolie a cas:
Mi louerd doþ me no folas.
 Ich moſte haue ſom oþer loue.’
 ‘**N**ai, dowter, for God aboue.
 1620 **O**ld men ben felle and queinte,
 And wikkede wrenches conne ateinte.
Misdo nowt, doughter, but do bi rede.’
 ‘**L**at ben, moder, for hit is nede.’
 ‘**D**oughter, þi louerd haþ⁵¹ o gardin,

1625 **A** wel fair ympe⁵² is þarin.
A fair herber hit ouerſpredeʒ,
Al his folas þerinne he ledeʒ.
Nou ne bereþ hit lef non,
 And whan þi louerd is out igon,
 1630 **D**oughter, tak þi gardiner,
 And lat it hewe to þe fer.
 And ʒif he faiʒ to þe ani refoun
 Anſwere *him* wiz þis encheſoun:
 f.94rb **Þ**at þou deſt, hit is for þe nones
 1635 **T**o warme bi his colde bones.’
 ‘**D**ame,’ ʒhe faide, ‘hit fſchal ben don.’
Hom ſche wente ſwiþe anon,
 ʃ al maugre þe gardiner,
 Þe ympe⁵³ was hewe to þe fer.
 1640 **Þ**e gode burgeis was hom icome,
 And goþ to his gardin, aſ was his wone,
 And fond his ympe⁵⁴ vp ihewe
 ‘**O**,’ þouʒte he, ‘her was a fſcherewe.’
 ʒhe faide ſche dede hit for non arm,
 1645 **B**ut for he fſcholde his bones warm.
 He hit tok on iuel strong,
 But he ne monede hit nowt long.
 He wentte to bedde and tok folas,
 Þat niʒt neuer þe better hir nas.
 1650 **Þ**e ʒonge wif anoþer dai
 To chirche tok þe riʒte wai,
 And fond eft hire moder þare
 And of bliſſe ſche was al bare,
 For neiþer be niʒt no be dai
 1655 **H**ire louerd nolde wiz hire plai.
 ‘**I**ch mot louie,’ ʒhe faide, ‘dame.’
 ‘**O** doughter, hit were gret fſchame,
 ʒif þou fſcholdeſt þi gode kende
 Þourgh dede of vilainie fſchende.
 1660 **F**or ʒif þou doſt a folie,
 Þi louerd hit wile fone aſpie

⁵⁰ The “i” in “**B**i” may have been added after the rest of the line was copied, having been written within the column of red-highlighted initials; the text column begins with “her.”

⁵¹ Here the manuscript reads “had.”

⁵² Here the manuscript reads “þmpe.”

⁵³ Here the manuscript reads “þmpe.”

⁵⁴ Here the manuscript reads “þmpe.”

And he *him* wolde fellich awreke.
 Herkne doughter what I schal speke:
 A grai bichche þi louer[d] ginne3 louie
 1665 Ouer alle oþer bestes aboue;
 And whan 3e fit bi þe glede
 And þe bichche li3 in þi grede,
 Mak þe wroþ and draw þi knif
 And binim þe bichche here lif;
 1670 And loke þou be þerafter queynt,
 And were þe wi3 a wiues pleint.
 Þe 3onge faide hit ffcholde be so,
 Hom ffche gan hire wai to go.
 Was hit nowt longe afterwar[d]
 1675 Þe 3onge leuedi and hire lord
 Sete an euen bi þe fer,
 Biforen hem stod here squier.
 f.94va 3e hadde on a pilche of pris
 And a chaifel þeron, iwis.
 1680 Þe bichche lai in hire barm,
 Sche plaide and hit dede here harm.
 Sche drow a knif and here smot,
 Þe bichche daide, God hit wot,
 ʒ pilche and cheifel al bibles.
 1685 Þe lord ros and zede to bed.
 For al hire wrenche and al here ginne,
 Þe more loue fche ne mi3t awinne.
 Þe þridde time to fcherche fche went
 And hire moder þer fche fint
 1690 And faide, ‘Dame, for al þi lore,
 I finde loue neuer þe more.
 Moder, ich mot louie algat.’
 ‘Doughter, ich rede þat þou lat.
 Ac, tel me, doughter, for God aboue,
 1695 What man haftou ment to loue?’
 ‘Dame,’ 3he faide, ‘þe preft, bi skil.’
 ‘Nai, doughter, 3if God wil,
 While þou mi3t haue squier or kni3t.’
 ‘Nai, moder, mi trewþe I pli3t,
 1700 I nelle come in no kni3tes bedde,
 He hit wile make wide ikedde,
 And I þe faie, fikerliche,
 Þe preft I mai loue priueliche.’

‘Nai, doughter, her a queinte ginne,
 1705 Þi louerdes loue hou schalt winne.
 Þi louerd schal fone make a fest
 Of riche men and honest.
 Þou schalt be bifaie þat ilke dai.
 Honge at þi gerdel mani a kai
 1710 And sette þe haieft ate bord,
 In a chaier a3en þi lord.
 Þi kai in þe cloþ make þou fast,
 After, stirt vp an haft,
 Þai þou felle coppe oþer cloþ.
 1715 Go forþ and ftrif nowt þerof.
 And þan þou schalt fone ife
 What þerof wil be.’
 Þe 3onge wif to hire moder faid,
 ‘Hit ffchal be don, bi Marie maid,
 1720 And wite I ffchal, moder, bi þan,
 3if he wil plaie, þat olde man.’
 f.94vb Wel fone þerafter, fikerli,
 Þe olde kni3t and te leuedi,
 A wel fair feste þai made þare,
 1725 O[f] frendes þat hem leue ware.
 Sire, what helpe3 hit longe tale?
 Þe wif seruede of bred and ale,
 And after fet hire adoun fone;
 Þe kai made moche to done,
 1730 For fche feld boþe cloþ and cop,
 Napeles þai ware gadered vp.
 Swithe fore fche *him* atraid,
 Certes he was wel iuel ipaid.
 Whanne þe gestes weren at ais,
 1735 Þai wenten hom fram his paleis.
 Morewe com, ac now ihere.
 Þe louerd let make a gret fere
 And let offende a neyghebour,
 Ich vnde^rftonde a god barbour,
 1740 And fet his wif forþ fot-hot
 And hire misddedes hire atwot,
 And faide he mofte chafti hire ginne,
 For iuel blod was hire wi3inne.
 Hit moste be quik ilaten out,
 1745 Þat ffche ne helde hire nowt so stout;

Wer here lef, were hire loþ,
 Of hire he ſpoiled euerich cloþ.
 Þo hire kertel was of idrawe
 Þo wende ffche wel to ben iflawe,
 1750 An[d] faide 3he ffcholde die alfo ſwiþe,
 For 3he neuer lat blod in hire liue.
 Þerof ne ftod him non owe,
 He rent hir ſmok to þe elbowe
 And fithen fet hire on a ftol,
 1755 For he ne wolde nowt ffche were a fol.
 And gan to ſmiten hire on þe veyn⁵⁵
 And ſche bledde wiz gret meyn,
 Grete diffchfolles two.
 Als swithe here arm was ftaunched þo,
 1760 He dede þat oþer arm forht drawe,
 Þan wende ffcho wel to ben islawe
 And loude ffche gan to wepe and crie,
 ‘Hit helpez þe nowt, be ſeinte Marie.’
 Þe barbour in þe veyne hire ſmot,
 1765 Sche bledde wel til ffche was hot
 f.95ra Þe þridde diffcful vprizt;
 Anon 3he les colour and mi3t.
 Þe louerd hit ſegh3 and dede hire ftaunche,
 And in a bed he dede here launche,
 1770 And faide, ‘Þries þou breddeft wod,
 Þerfore þou bleddeft þre diffchfoul of blod,
 And 3if þou bredeft wod ani more,
 3it I ffchal dubble þi fore.’
 Sche wende to degh3e, ſche was agaft,
 1775 And ſent after here moder on haft.
 Hire moder com and ſche faide,
 ‘A, mercy, moder, for Mari maide.
 I ſchal degh3e, nou red me red.’⁵⁶
 ‘Doughter, what ſchal þat ifed?’
 1780 Þou moft me telle what is þis.’
 ‘Mi louerd me haþ nez lawen, iwis.
 For mine þre vnwraft dede,
 Þre diffchfol of blod he let me blede,
 Þat I ne mai liue, bi Godes ore.’

1785 ‘Doughter, left þe loue more?’
 ‘Nai, moder, bi God almi3t,
 I nelle neiþer louie clerk ne kni3t.’
 ‘No, doughter, I feide ful wel,
 Þat olde men bez queynte and fel;
 1790 Þai conne more qued biþenche,
 Þan þou kanft do wiz ani wrenche.
 Hold þe to þine hofebounde,
 And þou ffchalt haue al þe mounde.’”
 “Lo fire,” quad Malquidras,
 1795 “Ne was þis a wonder cas?
 Þries mi3dede þis womman bald,
 And þre vengauces he hire 3ald.
 Þerfore ſche hadde elles idon,
 Þat had ben werft of euerichon.
 1800 Þe preft hi kaſte hire loue to,
 Þat noman mi3t haue vndo.
 So fare3 þe quen wiz hire refoun,
 Wiz hire leſinges and fals trefoun
 Þi ſone to deþ for to bring;
 1805 Ac 3if þou leueft hire leſing,
 Þan []⁵⁷ þe falle a werfe aprife,
 Af dede to þat elde wiſe.”
 “Par fai, maifter, þat ware lawe,
 To dai ne ſchal he nowt be ſlawe.”
 f.95rb Þe maifter out of toun rit,
 Þe child bileft in priſoun pit.
 Þe dai is gon, and comen þe ni3t,
 Þemperour wente to chaumbre, apli3t.
 His emperice þer he fond,
 1815 Sore wepe and wrong hire hond.
 “Ma dame,” faide þemperour,
 “Whi makeft þou swich ſcher 3 foul lour?”
 “Sire, no wonder þou3 ich am wro3t,
 Þou doft þing þat me is loht.
 1820 Þou leueft tales of loſengrie
 Of falſneſſe and of trecherie.
 So dede Creffus þe riche man,
 Gold and filuer to wille he wan
 Bi loſengerie an[d] bi engin,

⁵⁵ Here the manuscript reads “vreyne.”

⁵⁶ In the manuscript “me red” has been written twice.

⁵⁷ Something has been effaced here.

1825 **A**c hit turned *him* to euel fin."
 "Ma dame," he faide, "tel þat me,
 Of Sire Creffus, hou ended he?"
 "Bleþeliche, fire, fo mot ich þe,
 So þat ze wil þe better be.
Uirgil was whilom a clerk
 Þat coude of nigramancie werk.
He made a fair coniuring
Amideward Rome cheping,
 Þat no man quenche ne miȝt
 1835 **W**iȝ no water, I zou pliȝt.
Alle þe poure men of þe lond
Warmed hem þerbi, fot and hond,
And made here mete bi þat fir,
 Þat was a þing of gret matir.
 1840 **A**nd þer bifide on a⁵⁸ donioun
He keft a man of cler latoun,
And in his hond an arblaft heldand
And þerinne a quarel taifand,
And in his foreheued was writen wiȝ blac,
 1845 **L**ettres þat þif word spak:
 'Ȝif me smiteȝ ani man,
I ffchete *him* anon oȝan.'
So hit bifel on a dai
A lumbard com wiȝ gret noblai
 1850 **A**nd seȝ þe merueile, faunȝ dout,
And faide to þe folk about
 'Wil ze þat I smite þis man
To loke what he do can?'
 f.95va **A**nd þai faide, "Ȝa," and he *him* smette
 1855 **Þ**e ymage⁵⁹ in þe fir ffchette.
Þ[e] fir aqueinte for euere mo.
Sire, was þis wel ido?"
 "Nai, dame," he faide, "bi heuene-king,
 Þat was no riȝt wif doing."
 1860 **N**o fire," ȝhe faide, "wiȝouten fail;
Ac Virgil dede ȝit more meruail.
Vpon þe eft ȝate of þe toun
He made a man of fin latoun

⁵⁸ Here the manuscript reads "o."

⁵⁹ Here the manuscript reads "þmage."

And in his hond []⁶⁰ of gold a bal.
 1865 **V**pon þe ȝate on þe weft wal
Virgil keft an ymage⁶¹ oþer,
Riȝt als hit were his owen broþer,
 Þat al þe folk of Rome faid.
Wiȝ þat bal togider þai plaid.
 1870 **Þ**at on hit hente, þat oþer hit þrew,
Mani a man þe foþe iknew.
Amideward þe cite on a ftage
Virgil made anoþer ymage,⁶²
 Þat held a mirour in his hond,
 1875 **A**nd ouerfegȝ al þat lond.
Who wolde pes, who wolde bataille
Quik he warned þe toun, faunȝ faile,
Aboute Rome feuen jurneys;
 Þous he warned niȝt and dais,
 1880 **A**nd þo þat were rebel ifounde,
 Þe Romains gadered hem in a ftounde.
 Þai wente þider quik anon
And deftrued here fon.
 Þe kyng of Poile hadde gret enuie
 1885 **Þ**at þe Romayns made swich maiftrie
For he ne miȝte for non nede
Aȝen Rome in batail fpede,
 Þat he ne was euer more biwraid,
Ouercomen, venkud and bitraid.
 1890 **U**pon a dai he fend his fond
 After alle þe wif men of his lond,
And tolde hem alle his greuauce
And faide he wolde hegliche auauce
Who miȝt þat ymage⁶³ fel adoun,
 1895 **H**e wolde *him* ȝif his warifoun.
Twei clerkes, breþer, þat were in Rome
 Þat maiftri on honde þai nome,
 f.95vb **A**nd þe king hem made feur
Of warifoun and gret honeur.

⁶⁰ There is an extra space here between words where something may have been effaced.

⁶¹ Here the manuscript reads "þmage."

⁶² Here the manuscript reads "þmage."

⁶³ Here the manuscript reads "þmage."

- 1900 **P**ai dede þe king fille twei forcers
Of riche gold ȝ of clers
And dede hit lade wiȝ priuete
Into Rome þat riche cite.
Pat o forcer þai doluen nowt late
- 1905 **I**n Rome ate eft ȝate
Vnder þe ymage⁶⁴ þat þe bal held.
Pis was a dede queinte and held.
Pat oþer forcer ful of gold
Pai bidoluen in þe mold
- 1910 **V**nder þe weft gate þat noman wift.
Pis was a dede of queint lift.
Amorewen þai fſchewed hem in Rome
ȝ biforn Sire Creffus come
An[d] faid, ‘Al hail, fir *emperour*,
It falleȝ to þe tol of trefour.
- 1915 **W**e conne to do þe vnderfonde
Of hid trefor in þi londe.
ȝif þou wilt half parte wiȝ ous,
Pou fſchalt hit haue, Sire Creffus.’
- 1920 **P**emperour faide, ‘Þat I not,
Ich haue forlorn þat eueri grot,
ȝ þerfore frendes I graunt ȝou,
Pat ȝe mai finde wiȝ ȝoure vertu,
Pe haluendel in alle þingge.’
- 1925 **G**o we aboute þe findinge.’
‘Nai, certes,’ faide þe elderer broþer,
‘Arft we mote don anoþer,
Ich mot mete a sweuen toniȝt,
ȝ tomorewen, what hit is liȝt,
- 1930 **S**ire, þou fſchalt haue þine wille.’
Pous þai were þat niȝt ftille.
Sone amorewe wiȝ god entent
Sire Creffus to þe eft ȝate went.
Pe clerkes doluen in þe mold
- 1935 **A**nd fond a forcer ful of gold.
And ȝaf hit vp to þemperour
And he hit feng wiȝ gret honur.
Amorewe þe ȝonger faide wel euen,
‘Sire toniȝt me mette a sweuen
- 1940 **A** richcher forcer þan þat
We fſchulle finde ate weft ȝate.’
- f.96ra **Q**uik wente þider þemperour
And hiȝe barouns of gret honur
And þer þai doluen in þe gronde,
- 1945 **A** riche forcer þer þai founde
Ful of red gold igraue,
And vp to þemperour þai hit haue
Pemperour⁶⁵ held hem ſo wife
In al þe werld was hire pris.
- 1950 **P**an swor þe eldere, ‘Bi blod an^d bones
Haue ich toniȝt imet ones,
I fchal þe finde trefor, I telle,
Is non richer fram hennes to helle.’
Pai ȝede to bedde and riȝen amorewe
- 1955 **P**emperour to mochel forewe.
Pan faide þe elder to þemperour,
‘Vnder þe ymage⁶⁶ þa^t halt þe mirour
In al Poile ne Romanye
Ne is fo mochel treforie.
- 1960 **M**ofte we delue þervnder,
Pou fſcholdeft habbe gold a wonder.’
‘Nai,’ quaþ þemperour, ‘for eȝte non
Pat ymage⁶⁷ wolde ich miȝdon.’
Pan feide þe ȝonger to þemperour
- 1965 **P**er is al Virgiles trefour.
We fſchulle þe ymage⁶⁸ fo vnderfette
Pat we ne fſchal hit no þing lette,
ȝ whan we han þe gold in þe gronde,
We fſcholle hit make afe we hit founde,
- 1970 **F**or we beþ mazouns queinte of caſt.’
Pan faide Creffus, ‘Goht an haft.’
Pai bigonne hire werk ſaunȝ dout
And fette poſtes al about,
And bigan to mini vnder.
- 1975 **H**erkneȝ now a felkouȝ wonder.
Pai torent fton fram fton,

⁶⁴ Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”

⁶⁵ Here the manuscript reads “Pempour.”

⁶⁶ Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”

⁶⁷ Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”

⁶⁸ Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”

Þe fundament tobraft anon.
 Al dai þai mined doun riȝt
 Til hit come to þe niȝt.
 1980 On þe morewe þai faide to Creffus ftille,
 ‘Of gold þou ffchalt haue þi wille.’
 Þemperour wente to his palais,
 Clerkes alfo and mani burgeis,
 Ech man wente to his inne,
 1985 Þe clerkes þoughte anoþer ginne.
 f.96rb Whanne ech man flepen, grete and fmale,
 Þe clerkes to þe ftage ftale,
 And bet a fir ftrong and fterk.
 Þe fir fleghȝ vp into þe werk,
 1990 ȝ falſed þe fimment and þe fton,
 Þe ymage⁶⁹ ouerþrew anon.
 And þo þe clerkes feghȝen þis,
 Awai þai flowen for fothe iwis.
 Amorewe þemperour aros,
 1995 Of þis dede *him* fore agros;
 In his herte was kare and howe,
 Awai he wolde han iflowe.
 Þe fmale and þe poeple of Rome
 To fire Creffus þai nome fone
 2000 ȝ tolde *him* for coueitife
 He hadde iloren Romes *prife*.
 Þai ladde forþ in þat ftounde
 ȝ to a table faft *him* bounde,
 ȝ red gold quik þai melte
 2005 ȝ nose and mouht ful þai helte
 ȝ eren and eȝen alfo,
 Þer whiles a drope wolde in go,
 ȝ faide, ‘Sire, for Godef loue,
 Þou haft mad þral þat was aboue.
 2010 Nou artou ful, nou make þe heit,
 Nou wiltou *nammore* coueit.’
 Nou is he ded wiȝ mochel fchame.”
 “O, þou feift foþ,” he faide, “dame.”
 “Ȝa, fire, for his leſingges
 2015 Þat he leued twaie falſe gadelinges
 He turned to wel iuel fin.

Sire, swich ffchal be ending þin.”
 “Nai, dame,” he faide, “ȝif God wile.”
 “Ȝis, fire,” fche faide, ‘bi riȝt fkile,
 2020 For þou leueft wel flaterie,
 Þat þe maiftres conne to þe lie,
 ȝ defire to make þin air,
 He þat ffchal þe fchende vair,
 For he is þe fendes chike,
 2025 Þer whiles he liueȝ þou mai like.”
 “Dame, I ffchal kepe me fram kare,
 Riȝt tomorewe he ffchal forþ fare.”
 “Sire,” fche faide, “bi feint Michel,
 Þanne doft þou wiſliche and wel.”
 f.96va Morewe com, af ȝe mowe here,
 Þemperour aros wiȝ wroþ chere,
 And to his paleys he gan wende,
 Riȝt biforen his barouns hende.
 He let brenge forht his owen fone,
 2035 And whan he com out of *prifoun*
 Amideward Rome toun,
 Þan com riden maifter Catoun.
 Þe folk of Rome on *him* gan crie
 And faide, “Catoun, kiþe þi maiftrie,
 2040 Help þi difciple in þis nede.”
 Catoun liȝt adoun of his ftede
 And grette þemperour on his kne,
 And vneþe he wold *him* fe;
 He feide to *him*, “Maifter Catoun,
 2045 Þou haft me don wel gret traifoun
 For to þe and þine fere
 I bitok mi fone to lere.
 Ȝe tauȝte *him* to nimen forþ min *emperice*.”
 “Sire,” quaþ Catoun, “swich wordes bez nice.”
 2050 “ȝ his ſpeche is forlore.”
 “Nai, fire, and he finde ȝoure grace bifore.
 Þi wif wolde he forlain haue nowt,
 Ȝif þou hit leueft, þou art bicouȝt.
 Ac ȝif þou do þi fone dureffe,
 2055 On þe falle swich a deftreffe
 And swich a maner vileynie,
 As hadde þe burgeis for his pie.”
 “O maifter,” he faide, “what, what?

⁶⁹ Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”

I þe praie, tel me þat.”
 2060 “Sire,” he faide, “what helpez hit mi fawe,
 3if þi fone þer whiles beþ iflawe?
 Ac let him fechche quik azain
 And I þe ffchal mi tale fain.”
 Þe emperour of Rome, Dioclician,
 2065 His fone he het fechche anon.
 Nou euerich man þat louez his hale,
 Leftne wel Catones tale:
 A burgeis was in Rome toun,
 A riche man of gret renoun.
 2070 Marchaunt he was of gret auoir
 ʒ had a wif was queint and fair.
 But fche was fikel vnder hir lok,
 And hadde a parti of Eue smok.
 f.96vb And manie ben zit of hire kinne,
 2075 Þat ben al bilapped þerinne.
 Þe burgeis hadde a pie in his halle,
 Þat couþe telle tales alle
 Apertlich, in Freinch langage,
 And heng in a fair cage
 2080 And feþ lemmans comen and gon,
 And teld hire⁷⁰ louerd fone anon.
 And for þat þe pie hadde ifaid,
 Þe wif was ofte iuel ipaid.
 And þe burgeis louede his pie,
 2085 For he wifte ffche⁷¹ couþe nowt lie.
 So hit bifil vpon a dai,
 Þ[e] burgeis fram home tok his wai,
 And wente aboute his marchaundife,
 Þe wif waited anon hire prife,
 2090 And fente here copiner fore;
 ʒ whanne he com to þe halle dore,
 He ne dorste nowt in hie
 For þe wriiing of þe pie.
 Þe wif him bi þe hond hent,

2095 And into chaumbre anon þai went.
 Þe pie bigan to grede anon,
 ‘3a, now mi louerd is out igon,
 Þou comest hider for no gode,
 I fchal zou wraie bi þe rode.’
 2100 Þe wif þouzt fchent ze was,
 A wrenche 3he þouzte napelas,
 And clepede a maide to make here bed,
 And after, bi hir boþer red,
 A laddre þai fette þe halle to,
 2105 And vndede a tile or two.
 Ouer þe pie þai gan handel
 A cler bacyn and a candel.
 A pot ful of water cler
 Þai ffchadde vpon þe pies swer.
 2110 Wi3 bacyn beting and kandel li3t
 Þa[i] bobbed þe pie bi ni3t
 And water on hir⁷² gan fchenche –
 Þis was on of wommannes wrenche.
 Þo þe dai dawen gan,
 2115 Awai ftal þe zonge man.
 Men vnlek dore and windowe,
 Þe pie hir⁷³ ffchok wi3 mochel howe,
 f.97ra For ffche was fain þat hit was dai,
 Þe copiner was went his wai.
 2120 Þe gode burgeis was him icome
 Into þe halle þe wai he nome.
 Þe pie faide, ‘Bi God almi3t
 Þe copiner was her toni3t
 And haþ idon þe mochel ffchame,
 2125 Imad an hore of oure dame.
 And zit hit had ben toni3t
 Gret rain ʒ þonder bri3t.
 Sehthen ich was brid in mi nefst
 I ne hadde neuere fo iuel refst.’
 2130 Þe wif haþ þe tale iherd
 And þouzte wel to ben amered,
 And faide, ‘Sire þou haft outrage
 To leue a pie in a kage.’

⁷⁰ The manuscript uses feminine and masculine pronouns in reference to the pie. For the sake of clarity, I have used the feminine throughout as that is the more common of the two in the manuscript text.

⁷¹ Here the manuscript reads “he.”

⁷² Here the manuscript reads “him.”

⁷³ Here the manuscript reads “him.”

Tonizt was þe weder fair and cler
 2135 And þe firmament wel fair,
 And sche faiþ hit haþ ben þonder.
 Sche haþ ilowe mani a wonder
 But ich be awreke of here swiþe,
 Ne ſchal I neuer ben womman bliþe.’
 Þe godeman afkede his nezebours
 Of þat nizt and of þe ours
 And þai faide þat al þat nizt
 Was þe weder cler and brizt.
 Þe burgeis faide þe pie
 2145 Ne ſcholde him nammore lie.
 Nammo wordes he þar ſpak,
 But alfo ſwiþe hir⁷⁴ nekke tobrak.
 And whanne he feþ his pie ded
 For forewe coude he no red.
 2150 He feþgh hir []⁷⁵ and hir⁷⁶ cage
 He þouzte of gile and of outrage.
 He wente him out, þe ladder he feþg
 And vp to þe halle rof he ſteþg.
 Þe pot wiþ þe water he fond,
 2155 Þat he brak wiþ his hond,
 ʒ mani oþer trecherie
 Þat was idon to his pie.
 He went him down wiþouten oþ
 In his herte grim and wroþ.
 2160 And wiþ a god ſtaf ful ſket
 His wif ate dore he bet,
 f.97rb And bad hir go þat ilche dai
 On alder twenti deuel wai.”
 “Lo fire,” he faide, “for a foles red,
 2165 Þe pie þat faide ſoht, was ded.
 Hadde he taken god confeil
 His pie hadde ben hol and hail.
 And alfo fareþ þin emperice
 Þourþ here refoun ffcherewed and nice.
 2170 Sche goþ aboute, dai and nizt,

⁷⁴ Here the manuscript reads “his.”

⁷⁵ There is an extra space here between words where something may have been effaced.

⁷⁶ Here the manuscript reads “his.”

Þi fone to deþe for to dizt.
 And he be ded, verraiment,
 Ne worþ þer non amendement.
 Bi here rede ne do þou nout;
 2175 3if þou do, þou art bicouzt.
 Al þe werld þe [ffchal de]ſpiþe,
 3if þou do bi here and lete þe wife.”
 Anon þemperour faide þan,
 “Catoun, bi him þat made man,
 2180 Don ich wille after þi ſawe,
 Todai ne ffchal he nowt be flawe.”
 Þe ſchild bileft in priſoun,
 Vpon his palefrai lep Catoun,
 And hadde mani a bleſſing,
 2185 For his deſciples deliuering.
 Þe nizt is comen, þe dai is gon,
 Þemperour wente to chaumbre anon.
 His quen þanne aþen him nam,
 Wiþ ſemblant afe a wroþ wimman.
 2190 “Dame,” he faide, “pluk vp þi cher,
 Oþer tel me whi þou makeſt swich cher?”
 “Hit nis no wonder, fire, bi heuene,
 Þe ffchulle ffchende þi maiftres ſeuene
 Þat makeþ þe to loue þi fo,
 2195 Forþi ich wille nou fram þe go.
 Ac 3if þou doſt more bi hire leuing,
 Falle on þe afe dede on Herowde þe king
 Þat les his fiþt in wonder wife;
 Þerfore þou miþt fore agrife.”
 2200 “Dame,” he faide, “on ech manere,
 Þat ilche tale ich moſte here.”
 “Bleþeliche, fire, fo mot ich þe,
 So þat 3he wolde þe better be.
 An emperour was in Rome,
 2205 Þe richeſt man of Criſtendome,
 f.97va Herowdes was his riþte name,
 Wide iþprongge his riche fame.
 He hadde wiþ him ſeuē wife,
 Alf 3e han, of grete priſe.
 2210 Al þat þemperour dede or þout,
 Bi here confeil al he hit wrout.
 So her was arered in þis toun,

Bi here rede and bi hire coftom,
 Þat who þat mette a fweuen anizt,
 2215 He ſcholde come amorewe, aplizt,
 And brenge a befaund to offring,
 And of his sweuen haue vndoing.
 So longe þai vfed þis errour
 Þai were richcher þan þemperour.
 2220 So hit bifel vpon a dai,
 Als he went vpon his plai,
 7 whan he com to Rome zate,
 7 wolde wenden out þerate,
 He bicam blind fo fton.
 2225 His maiftres he offente anon,
 And asked whi he mi3t nowt fe,
 Whan he ffcholde out of Rome te?
 Þai asked refpit a fou^rten ni3t,
 Bi þan þai trowede þat þai mi3t
 2230 In hire bokes finde refoun
 And answeren him wiz ri3t enchefoun.
 Refpit þai hadde of þemperour;
 He wente him hom to his tour,
 And þe maiftres hom went,
 2235 And hire bokes went and trent,
 Ac þai ne couþe nowt ifinde,
 Whi þemperour was blinde.
 Þai fou3te confeil fer 7 nez,
 Afe man þat is queinte.
 2240 So on a dai after þan,
 Þai mette wiz an hold man,
 And tolde him al hire confeil,
 And he answered faun3 fail,
 ‘In al þe werld nis man liiind
 2245 Þat couþe 3ou þat fothe find,
 But 3if hit ware child on,
 Þat neuer hadde fader non.
 For he can telle fopes alle,
 Þat ben don in bour and halle.
 f.97vb 3if 3he þat fchild finde mowe
 He fchal 3ou telle, ich wille auowe.’
 Þe maiftres wolde no leng abide,
 To feche þe fchild þai gonne ride.
 On a dai þai com þer Merlin pleid,

2255 And on of his felawes him traid,
 And he was wroþ, and maked a res,
 And cleped him ffchrewe faderles,
 And faide he was of þe fendes kinde,
 Hife felawes euer misdoinde.
 2260 ‘Daþeit haue þou,’ quaþ child Merlin,
 ‘Al to loude þou fpak þi Latin.
 Seue maiftres I fe her come,
 Þat han me fou3t al fram Rome,
 Þai han wiz me mochel to done,
 2265 Ich wil hem helpe swiþe fone.’
 Wiz þat com a man of þat lond,
 And brou3t a befaund in his hond,
 To whom þat Merlin faide þous:
 ‘Man, þou art ful merueilous,
 2270 Þou woldeft haue vndoing
 Of þi toni3tes meting.
 Forþi þou woldeft þat o befaund offer;
 Bere hit hom into þi coffe,
 And I ffchal telle and nowt ne lie,
 2275 What þi meting signefie.
 Þou metteft toni3t in þi donghel
 Sprong a water out of a wel,
 Þat was of swiþe god fauour,
 And feruede þe and þi ney3ebour.
 2280 I wil þe faie þe fothe word,
 Þe welle bitoknez a gold hord.
 Go delue anon in þi donghel,
 Þou ffchalt hit finde swiþe snel.’
 Þanne he dalf þerinne anon,
 2285 And fond of gold ful god won.
 He 3af þe maiftres of þe gold,
 Afe moche afe þai nime wold
 And alfo his nezhebour,
 He made him riche of þat trefour.
 2290 But Merlin faide, bi heuene-king,
 He wolde þerof no þing.
 Þe maiftres out of toune nome,
 And ladden Merlyn toward Rome,
 f.98ra And asked him wiz milde mouþe
 2295 3if he þe fothe telle couþe
 Whi þemperour mi3t nowt fe

Whanne he ffolde out of Rome te.
 ‘3a,’ faide Merlin, ‘fikerli,
 Ich kan telle him ful wel whi.’
 2300 Þe maiftres were glad of þis
 And to Rome þai went iwis.
 Þe dai was comen þat hem was fet,
 Anon wiz þemperour þai met
 7 faide, ‘Þe dai is comen of anfwering.’⁷⁷
 2305 Quaþ Herowdes, ‘þat is foþ þing.’⁷⁸
 Tel me haftilich and fket
 Þing þat 3he me bihet.’
 ‘Lo! fire we han a fchild ibrowt
 Þat fchal þe telle al þi þowt.
 2310 Lo her, fire, a litel page,
 Þat fchal fai þe þi corage.’
 Quaþ þemperour of lime and lond,
 ‘Wil 3e his tale take an hond?’
 ‘3a, on al þat we haue or haue mowe,
 2315 Þe childes tale we wil auowe.’
 ‘Tel me,’ he faide, ‘child Merlin.’
 ‘Sir,’⁷⁹ lad me arft to chaumbre þin.’
 Þemperour him ladde anon
 Into his chaumbre of lim and fton,
 2320 And whanne þai were þerinne ifchet,
 Merlin his tonge wiz wit whet,
 And fpak to þemperour,
 ‘Þou haft,’ he faiþ, ‘her in þi bour
 Fer vnder þi bed adoun,
 2325 A gret boiland cauderoun
 Wiz feuen walmes boiland;
 Þe walmes han þe abland
 And þer whiles þai boilland be
 Sire, þou ne fchalt neuer ife,
 2330 And 3if þai mai ben queint arizt,
 Þou mizt wel⁸⁰ haue þi fi3t.’

⁷⁷ Here the manuscript reads “anfweriing.”

⁷⁸ Here the manuscript reads “king.”

⁷⁹ The “ir” in “Sir” may have been added after the rest of the line was copied, having been written within the column of red-highlighted initials; the text column begins with “lad.”

⁸⁰ In the manuscript “wel” has been written twice.

Þemperour had wonder of þis,
 And let remue his bed, iwis,
 And tok ten men oþer twelue,
 2335 And het hem in þe grounde delue.
 Þai deden afe here louerd hem het,
 And doluen alle þere ful fket.
 f.98rb Þai ne hadde doluen but a ftounde,
 Þat þe caundroun was ifounde,
 2340 Þat hadde rizt walmes feuen.
 Þo was ileued þe fchildes steuen.
 Quad þemp[er]our, ‘Forfothe iwis,
 Bi þe I wil don after þis.
 Ac telle me, child, fom refouns,
 2345 What bitoknez þis boilouns?’
 ‘Sire, do out þi folk ichon,
 7 ich wil þe telle swiþe anon.’
 Þemperour anonrizt
 Drof out boþe clerk and knizt.
 2350 Þanne beginnez þe child Merlin
 To telle þemperour swich Latin:
 ‘Sire,’ he faid, ‘bi God in heuen,
 Þife boilouns þat boilen feuen,
 Bitoknen þine feuen wife,
 2355 Þat han iwrowt a3en þe affife.
 Þai han arrered cuftumes newe,
 Þat þe mai wel fore rewe.
 Be hit oþer clerk or knizt,
 And him mete a sweuene anizt,
 2360 He come3 amorewe, ich vnderftonde,
 An[d] brenge3 a befaund in his honde
 And to þe maiftres hire sweuene telle.
 Þai hit vndo after her wille.
 Þai respoude afe hem like3,
 2365 Þous þai mani man bifwike3.
 And for þat ilche fenne, I finde,
 Þat þou art bicomme blinde.’
 ‘Nou tel me child þin entent,
 What mai me to amendement?’
 2370 ‘Leue fire, for mi loue,
 Bi on of hem mi tale proue.
 Leue fire, take3 þemprife,
 And take3 þe eldef of þe wife,

Lat fmite atwo his nekke bon,
 2375 Þe gretteft walm ſchal quenche anon.⁷
 Þemperour dede be þe ſchildes lore,
 Þe eldeft maifter was ſlein þefore.
 His heued was into þe caundroun caft,
 Þe grefte walm queynte on haft.
 2380 Þo þemperour wifte þis,
 He let fle alle feuene, iwis.
 f.98va Þe water bicom faire and liþe,
 Þemperour þerof was bliþe.
 Anon he wichff þerof his hond,
 2385 And ouerfez al þe lond.
 And fire, fo fare maiftres þine,
 Þai ſchal þe bringe to mochele pine.
 Þai han fo iblent þe,
 Þat þou miȝt nowt þat foþe iſe.
 2390 Ac ȝif þou doſt more bi here rede,
 To swiche blendneſſe mote þai þe lede,
 As hadde Herowdes þe king,
 Þat was neȝ browt []⁸¹ to iuel ending.”
 “Nai, dame,” he ſaide, “þou art wilde,
 2395 Fram swiche ſchame God me ſchilde.
 For hem I ſchal me ful wel kepe,
 Of hem ne ȝiue I nowt an hepe.”
 “Sire,” ſche ſaide, “þou haſt god riȝt;
 Þai ben about, dai and niȝt,
 2400 Þe to bigile an[d] bitraie.”
 Cokkes crewe and hit was daie.
 Þemperour aros anon,
 And wente to hiſ halle of ſton,
 And aſe þemperour, verraiment,
 2405 Hadde ȝiuen his ſone juggement,
 Þe ſexte maifter com into þe halle,
 ȝ hendeliche he grette hem alle,
 And ſaide, “Sire, þou art wel nice,
 To leue ſo mochel þin emperice.
 2410 Whanne þou leueſt hire fo,
 Þat þou wilt þi ſone flo,
 Þanne mot hit fo fare bi þe,

⁸¹ There is an extra space here between words where something may have been effaced.

As bi a ffchereue of þis countre,
 Þa[t] hirt his wif wiȝ a knif
 2415 In þe wombe; ȝe les hir lif.”
 Quaþ þemperour, “In alle maner,
 Þat ilche tale ich moſte her.”
 “Leue ſire, what helpez mi tale,
 ȝif þi ſone þolieȝ deþes bale?
 2420 ȝif him todai longes reſt,
 Ich ſchal þe telle a newe geft;
 Swich a tale I þe telle can,
 Ne ſchaltou neuer leue wimman.”
 Þemperour hete him let
 2425 And his ſone aȝen fet.
 f.98vb Þe child was pult in priſoun,
 Þe maifter ginneȝ his reſoun.
 “Sire,” he ſaide, “þou miȝt me leue,
 Hit was a kniȝt, a riche ffcherreue,
 2430 And [had a] ȝong jolif wif
 Þat he louede [hire] has his lif,
 And ffche him bi vnderſtounding,
 Louede him wel in alle þing.
 So on a dai him and his wif
 2435 Was iȝouen a newe knif.
 Fair hit was and of egge ſcharp,
 And þai on gamen gonne carp.
 Þe kniȝt his wif in þe wombe carf,
 For doel þerof amorewe ſtarf.
 2440 He dede gret foli, cert,
 Or to tendre was his⁸² hert.
 Sone amorewe erliche
 He⁸³ was biwaked richeliche
 ȝ wel faire browt on erthe
 2445 After þat he⁸⁴ was werthe.
 Þe leuedi ſaide for no wenne
 Sche ne wolde neuer wende þenne
 But as hir louerd for hir⁸⁵ daide
 Sche wolde be ded an[d] bi him laide.

⁸² Here the manuscript reads “hir.”

⁸³ Here the manuscript reads “ȝhe.”

⁸⁴ Here the manuscript reads “ſche.”

⁸⁵ Here the manuscript reads “him.”

2450 Here frendes feȝzen al þat cas
 ȝ comen to hire to make solas
 ȝ faiden, 'Dame, gent and fre,
 Of þi felue haue pite,
 For þou art fair and ȝong, faunȝ fail,
 2455 And maift þe werld mochel auail.
 Some kniȝt þe wedde of noblai
 And haue wiȝ him moche to plai,
 Gode children biȝeten and faire.
 Gentil dame, debonaire,
 2460 Lete awai þi mourning,
 ȝ tak þe to fom conforting.'
 'Þat wil I do for no wele,
 Ac die ich wille on his beriele.'
 ȝhe faide, 'Allas and wailawo!
 2465 Nel ich hennes neuere go,
 Ne confor[t] take neuer mo.'
 Here frendes were fori þo,
 A logge þai made vpon his graue,
 For ſche wolde þer bilaue,
 f.99ra And maked hire⁸⁶ a ful fair fer,
 And fond hire þat niȝt ftouer,
 And left here alone,
 And ſche made reuli mone.
 Þat ich dai þai were inome,
 2475 Þe þre þeues, bi *commun* dome.
 Þe þre þeues were kniȝtes
 Þat were ihonged anonriȝtes,
 For þai hadde þe cowntre anuwed,
 ȝ wiȝ robberie destrwed,
 2480 Anhonged were alle þre.
 A kniȝt of þe cowntre held his fe
 For to loke þe þre kniȝttes
 Vpon þe galewes þre niȝtes.
 He com to þe galewes armed wel
 2485 Boþe in iren and in ſtel
 For to make þe ferft niȝt ward;
 Þe weder was cold and froward.
 He was forcold and lokede aboute,
 And was war wiȝouten doute

2490 Of þe fir in þe chirche hawe
 And þiderward he gan to drawe
 For to haue fom warmyng,
 And fond þe leuedi doel makyng,
 And bad ȝhe ffcholde late him in.
 2495 ȝhe faide ȝhe nolde 'bi feint Johain.'
 'A ȝis,' he feide, 'leue dame,
 I nelle þe do harm ne ffchame.'
 He swor as he was gentil kniȝt,
 Sche let him in anonriȝt.
 2500 He fat and warmed him bi þe fer,
 He biheld þe leuedis cher,
 And feȝ swich ſemblant ȝe made
 And faide, 'Dame, þou art a gade,
 Þat þou mournest for þe ded
 2505 Þat mai þe do noþer god ne qued.
 Confort þi ſelf, pluk vp þin herte,
 Swich mourning þan wil þe ſmerte.
 Of þis mourning þou haft vnriȝt,
 Þou ſcholdeſt louye fom gentil kniȝt,
 2510 Þat þat þe miȝt do *ſum* ſolas.'
 And ſche faide 'Allas! allas!
 He was ſo ſmal and ſo gent,
 I ne mai loue non oþer, verraiment.'
 f.99rb Ne hadde he ſeten þer but a while
 2515 He þouȝte men miȝte don him gile.
 He priked to þe galewes wiȝ his fole,
 ȝ fond þat a þef was iſtole.
 Þo was him wo, *verraiment*,
 He ſcholde leſe his auancement,
 2520 But he miȝte finde þe þridde,
 Þe þef þat heng þe twaie amidde.
 He [þouȝt] þat wimmen couþe red
 To help men at her ned.
 ȝhe ne was nowt fer, but ſomdel nez,
 2525 He telde hire þe forewe þat he drez,
 And bifoughte hire of god confeiling
 For þat he was in gret mourning.
 ȝhe faide, 'Sire, ich wille helpe þe,
 So þat þou wille ſpouſi me.'
 2530 'ȝis, dame,' he faide, '*preciouſe*,
 ȝif þou me helpe, ich wille þe ſpouſe.'

⁸⁶ Here the manuscript reads "him."

3e let here sorewe awai gon,
 And faide, 'Help, lemman, anon,
 Help delf vp mi lord þat was,
 2535 He ſchal vs helpen in þis cas,
 And honge we him in his entaile.'
 Here red was don, faun3 faille,
 Hit ne mai nowt ben forhole,
 Þai baren him forþ for him was stole.
 2540 Þanne faide þe kni3t to þe leuedi,
 'Who mai þis kni3t hongig?
 I þe fegge, bi heuene-king,
 I nolde him honge for no þing.
 For 3if ich hadde ihonged a kni3t,
 2545 I ſchol be coward icleped wi3 ri3t.'
 'Sire,' 3he faide, 'ich wil fol fawe
 Heghe him honge and vpdrawe.'
 Þe leuedi dede in wode gere,
 A rop aboute hire lordes swere,
 2550 And drow him vp and heng him fa3t;
 Þe kni3t of hire dedes was aga3t,
 And faide, 'Dame, be gode mounde,
 Þe ſtolen kni3t hadde a wonde
 In his heued þat was biknawe,
 2555 Whar bi him knewe heghe and lowe.
 And but þi louerd swich on haue,
 I þe fai, fo God me faue,
 f.99va Sone wi3inne litel while
 Worht iparceiued oure gile.'
 2560 'Sire,' ſche faide, 'tak þi ſwerd
 ȝ in þe heued ſmit mi louerd;
 Þanne ſchal hit ben non vnderftonding,
 But hit was he þat er þar hing.'
 'Nai, dame, for moche ne lite,
 2565 Þe dede kni3t wolde I nowt ſmite.'
 'No, fire,' ſche faide, 'þi fwerd me reche
 And ich him ſchal, wi3 min hond, teche
 Hou godes grame com to toune,
 Ri3t amideward his croune.'
 2570 Þe leuedi tok and ſmot wi3 mayn,
 Al amideward þe brayn.
 Þanne þe kni3t wel vnderftod,
 Þat fals and fikel was hire blod,

And faide, '3it vnliche he⁸⁷ bez.
 2575 Broken were his fore tez.'
 'Sire,' ſche faide, 'ſmit hem out.'
 'Nai, dame,' he faide, 'wi3outen dout.'
 'Þan wil ich' 3he faide, and tok a fton
 And ſmot hem out euerichon.
 2580 Whan þis dede was ido,
 Þe leuedi faide þe kni3t to
 'Sire, now ich haue iwonne þi loue.'
 'Nai, dame,' he faide, 'bi God aboute,
 For gold no filuer, lond ne house,
 2585 Þi falſe bodi ne wolde I ſpouſe.
 For alfo woldeſtou ſerue me,
 Haſe þou haſt don þi louerd fo fre.
 Þou haſt itawt me a newe ran,
 Þat I ſchal neuer leue wimman.⁸⁸
 2590 For þere þai make ſemblant faireſt,
 Þai wil bigile þe alþerformeſt.'
 Sire and on þe falle swich a ſtrif
 Als dede þe ſſcherreue of his wif,
 3if þou for þin emperice wild
 2595 Wolle fle þin owen child.
 Ac, fire, abid til anoþer morewe,
 On hire ſſchal falle alle þe forewe.
 And whanne þou hereſt þi ſone ſpeke,
 Ri3tfulliche þou him awreke."
 2600 Þemperour faide, "So ich ſchal."
 And þanne departed þe curt al,
 f.99vb Some to caſtel, and ſome to tour,
 Þemperour wente to his bour.
 Þemperice made ſemblant ille,
 2605 For ſche ne hadde nowt hire wille.
 His owen men naþelas,
 Made wel god ſolas.
 Þemperour was browt abedde,
 Wi3 riche baudekines iſpredde,
 2610 Þemperice him com to,
 Als ſche was ar iwont to do,

⁸⁷ Here the manuscript reads "3he."

⁸⁸ An "X" has been added in another hand in pencil in the margin beside this couplet.

“Sire, haftou owt herd þe gefte,
 Whi men made folen fefte?”
 “Nai, dame,” he faide, “gent and fre,
 2615 I þe praie þanne telle hit me.”
 “Sire,” 3he faide, “wi3outen dout
 Whilom was Rome bilayn about
 Wi3 feuen foudans bifet,
 Wal and gate and caftelet,
 2620 Þe honur of Rome for to abate
 And for to ftrwe feinte Petres fate,
 Þat is to feie, Criftendom to felle,
 And Criften men to aquelle.
 Þe folk hem ful wel held,
 2625 Wife of speche, of dede beld
 ‘To vij wife men toke we þif toun,
 To kep hit fram deftructioun.’
 Bi his rede hit was itake,
 To ·vij· wife men to biwake.
 2630 A moneþ þai kept hit,
 Afe we finde3 in þe writ.
 Whan hit com to þe mone3 ende,
 Þai ne mi3t hit no lenger defende,
 But afe þai dide a fair queintife,
 2635 Herknez now in what wife.
 A man þer was, fo fei3 þe rime,
 Þat hit Gemes in þat time.
 He was on of þe feuen wife,
 Þer he dede a fair queintife.
 2640 He let him make a garnement,
 Afe blak afe ani arnement,
 And heng þeron fquirel tail,
 A þoufand and mo, wi3outen fail.
 A vifer 3it he made more,
 2645 Two faces bihinde 7 two bifore// [end of f.99vb]
 7 tvay nafel⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Scribe 1’s catchword. The rest of the text is now lacking.

6. FLORIS AND BLANCHEFLOUR

- f.100ra//**I** ne kan telle zou nowt
Hou richeliche þe fadel was wrout.
Þe arfouns were gold pur and fin,
Stones of vertu fet þerin,
5 **B**igon abouten wiz orfreis.
Þe quen was hende ȝ curteis;
Ȝhe caft her hond to hire fingre
ȝ drouȝ þerof a riche ringe.
“Hauē nou, sone, here þis ring;
10 **W**hile þou hit haft, doute þe no þing,
Ne fir þe brenne, ne drenchen in fe,
Ne iren ne ftel fchal derie þe;
ȝ be hit erli and be hit late,
To þi wille þou fchalt hauē whate.”
15 **W**eping þai departed nouþe,
ȝ kifte hem wiz softe mouþe.
Þai made for him non oþer chere
Þan þai feȝe him ligge on bere.
¶ **N**ou forht þai nime wiz alle main,
20 **H**imself and his chaumberlain.
So longe þai han vndernome,
To þe hauene þai bez icome
Þer Blancheflour lai anizt.
Richeliche þai were idizt;
25 **Þ**e louerd of þe hous was wel hende,
Þe child he fette next his hende
In þe alþrest faireft fete;
Gladliche þai dronke ȝ ete.
Al þat þerinne were,
30 **A**l þai made glade chere,
And ete and dronke echon wiz oþer,
Ac Florice þouȝte al anoþer;
Ete ne drinke miȝte he nouȝt,
On Blancheflour was al his þouȝt.
35 **Þ**e leuedi of þe hous vnderȝat
Hou þis child mour[n]ing fat,
ȝ feide here louerd wiz stille dreme,
“Sire,” ȝe faide, “nimftou no ȝeme
Hou þis child mourning fit?
40 **M**ete and drink he forȝit.
- L**itel he eteȝ and laffe he drinkeȝ;
He nis no marchaunt af me þinkeȝ.”
¶ **T**o Florice þan fpak ȝhe,
“Child, ful of mourning I þe fe,
f.100rb**Þ**ous fat herinne þis enderdai
Blauncheflour þat faire mai.
Herinne was þat maiden bowȝt,
And ouer þe fe ȝhe was ibrowȝt;
Herinne þai bouȝte þat maden swete,
50 ȝ wille here eft felle to biȝete.
To Babiloyne þai wille hire bring
ȝ felle hire to kaifer oþer to king.
Þou art ilich here of alle þinge,
Of semblant ȝ of mourning,
55 **B**ut þou art a man ȝ ȝhe is a maide.”
Þous þe wif to Florice faide.
¶ **Þ**o Florice herde his lemman neuene,
So bliþe he was of þat steuene
Þat his herte bigan al lizt.
60 **A** coupe of gold he let fulle rizt.
“Dame,” he faide, “þis hail is þin,
Boþe þe gold and þe win,
Boþe þe gold and þe win eke,
For þou of mi lemman speke;
65 **O**n hir I þout, for here I fiȝt,
And wift ich wher hire finde miȝt,
Ne fcholde no weder me affoine
Þat I ne fchal here feche at Babiloine.”
¶ **F**lorice reft him þere al niȝt.
70 **A**morewe whanne hit was dai-lizt
He dide him in þe falte flod;
Wind and weder he hadde ful god.
To þe mariners he ȝaf largeliche
Þat brouȝten him ouer bleþeliche
75 **T**o þe londe þar he wold lende,
For þai founden him fo hende.
Sone fo Florice com to londe –
Wel ȝerne he þankede Godes sonde –
To þe lond þer his lemman is,
80 **H**im þouȝte he was in Paradis.

¶ Wel fone men Florice tidingges told,
 Þe amerail wolde fefte hold,
 And kinges an[d] dukes to *him* come scholde,
 Al þat of *him* holde wolde,
 85 For to honure his heȝhe fefte
 And alfo for to heren his hefte.
 Þo Florice herde þis tiding,
 Þan gan *him* glade in alle þing,
 f.100va And in his herte þouȝte he
 90 Þat he wolde at þat fefte be,
 For wel he hopede in þe halle
 His leman fēn among hem alle.
¶ So longe Florice haȝ vndernome,
 To a fair cite he is icome;
 95 Wel faire men haȝ his in inome,
 Afe men scholde to a kinges fone,
 At a palais, was non *him* iliche.
 Þe louerd of þe hous was wel riche,
 ȝ god inow *him* com to honde
 100 Boȝe bi water and be londe.
 Florice ne sparede for no fe
 Inow þat þere ne scholde be
 Of fiſſc, of fleſſch, of tendre bred,
 Boȝe of whit win and of red,
 105 Þe louerd hadde ben wel wide;
 Þe child he fette bi his fide
 In þe alperferſte fete.
 Gladliche þai dronke ȝ ete,
 Ac Florice et an[d] drank riȝt nowt¹
 110 On Blancheflour was al hi[s] þouȝt.
¶ Þan biſpak þe bourgeois
 Þat hende was, fre and curteys,
 “Child, me þinkeȝ swithe wel
 Þi þout is mochel on þi catel.”
 115 “Nai, on mi catel is hit nowt,
 On oȝe[r] þink is al my þouȝt.
 Mi þouȝt is on alle wife
 Mochel on mi marchaundife,
 ȝ ȝit þat is mi meſte wo
 120 ȝif ich hit finde and ſchal forgo.”

¹ Here the manuscript reads “riȝ ttowt.”

¶ Þanne ſpak þe louerd of þat inne,
 “Þous ſat þis oȝer dai herinne
 Þat faire maide Blancheflour.
 Boȝe in halle and ek in bour
 125 Euere ȝhe made mourning chere,
 ȝ biment Florice here leue fere;
 Joie ne bliſſe ne hadde ȝhe none,
 Ac on Florice was al here mone.”
 Florice het nime a coppe of ſiluer whiȝt,
 130 And a mantel of ſcarlet
 Ipaned al wiȝ meniuer,
 And ȝaf his hoſteſſe þer.
 f.100vb “Haue þis,” he² ſaide, “to þine honur,
 And þou hit miȝte þonke Blancheflour.
 135 Stolen ȝhe was out mine countreie;
 Here ich [h]ere ſeche bi þe waie.
 He miȝte make min herte glad
 Þa^t couȝe me telle whider ȝhe was lad.”
¶ “Child, to Babiloyne ȝhe his ibrouȝt,
 140 And [þe] ameral hire had ibouȝt.
 He ȝaf for hire afe ȝhe ſtod vpriȝt
 Seuen fiſhes of gold here³ wiȝt;
 For hire faired⁴ and for hire ſchere
 Þe ameral hire bouȝte fo dere,
 145 For he þenkeȝ, wiȝouten wene,
 Þat faire mai to hauen to quene.
 Amang oȝer maidenen in his tour
 He haȝ hire ido wiȝ mochel honur.”
¶ Nou Florice reſt *him* þere al niȝt.
 150 On morewe whan hit was dai-liȝt
 He aros vp in þe moreweninge,
 And ȝaf his hoſte an hondred ſchillinge,
 To his hoſte and to hes hoſteſſe,
 ȝ nam h[i]s leue and gan hem keſſe.
 155 And ȝerne he haȝ his oſteſſe biſouȝt
 Þat ȝhe *him* helpe ȝif ȝhe mouȝt,
 Hou he miȝte wiȝ ſum ginne

² Here the manuscript reads “ȝhe.”

³ Here the manuscript reads “here gol of.”

⁴ In the manuscript “hire faired” has been written twice.

þe faire maiden to *him* awinne.
 ¶ “Child, to one brigge þou scha[l]t come,
 160 A burgeis þou findeſt ate frome;
 His paleis is ate brigges ende.
 Curteis man he his and hende.
 We beþ wed-breþren and trewþe-iplizt.
 He þe can wiſſen 7 reden⁵ ari3t.
 165 Þou ſchalt beren *him* a ring
 Fram miſelue to tokning,
 Þat he þe helpe in eche helue
 So hit were bifalle miſelue.”
 Florice tok þe ring and nam his leue,
 170 For þere no leng wolde he bileue.
 Bi þat hit⁶ was vndren hegh3
 Þe brigge he was ſwiþe neg3.
 When he was to þe brigge icome,
 Þe burges he fond ate frome,
 175 Stonde[n]d on a marbel fton;
 ¶ Fair man and hende he was on.
 f.101ra Þe burgeis was ihote Da[r]ye,
 Florice him grette ſwiþe faire,
 And haþ him þe ring irawt
 180 And wel faire *him* bitawt,
 Þourgh tokning of þat ilke ring
 Florice hadde þer god geftning
 Of fichſſ, of fleffch, of tendre bred,
 Boþe of whit win and of red.
 185 Ac euere Florice ſizte ful cold,
 And Darys gan *him* biho[l]d.
 “Leue child, what mai þe be,
 Þous carfoul afe I þe fe?
 ¶ I wene þou nart nowt al fer,
 190 Þat þo^u makeſt þous doelful cher,
 Oþer þe like3 nowt þin in.”
 Nou Florice answered *him*,
 “3is, fire, bi Godes hore,
 So god I ne hadde 3ore,
 195 God late me bide þilke dai
 Þat ich þe zelde mai,

⁵ Here the manuscript reads “renden.”

⁶ Here the manuscript reads “his.”

Ac I þenke, in alle wife,
 Vpon min owen marchaundife
 Wherfore ich am hider come,
 200 Left I ne finde hit nowt ate frome;
 And 3it is þat mi meſte wo,
 3if ich hit finde and ſſchal forgo.”
 ¶ “Child, woldeſt þou tel me þi gref,
 To helpe þe me were ful lef.”
 205 Nou euerich word he haþ *him* told,
 Hou þe maide was fram *him* fold,
 And hou he was of Speyne a kinges ſone,
 And for hir loue þider icome
 For to fonde wi3 ſom ginne
 210 Þat faire maide to biwinne.
 Daris now þat child bihalt,
 And for a fol he *him* halt.
 “Child,” he ſei3 “I fe hou go3,
 Iwis þou 3erneſt þin owen de3.
 215 ¶ Þameral haþ to his iuſtening
 Oþer half hondred of riche king;
 Þat alþerricheſt⁷ kyng
 Ne dorſte biginne swich a þing,
 For mi3te þameral⁸ hit vnder3ete,
 220 Sone þou were of liue quite.
 f.101rb Abouten Babiloine, wi3outen wene
 [Dureþ] Sexti longe milen and tene;
 And ate walle þar beþ ate
 Seuen ſiþe twenti 3ate.
 225 Twenti tour^s þer be3 inne
 Þat euerich dai cheping is inne;
 Nis no dai þourg þe 3er
 Þat ſcheping nis þe[r]inne plener.
 An hondred toures alfo þerto
 230 Be3 in þe borewe and ſomdel mo;
 Þat aldereſt febleſt tour
 Wolde kepe an emperour
 To comen al þer wi3inne,
 Noiþer wi3 ſtreng3e ne wi3 ginne.
 235 ¶ And þei alle þe men þat beþ ibore

⁷ Here the manuscript reads “alþerricheſt.”

⁸ Here the manuscript reads “þamerlal.”

Adden hit vp here deth iswhore,
 Þai ſcholde winne þe mai fo ſone⁹
 As fram þe heuene he3 þe ſonne 7 mone.
 And in þe bourh, amide þe ri3t
 240 Þer ſtant a riche tour,¹⁰ [I] þe aplit3.
 A 3oufang taifen he his heize,
 Wo-fo it bi[h]alt wit fer 7 negzene;
 And an hondres taifes he is wid,
 And imaked wi3 mochel prid
 245 Of lim and of marbel ſton;
 In Criſtiente nis fwich non.
 7 þe mortar is maked fo wel,
 Ne mai no man hit breke wi3 no ſtel;
 And þe pomel aboute þe led
 250 Is iwrount wi3 fo moche red
 Þat men ne þorfen¹¹ ani3t berne
 Neiþer torche ne lanterne.
 Swich a pomel was neuer bigonne,
 Hit ſchine3 ani3t fo adai doþ þe ſonne.
 255 ¶ Nou beþ þer inne þat riche toure
 Four and twenty maidenés boure;
 So wel were þat ilke man
 Þat mi3te wonen in þat an,
 Now þourt him neuere, ful iwis,
 260 Willen after more bliſſe.
 Nou beþ þe ſeriaunts in þe ſtage
 To ſeruen þe maidenés of parage,
 Ne mai no ſeriaunt be þerinne
 Þat in his brech bereþ þet ginne,
 f.101va ¶ Neiþer bi dai ne bi ni3t,
 But he be aſe capoun di3t.
 ¶ And at þe gate is a gateward;
 He nis no fol ne no coward.
 3if þe[r] come3 ani man
 270 Wi3inne þat ilche barbican,
 But hit be bi his leue,
 He wille him boþe bete and reue.
 Þe porter is proud wi3alle;

⁹ Here the manuscript reads “fene.”

¹⁰ Here the manuscript reads “a tour.”

¹¹ Here the manuscript reads “tforren.”

Euerich dai he goþ in palle
 275 And þe amerail is fo wonder a gome
 Þat euerich 3er hit is his wone
 To chefen him a newe wif¹²
 ¶ And whan he a newe wif vnderfo,
 He knawe3 hou hit ſchal be do.
 280 Þanne ſcholle men feche doun of þe ſtage
 Alle þe maidenés of parage,
 An[d] brenge hem into on orchard,
 Þe faireſt of all middelhard;
 Þer is foulen ſong;
 285 Men mi3te libben þer among.
 Aboute þe orchard goþ a wal,
 Þe werfte ſton is criſtal.
 Þer man mai ſen on þe ſton
 Mochel of þis werldes wiſdom.
 290 ¶ 7 a welle þer ſpringe3 inne
 Þat is wrowt wi3 mochel ginne.
 Þe welle is of mochel pris;
 Þe ſtrem com fram Paradis,
 Þe grauel in þe grounde of preciouſe ſtone,
 295 7¹³ of vertu, iwif, echone;
 Of ſaphires and of ſardoines,
 Of oneches and of callidoines,
 Nou is þe waie of so mochel eye,
 3if þe[r] come3 ani maiden þat is forleie,
 300 7 hi bowe to þe grounde
 For to waſchen here honde,
 Þe water wille zelle als hit ware wod
 And bicom on hire so red so blod.
 ¶ Wich maiden þe water fare3 on fo,
 305 Hi ſchal ſone be fordo,
 And þilke þat beþ maidenés clene,
 Þai mai hem waſſche of þe rene;
 Þe water wille erne ſtulle and cler,
 f.101vb ¶ Nelle hit hem make no daunger.
 310 A t þe welle-heued þer ſtant a tre,
 Þe faireſt þat mai in erthe be.

¹² Judging from this poem’s rhyme scheme, a line has been omitted before or after this one.

¹³ In the manuscript a redundant “and” follows “7.”

Hit is icleped þe tre of loue,
 For floures and blofmes beþ euer aboue;
 And þilke þat clene maiden es be,
 315 Men ſchal hem bringe vnder þat tre,
 And wich-fo falle3 on þat [ferſte] flour,
 Hi ſchal ben choſen quen wi3 honur;
 ʒ zif þer ani maiden is
 Þat þamerail halt of meſt pris,
 320 Þe flour ſchal on here be went
 Þourh art and þourgh enchantement.
 Þous he cheſeþ þour3 þe flour
 ʒ euere we herkne3 when hit be
 Blauncheflour.”
 Þre fithes Florice ſwouned nouþe
 325 Er he mi3te ſpeke wi3 mouþe.
 Sone he awok and ſpeke mi3t,
 Sore he wep and fore he fi3t.
 “Darie,” he faide, “ich worht ded
 But ich haue of þe help and red.”
 330 ¶ “Leue child, ful wel I fe
 Þat þou wilt to deþe te.
 Þe beſte red þat I can –
 Oþer red I ne can –
 Wende tomorewe to þe tour
 335 Afe þou were a god ginour,
 And nim in þin hond ſquir and ſcantiloun
 Als þai þou were a maſoun;
 Bihold þe tour vp and doun.
 Þe porter is coluard and feloun;
 340 Wel ſone he wil come to þe
 And aſke what miſter man þou be
 ʒ ber vpon þe felonie,
 ʒ faie þou art comen þe tour aſpie.
 ¶ Þou ſchalt anſweren him ſwetelich
 345 ʒ ſpeke to him wel mi[l]delich,
 ʒ fai þou art a ginour
 To beheld þat ilche tour
 ʒ for to lerne and for to fonde
 To make anoþer in þi londe.
 350 Wel ſone he wil com þe ner
 And bidde þe plaien at þe ſcheker;
 To plaien he wil be wel fous

f.102ra And to winnen of þin wel coueitous.
 When þou art to þe ſcheker brou3t,
 355 Wi3outen pans ne plai þou nowt;
 ¶ Þou ſchalt haue redi mitte
 Þritti mark vnder þi ſlitte.
 And zif he winne ou3t al þin,
 Al leue þou hit wi3 him,
 360 ʒ zif þou winne ou3t of his,
 Þou lete þerof ful litel pris,
 Wel 3erne he wille þe bidde ʒ praie
 Þat þou come amorewe and plaie;
 Þou ſchalt figge þou wilt fo,
 365 ʒ nim wi3 þe amorewe swich two;
 ʒ euer þou ſchalt in þin owen wolde
 Þi gode cop wi3 he atholde,
 Þat ilke ſelf coppe of golde
 Þat was for Blauncheflour izolde.
 370 ¶ Þe þridde dai bere wi3 þe an hondred¹⁴ pond
 And þi coppe al hol and fond.
 3if him markes and pans fale,
 Of þi mone tel þou no tale.
 Wel 3erne he þe wille bidde and praie
 375 Þat þou legge þi coupe to plaie.
 Þou ſchalt anſweren him ate firſt,
 No lenger plaie þou ne liſt.
 Wel moche he wil for þi coupe bede,
 3if he mi3te þe better ſpede.
 380 Þou ſchalt bleþelich 3iuen hit him,
 Þai hit be gold pur and fin,
 ʒ fai, ‘Me þinke3 hit wel biſeme3 te,
 Þai hit were wor3 swiche þre;’
 ¶ Sai alfo þe ne faille non
 385 Gold ne ſeluer ne riche won.
 And he wil þanne fo mochel loue þe
 Þat þou hit ſchalt boþe ihere and fee
 Þat he wil falle to þi fot
 ʒ bicome þi man, zif he mot.
 390 His manred þou ſchalt aſonge
 And þe trewþe of his honde.
 3if þou mi3t þous his loue winne,

¹⁴ Here “hondred” has been altered from “dondred.”

He mai þe help wiz fom ginne.”
 ¶ Nou alfo Florice haþ iwrowt
 395 Alfo Darie him haþ itawt,
 Þat þourgh his gold and his garfome
 f.102rbÞe porter is his man bicomē.
 “Nou,” quaþ Florice “þou art mi man,
 7 al mi trest is þe vpan.
 400 Nou þou miȝt wel eþe
 Arede me fram þe deþe.”
 7 euerich word he haþ *him* told,
 Hou Blancheflour was fram *him* fold,
 7 hou he was of Spaine a kynges sone,
 405 7 for hire loue þider icome
 To fonde wiz fom ginne
 Þe maiden aȝen to *him* winne.
 ¶ Þe porter þat herde 7 fore fiȝte,
 “Ich am bitraied þourȝ riȝte;
 410 Þourȝ þi catel ich am bitraid,
 And of mi lif ich am defmaid;
 Nou ich wot, child, hou hit geþ,
 For þe ich drede to þolie deþ,
 7 napeles ich ne ſchal þe neuere failē mo,
 415 Þer whiles I mai ride or go;
 Þi foreward ich wil helden alle,
 What-fo wille bitide or falle.
 Wende þou hom into þin in
 Whiles I þink of fom ginne.
 420 Bitwene þis and þe þridde dai
 Don ich wille þat I mai.”
 ¶ Florice ſpak and wep among;
 Þat ilche terme *him* þouȝte wel long.
 Þe porter þouȝte what to rede,
 425 He let floures gaderen in þe mede;
 He wiſte hit was þe maidenē wille.
 Two coupē he let of floures fille.
 Þat was þe rede þat he þouȝt¹⁵ þo,
 Florice in þat o coupe do.
 430 Twei gegges þe coupe bere –
 So heui charged þat wroþ þai were;

¹⁵ In the manuscript a redundant “he þout” follows he
 “he þouȝt.”

Þai bad God ȝif *him* euel fin
 Þat fo mani floures dede þerin –
 ¶ Þider þat þai weren ibede.
 435 Ne were þai nowt ariȝt birede,
 Acc þai turned in hire left hond
 Blanchefloures bour an hond,
 To Clarice bour þe coupe þai bere
 Wiȝ þe floures þat þerinne were.
 440 Þere þe couppe þai ſette adoun,
 f.102va7 ȝaf *him* here malifoun
 Þat fo fele floures [h]em brouȝte on honde;
 Þai wenten forht 7 leten þe coppe ſtonde.
 Clarice to þe coppe com and wolde
 445 Þe floures handleden 7 biholde.
 Floriffe wende hit hadde ben his ſwet wiȝt;
 In þe coupe he ſtod vprizt,
 7 þe maide al for drede
 Bigan to ſchrichen an[d] to grede.
 450 Þo he¹⁶ ſeghȝ hit nas nowth ȝhe¹⁷
 Into þe coupe he ſtirte aȝe,
 7 held *him* bitraied al clene;
 Of his deȝ he ne ȝaf nowt a bene.
 Þer come to Clarice maⁱdenē lepe,
 455 Bi ten, be twenti in one hepe,
 7 alkedē what here were,
 Þat hi makede fo loude bere.
 Clarice hire vnderſtod anonriȝt
 Þat hit was Blancheflour þat swete wiȝt;¹⁸
 460 For here boures neȝ were,
 7 felden þat þai neren ifere,
 7¹⁹ aiþer of oþer counſeil þaⁱ wiſte,
 7 michel aiþer to oþer triſte.
 Hii ȝaf hire maidenē anſwere anon
 465 Þat into boure þai ſſcholden gon,
 “To þis coupe ich cam and wolde

¹⁶ Here the manuscript reads “ȝhe.”

¹⁷ Here the manuscript reads “he.”

¹⁸ This line extends so far into space between columns
 that the “t” of “wiȝt” is aligned with the rubricated initials
 of column b and rubricated itself in place of the initial of

¹⁹ In the manuscript a redundant “and” follows “ȝ.”

- Þe floures handli and biholde,
 Ac er ich hit euer wifte
 A boterfleze tozain me flufte.
 470 Ich was for adrad of þan,
 Þat ffchrichen and greden I bigan.”
 Þe maidenes hadde þerof gle,
 ʒ turnede aʒen and let Clariffe be.
 ¶ So fone fo þe madenes weren agon,
 475 To Blauncheflours bour Clarice wente anon,
 ʒ faide leyende to Blauncheflour:
 “Wiltou fen a ful fair flour,
 Swiche a flour þat þe fchal like
 Haue þou fen hit a lite?”
 480 “Auoy!²⁰ dameifele,” quaf Blauncheflour,
 “To fcorne me is litel honur.
 Iich ihere, Clarice, wizoute gabbe,
 Þe ameral wil me to wiue habbe;
 Ac þilke dai fchal neuer be
 f.102vb Þat men fchal atwite me
 Þat ifchal ben of loue vntrewe,
 Ne chaungi loue for non newe
 For no loue ne for non eie,
 So doþ Floris in his contreie.
 490 Nou [I] fchal swete Florice miffe,
 Schal non oþer of me haue bliffē.”
 Clarice ftant and bihalt þa^t reuþe,
 And þe treunefse of þis treuþe.
 Leizande fche faide to Blauncheflour,
 495 “Com nou, fe þat ilche flour.”
 To þe coupe þai zeden þo.
 Wel blifful was Floriffe þo,
 For he had iherd al þis;
 Out of þe coupe he ftirte, iwis.
 500 Blauncheflour chaungede hewe;
 Wel fone aiþer oþer knewe.
 Wizouten fpeche togidere þai lepe,
 Þat clepte ʒ kefte ʒ eke wepe.
 Hire cuffing lafte a mile
 505 ʒ þat hem þouʒte litel while.
 ¶ Clarice bihalt al þis,
- Here contenaunce ʒ here bliff,
 ʒ leizende faide to Blauncheflour,
 “Felawe, knoueftou ouʒt þis flour?
 510 Litel er noldeft þou hit fe,
 ʒ nou þou ne miʒt hit lete fro þe.
 He moſte conne wel mochel of art
 Þat þou woldeft ʒif þerof ani part.”
 Boþe þife swete þinges for blis
 515 Falleʒ doun here fet to kis,
 ʒ crieʒ hire merci al weping
 Þat ʒhe hem biwraie²¹ nowt to þe king,
 To þe king þat ʒhe hem nowt biwreie
 Wherþourgh þai were fiker to deye.
 520 ¶ Þo fpak Clarice to Blauncheflour
 Wordes ful of fin amour:
 “Ne doute ʒou nammore wizalle
 Þan to miſelf hit hadde bifalle.
 White ʒhe wel witerli
 525 Þat hele ich wille ʒoure boþer druri.”
 To on bedde ʒhe haþ hem ibrowt
 Þat was of filk and fendal wrouʒt.
 Þai fette hem þere wel foſte adoun,
 f.103ra And Clarice drowʒ þe courtyrn roun.
 530 Þo bigan þai to clippe and kiffe,
 ʒ made joie and mochele bliffē.
 ¶ Florice ferft ſpeke bigan
 ʒ faide, “Louerd þat madeft man,
 Þe I þanke, Godes fone;
 535 Nou al mi care ich haue ouercome,
 ʒ nouⁱ ch haue mi lef ifounde
 Of al mi kare ich am vnbounde.”
 Nou haþ aiþer oþer itold
 Of mani a car foul cold,
 540 ʒ of mani pine ſtronge,
 Þat þai han ben atwo fo longe.
 Clarice hem feruede al to wille
 Boþe dernelich and ftille.
 But fo ne miʒte ʒhe hem longe iwite
 545 Þat hit ne ffcholde ben vnderʒete.
 ¶ Nou hadde þe amerail swiche a wone²²

²⁰ Here the manuscript reads “Auop.”

²¹ Here the manuscript reads “briwaie.”

Þat euer[i] dai þer ffcholde come
 Þre maidenen vt of hire boure
 To feruen him vp in þe toure,
 550 **W**iz water and cloþ and bacyn
 For to waffchen his hondes in.
 Þe þridde ſcholde bringge combe and mirour
 To feruen him wiz gret honur;
 And þai þai feruede him neuer fo faire,
 555 **A**morewen ſcholde anoþer paire.
 And meft was woned into þe tour
 Þerto Clarice and Blaunchefflour.
 So long him feruede þe maidenen route
 Þat hire seruice was comen aboute.
 560 **O**n þe morewen þat þider com Florice
 Hit fel to Blaunchefflour and to Clarice.
¶ Clarice, fo wel hire mote bitide,
 Aros vp in þe morewentide
 And clepede after Blaunchefflour
 565 **T**o wende wiz here into þe tour.
 Blaunchefflour ſaide, “Icham comende;”
 Ac here anfwere was al flepende.
 Clarice in þe wai is nome
 7 wende þat Blaunchefflour had come.
 570 **S**one fo Clarice com in þe tour
 Þe ameral asked after Blaunchefflour.
 “Sire,” 3he ſaide anonri3t,
 f.103rb **3**he had iwaked al þis ni3t
 7²³ ikneled and iloke
 575 7 irad vpon hire boke,
 7 bad to God here oreifoun
 Þat he þe 3iue his benifoun
 7 þe helde longe aliue;
 Nou ſche flepeþ alfo ſwiþe,
 580 **B**launchefflour, þat maiden swete,
 Þat hii ne mai nowt comen 3hete.”
 “**C**erte,” ſaid þe kyng,
 “Nou is hi a fwete þing;
 Wel au3te ich here 3erne to wiue,
 585 **W**henne 3he bit fo for mi liue.”

Anoper dai Clarice arift
 7 haþ Blaunchefflour atwift
Whi hi made fo longe demoere:
 “Arif vp and go we ifere.”
 590 **B**launchefflour ſaide, “I come anan
 7 Florice he klippe bigan,
 7 felle aſlepe on þiſe wiſe;
 7 after hem gan fore agrife.
 Clarice to þe piler cam;
 595 **Þ**e bacyn of gold 3he nam,
 7 had icleped after Blaunchefflour
 To wende wiz here into þe tour;
 3he ne anfwerede nei ne 3o.
 Þo wende Clarice 3he ware ago.
 600 **¶** Sone fo Clarice com into þe tour,
 Þe ameral asked after Blaunchefflour,
Whi and wharfore 3he ne come
 As hi was woned to done.
 “3he was arifen ar ich were;
 605 **I**ch wende here hauen ifonden here.
What, ne is 3he nowt icomen 3it?”
 “Nou 3he me doute3 al to lit.”
Forht he clepeþ his chaumberleyn,
 7 bit him wende wiz alle main
 610 7 wite wi þat 3he ne come
 As hi was wone bifore to done.
¶ Þe chaumberleyn had vndernome;
 Into hir bour he his icome,
 And ſtant bifore hire bed
 615 **A**nd find þar twai neb to neb,
 Neb to neb²⁴ an[d] mouþ to mouþ;
 f.103va **W**el ſone was þat forewe couþ.
 Into þe tour vp he ſteiz
 7 ſaide his louerd þat he ſeiz.
 620 **Þ**e ameral het his ſwerd him bring;
Iwiten he wolde of þat þinge.
Forht he nim3 wiz alle mayn,
Himſelf and his chaumberlayn,
Til þaie come þar þai two laie;
 625 **3**it was þe ſlep faft in hire eye.

²² Here “wone” has been altered from “wane.”

²³ In the manuscript a redundant “and” follows “7.”

²⁴ In the manuscript “to neb” has been written twice.

Þe ameral het hire cloþes kefte
 A litel bineþen here brefte.
 Þan feþ he wel fone anon
 Þat on was a man, þat oþer a womman.
 630 He quok for anguiſſe þer he stod
 Hem to quelle was his mod.
 He him biþouzte ar he wolde hem quelle
 What þai were þai²⁵ ſſcholde him telle,
 7 ſiþen he þouzte hem of dawe don.
 635 Þe children awoken vnder þon,
 Þai fegh þe ſwerd ouer hem idrawe,
 Adrad þai ben to ben iflawe.
 ¶ Þo biſpak þe ameral bold
 Wordes þat ſcholde fone bi told:
 640 “Sai me now, þou belami,
 Who made þe fo hardi
 For to come into mi tour
 To ligge þer bi Blaunche flour?
 To wroþerhale ware 3e bore.
 645 3e ſchollen þolie deþ þerfore.”
 Þanne ſaide Florice to Blaunche flour,
 “Of oure lif nis non focour.”
 And mercy þai cride on him fo ſwithe
 Þat he 3af hem reſpit of here liue
 650 Til he hadde after his baronage ſent
 To awreken him þourg3 jugement.
 Vp he bad hem fitte boþe
 7 don on oþer cloþes,
 7 ſiþþe he let hem binde faft
 655 7 into priſoun hem he caft,
 Til he had²⁶ after his barenage ſent
 To wreken him þourgh jugement.
 ¶ What helpeþ hit longe tale to ſſchewe?
 Ich wille 3ou telle at wordes fewe.
 660 Nou al his baronage had vndernome
 f.103vb And to þe amerail 3he beþ icome.
 His halle þat was heiþe ibult
 Of kynges and dukes was ifult.
 He stod vp among hem alle

665 Bi ſemblaunt ſwiþe wroþt wiþalle.
 He ſaide, “Lordingges of mochel honour,
 3e han herd ſpeken of Blaunche flour,
 Hou ich hire bouzt dere, apliþt,
 For ſeuen ſithes hire wiþt of gold;
 670 For hire faired & hire chere
 Ich hire bouzte allinge ſo dere.
 For ich þouzte wiþouten wene
 Hire haue ihad to mi quene.
 Bifore hire bed miſelf I com,
 675 7 fond bi hire an naked grom.
 Þo þai were me ſo wroþe,
 I þouzte to han iqueld hem boþe,
 Ich was ſo wroþ and ſo wod;
 7 3it ich wiþdrouþ mi mod,
 680 Fort ich haue after 3ou iſent
 To awreke me þour3 jugement.
 ¶ Nou 3e witen hou hit is agon,
 Awreke me ſwiþe of mi fon.”
 Þo ſpak a king of on lond,
 685 “We han iherd²⁷ þis ſchame and ſchonde,
 Ac er we hem to deye wreke,
 We ſcholle heren þo children ſpeke,
 What þai wil ſpeke and ſigge,
 3if þai ouzt aþein wil allegge.
 690 Hit ner nowt riþt jugement
 Wiþouten anſwere to acouplement.”
 ¶ After þe children nou men ſendeþ;
 Hem to brenne fur men tendeþ.
 Twaie Sarazins forþ hem bringeþ,
 695 Toward here deþ ſore weþinge.
 Dreri were þis ſchildren two;
 Nou aiþer biwepeþ oþeres wo.
 Florice ſaide to Blaunche flour:
 “Of oure lif nis non ſocour;
 700 3if manken hit þoli miþt
 Twies iſcholde die wiþ riþt,
 One for miſelf, anoþer for þe,
 For þis deþ þou haſt for me.”
 ¶ Blaunche flour ſaide aþen þo,

²⁵ Here the manuscript reads “þat.”

²⁶ Here the manuscript reads “dhad.”

²⁷ Here the manuscript reads “irerd.”

f.104ra “**Þ**e gelt is min of oure boþer wo.”
Florice drow forþ þe ring
Þat his moder *him* ʒaf at his parting:
“**H**auē nou þis ring, *lemman* min;
Þou ne schalt nowt die whiles hit is þin.”
710 ¶ **B**launche flour saide þo,
“**S**o ne schal hit neuer go,
Þat þis ring schal ared me,
Ne mai ihc no deþ on þe fe.”
Florice þe ring here arauʒt,
715 **ʒ** hi *him* aʒein hit bitauʒt;
On hire he had þe ring iþraft
ʒ hi hit haueʒ awai ikaft.
A duk hit feʒ and beʒgh to grounde,
An[d] was glad þat ring he founde.
720 ¶ **O**n þis maner þe children come
We ping to þe fur and to hire dome.
Bifore al þat fo[l]k þai ware ibrowt;
Dreri was hire boþer þouʒt.
Þer nas non fo fterne man
725 **Þ**at þife children loked vpan,
Þat þai ne wolde alle ful fawe
Here jugement haue wiʒdrawe,
ʒ wiʒ grete garifoun hem begge,
ʒif þai dorste speke oþer figge,
730 **F**or Florice was so fair a ʒongling
ʒ Blaunche flour so fwete a þing.
¶ **O**f men and wimmen þat beþ nouþe,
Þat gon and²⁸ riden and spekeþ wiʒ mouþe,
Beþ non so fair in hire gladneffe
735 **A**ls þai ware in hire foreweneffe.
No man ne knewe hem þat hem was wo
Bi femblaunt þat þai made þo,
But bi þe teres þat þai schadde,
And fillen adoun bi here nebbe.
740 ¶ **Þ**e ameral was so wroʒ and wod
Þat he ne miʒt wiʒdraw his mod.
He bad binde þe children fafte;
Into þe fir he [bad] *hem* cafte.
Þilke duk þat þe gold ryng hadde

²⁸ Here the manuscript reads “anr.”

745 **N**ou to speke²⁹ rewþe he hadde.
Fain he wolde hem helpe to liue,
ʒ tolde hou þai for þe ring ftriue.
¶ **Þ**e ameral het hem aʒen clepe,
f.104rb **F**or he wolde þo schildren speke.
750 **H**e askede Florice what he hete,
ʒ he *him* told swiʒe skete.
¶ **“S**ire,” he saide, “ʒif hit were þi wille,
Þou ne auʒttest nowt þif maiden spille,
Ac, fire, lat aquelle me
755 **A**nd lat þat maiden aliue be.”
Blaunche flour saide þo,
“**Þ**e gilt is min of oure boþer wo.”
ʒ þe ameral saide þo,
“**I**wis, ʒe sc[h]ulle die bo.
760 **W**iʒ wreche ich wille me awreke;
ʒe ne scholle neuere go no speke.”
¶ **H**is swerd he braid out of his ffcheþe.
Þe children for to do to deþe,
ʒ Blaunche flour pult forþ hire swire
765 **ʒ** Florice gan hire aʒein tire,
“**I**ch am a man, ich schal go bifore.”³⁰
Þou ne auʒttest nouʒt mi deʒ acore.”
Florice forht his fwire pulte
ʒ Blaunche flour aʒein hit brutte.
770 **A**l þat ifeʒen þis
Þerfore fori weren, iwis,
ʒ saide, “**D**reri mai we be
Bi fwiche children swich rewþe fe.”
¶ **Þ**ameral, wroþ þai he were,
775 **B**oþe *him* chaungede³¹ mod and chere,
For aiþer for oþer wolde die,
And he fegh so mani a weping eʒe,
And for he hadde fo mochel loued þe mai,
We ping he turned his heued awai,
780 **ʒ** his swerd hit fil to grounde;
He ne miʒte hit h[e]lde in þat ftounde.
¶ **Þ**ilke duk þat þe ring found

²⁹ Here the manuscript reads “fpleke.”

³⁰ Here the manuscript reads “fifore.”

³¹ Here the manuscript reads “chaungegde.”

Wiz þameral spak and round,
 7 ful wel þerwiz he spedde;
 785 Þe children þerwiz fram deþe he redde.
 “Sire,” he faide, “hit is litel pris
 Þise children to flen, iwis.
 Hit is þe wel more worffchipe
 Florice confeile þat þou wite,
 790 Who him taw3te þilke gin
 For to come þi tour wiz3n,
 f.104va 7 who þat him brou3te þar;
 Þe bet of oþer³² þo^u mi3t be war.”
 ¶ Þan faide þameraile to Florice þo,
 795 “Tel me who þe tau3te herto.”
 “Þat,” quap Florice, “ne ſchal I neuere do,
 But 3if hit ben for3iuen alfo
 Þat þe gin me tau3te þerto;
 Arft ne ſcha[l] hit neuer bi do.”
 800 Alle þai praied þerfore, iwis;
 Þe ameral graunted þis.
 ¶ No[u] eueri word Florice haþ him told
 Hou þe made was fram him fold,
 And hou he was of Speyne a kyngges fone,
 805 For hire loue þider icome
 To fonden wiz fom gin
 Þat faire maiden for to win;
 7 hou þourgh his gold and his garifoun
 Þe porter was his man bicom,
 810 7 hou he was in þe coupe ibore;
 7 alle þis oþer lowen þerfore.
 ¶ Nou þe amerail, wel him mote bitide,
 Florice he sette next his fide,
 7 made him ftonde þer vprizt,
 815 7 haþ idubbed him to kni3t,
 7 bad he ſcholde wiz him be
 Wiz þe formaft of his mene.
 Florice fallet to his fet
 And bit him 3if him his lef so swet.
 820 Þe ameral 3af him his lemman;
 Alle þe oþere him þanked þan.

¶ To one chirche h[e] let hem bringge,
 7 wedde here wiz here owene ringge.
 Nou boþe þis children alle for bliff
 825 Fil þe amerales fet to kis;
 7 þourgh counfeil of Blaunche flour
 Clarice was fet doun of þe tour,
 7 þe amerale here wedded to quene.
 Þere was feſte swiþe breme;
 830 I ne can nowt tellen þe fonde,
 Ac þe richeſt feſte in londe.
 Nas hit nowt longe after þan
 Þat Florice tidingge ne cam
 Þat his fader þe kyng was ded;
 835 And al þe barnage 3af him red
 f.104vb Þat he ſcholde wenden hom
 And vnderfongen his kyn[g]dom.
 At ameral he nom his leue,
 And he him bad wiz him bileue.
 840 Þanne biſpak þe ameral,
 “3if þou wilt do, Florice, bi mi conſeil,
 Dwelle here and wend nowt hom;
 Ich wille þe 3iuen a kyngdom
 Alfo longe and alfo brod
 845 Alf euere 3it þi fader bod.”
 ¶ “I nel bileue for no winne;
 To bidde me hit were finne.”
 Þai bitau3t þe amerail oure dri3t,
 7 þai com hom whan þai mi3t,
 850 7 let croune him to king
 7 hire to quene, þat fwete þing,
 7 vnderfeng Criſtendom of preſtes honde,
 7 þonkede God of alle his fonde.
 Nou ben þai boþe ded.
 855 Criſt of heuene houre foules led.
 Nou is þis tale browt to þende
 Of Florice and of his lemma[n] hende,
 Hou after bale hem com bote;
 So wil oure louerd þat ous mote,
 860 Amen figgez alfo,
 And ich ſchal helpe 3ou þerto.

³² In the manuscript a redundant “of oþer” follows he “of oþer.”

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