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Ways of Reading and Framing Collection in Late Medieval England

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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
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.

Christopher C. Baswell
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Zrinka Stahuljak
Matthew N. Fisher, Committee Co-Chair
Donka Minkova Stockwell, Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles
2014
For my parents, my earliest guides through a multitude of books.
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Abbreviations

BL                British Library
CUL               Cambridge University Library
EETS              Early English Text Society (o.s., Original Series; e.s., Extra Series)
LALME             A Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English. Edited by Angus McIntosh, M.
                  L. Samuels, and Michael Benskin with the assistance of Margaret Laing and
Lewis and Short   Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, eds. A Latin Dictionary. Oxford:
MED               The Middle English Dictionary. Edited by Hans Kurath, Sherman M. Kuhn,
                  1954-2001. Cited from the online Middle English Dictionary, last updated 24
                  from the Patrologia Latina Database. ProQuest, 1996-2014.
STC               A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland and
                  of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640. Compiled by A. W. Pollard and
                  G. R. Redgrave. 3 vols. 2nd ed. Revised and enlarged, begun by W. A.
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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:

\[
\text{Auauntages ſai hauen ſare}
\]
\[
\text{Freynsch ſ Latin euerywhere.}
\]
\[
\text{Of Freynsch no Latin nil y tel more,}
\]
\[
\text{Ac on I[n]glisch ichil tel ſerfore.}
\]
\[
\text{Riȝt is ſat I[n]glische vnderstond}
\]
\[
\text{Šat was born in Inglond.}
\]
\[
\text{Freynsche vse ſis gentil man}
\]
\[
\text{Ac euery Ŭnglische Ūnglische can.}
\]

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 euery Ŭnglische rather than merely to ſis 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.

---

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 advantages conferred by textual access:

Childer þat ben to boke ysett
In age hem is miche þe bett
For þai mo witen þ se
Miche of Godes priuete
Hem to kepe þ to ware
Fram sinne þ fram warldes care,
þe 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 advantages 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 Arthour 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 multitexual, 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. 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.

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3 For a discussion of this term in respect to medieval manuscripts, see Pamela Robinson, “The ‘Booklet’: A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts,” Codicological/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 a 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.\footnote{For a brief discussion of my editorial practices in these partial editions, see the introductory remarks at the opening of Appendix B.} 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 $s$. 
CHAPTER ONE
FINDING WAYS THROUGH THE WOOD: READING AND COLLECTION IN MEDIEVAL DISCOURSES OF COMPILATION

_Hic amor ecstaticus tam potenter nos rapuit ut, terrenis aliis abdicatis ab animo, acquirendorum librorum solummodo flagraremus 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

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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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Collections in Context: The Organization of Knowledge and Community in Europe}, ed. Karen Fresco and Anne D. Hedeman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011).

\textsuperscript{3} As the example of Richard demonstrates, desire furnished then, as now, a powerful motivation to collect. The \textit{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

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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.

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 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 tamquam 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).]


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.

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.”

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. This conventional narrative depends on major historical

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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).


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”) “compilator-discourse,” by means of which self-described compilers were conceiving and articulating their compiling activities with new self-consciousness and specificity. As Minnis and others have noted, this was also the time at which the words compilare, compilator, and compilatio came into wide use in reference to compiling activities as they have been defined here. 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.’ The Rouses account for medieval appropriation (and amelioration) of such violent terminology by pointing to an increasingly utilitarian approach to books favored by preachers.

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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]. 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. 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...

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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 wrestling them from their earlier or original contexts, confers power, even authority, on the compiler as well.\footnote{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.\footnote{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,
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

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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 meditacione diuturna, pectus suum biblothecam fecerat Christi” [by constant reading and long meditation his heart made a library for Christ].\(^\text{18}\) 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*).

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


\(^{20}\) The Latin bibliotheca encompasses senses of both textual collection and the physical space in which such a collection might be housed. See “bibliotheca” 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].

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—a long 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

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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 aequo 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

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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*). Hugh imagines circumstances rendering reading an abortive process, much as Jerome does with his putative penless reader. In this case the reader without *prudentia* 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.

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25 Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 5.5.
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 ...

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

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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*.

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...

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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 inventur. 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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

\textsuperscript{28} Carruthers, \textit{Book of Memory}, 106.
\textsuperscript{29} Speaking specifically of monastic attitudes towards scripture, the Rouses observe that a monastic reader practitioner of \textit{lectio divina} would be, in effect, “a living concordance” (\textit{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, imbibes 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 nescesse 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…alia 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*):

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 cognate [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 factito [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

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. 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].” 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.] 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

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. He renders physiologically concrete Gregory the Great’s exhortation, “In nobis metipsis 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]. What is read and transformed—or, in Hugh’s case, digested—within incites a concurrent transformation in outward life, in action. By ruminatively processing and revisiting one’s Scriptural readings, one internalizes their meaning and

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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.]

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

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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 contemplandi 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, dirigat actus, corrigat excessus, componit mores,

\(^{40}\) Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.10 “De meditatione.”

\(^{41}\) Hugh of St Victor, *Didascalicon* 3.10. Trans. Taylor, 92.

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

[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, distemmat, praedorinit), 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

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—which 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 compulsory processes concretized the mental compulsory 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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{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]. 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. 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

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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. 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 fratum 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

\[\text{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 (simplicem 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 comprehendi*) 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

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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

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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 (*revoluenti*)—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

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\(^{50}\) 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 *revolventi* 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.
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*.

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51 For 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

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52 Hugh associates tracting (*tractando*) with ruminination (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 *compilator*-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].

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 (succhum varium) harvested by the bees transform by a kind of mixture (mixtura quadam...mutant) into a single flavor.

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 aussi come une bresche de mel coile de divers flors, car ceste livre est compilés seulement des mervilleus dit des autors qui devant nostre tens ont traité de philoçofie, chascun selon 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

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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: “compilator,” 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 mervilleus 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 ordinat
ed 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
Tresor, 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 Tresor), Garland Library of
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 discredii, lectorem admoneo, ne forsan abhorreat, si quas huiusmodi contrarietates 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 relinquitudo cuius sententiae 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.]

Vincent justifies the presence of contradictions (*contrarietates*) 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

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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

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\(^{58}\) 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. 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 contrahenta, quae teneros lectores ad maximum inquirendae veritatis exercitium provocet et acutiores ex inquisitione reddant. Haec quippe prima sapientiae clavis definitur assidua scilicet seu frequens interroigatio; 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 studious 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.]

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

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59 Failing that, of course, one must weigh one authority against another: “Quod si forte adeo manifesta sit controversia ut nulla possit absolvit ratione, conferenae 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.

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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—itself 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.  

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.” 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

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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.

booklet among these few to which multiple scribes definitely contributed—Booklet 3 exhibits a fascinating tension with the manuscript’s mastermind. 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. 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. 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. Bucking the trend observed elsewhere

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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 Crounse 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.’ 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)

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 Degare 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.”

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. 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.”

Arthur Bahr’s recent study of Booklet 3 evinces a more sanguine response to the booklet, celebrating its exceptional structure and probing its meaning. 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. In the end, the booklet baffles his attempts to make sense of its production.

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).
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 *Pater noster*, 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.”

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. 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.

Shonk, “Bookmen,” 77.

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.

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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. 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. 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 “xliii” in the upper margin) points 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.

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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 Warwyke* 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-84a, 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. 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. Scribe 5 consistently left room for a larger initial, once preceded by space for a miniature and once to stand alone. In two instances, Scribe 1

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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 *Pater noster*. 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. 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. 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. 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. 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

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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.
constellations are clearly anything but haphazard products of exemplar availability. 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. 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

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[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 necessary 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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.\textsuperscript{33} Scribe 6’s allowances for a miniature strongly suggest he was copying \textit{Otuel} for this manuscript and was aware, however distantly, of Scribe 1’s overall decorative

\textsuperscript{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 Crounse 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,” \textit{The Antiquaries Journal} 66 (1986) and “Liber Horn’, ‘Liber Custumarum” and Other Manuscripts of the Queen Mary Psalter Workshops,” \textit{Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology in London}, ed. Lindy Grant (British Archaeological Association, 1990), 118-34.

\textsuperscript{32} Wiggins remarks that Scribe 2’s \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{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, Wiggins identifies Scribe 2 as the locus for (or force behind) the visually divergent parts of Auchinleck, which she identifies as follows:

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.

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. 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.

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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. 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.

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

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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*. 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. 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. 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. In the rare instances in which Scribe 1 has copied such texts, they almost invariably occupy ‘filler’ positions in their

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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.\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{43} A generous round-up of these texts includes \textit{The Despitsoun bitwen the Bodi and the Soule} (minimal narrative), \textit{Harrowing of Hell} (Latin/English), \textit{The Thrub and the Nightingale} (minimal narrative), \textit{The Sayings of Saint Bernard} (non-narrative), \textit{David the King} (Latin/English, non-narrative), \textit{The Four Foes of Mankind} (non-narrative), and \textit{Alphabetical Praise of Women} (non-narrative).

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

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Degare} appears to have once followed a miniature.

\textsuperscript{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 (\textit{The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin}, \textit{Seven Sages}, \textit{Floris}) or of the opening matter (miniature?, title?) preceding the text proper (\textit{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. 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. 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

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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.\textsuperscript{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

\textsuperscript{52} Bahr, \textit{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” (\textit{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.”

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

Auchinleck Manuscript” and that “the appearance of [Scribe 3’s] hand argues ... the likelihood that [Auchinleck] represents an enterprise that was lay and commercial.” 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. 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.” 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

55 Hanna, “Reconsidering,” 94.
56 Hanna, “Reconsidering,” 95.
copied.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{59}

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

\textsuperscript{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, \textit{Fragments and Assemblages}, 109-10).

Brunner asserts in his edition of \textit{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 $\text{ȝ}$ instead of $\text{þ}$, as $\text{wȝ}$ for $\text{wþ}$, ll. 22, 44, 61, etc., $\text{-eȝ}$ for $\text{-eþ}$ (third pers. sing. and plur., pres.) 25, 94, 115, etc., $\text{fȝrþ}$ for $\text{fþre}$ 60, $\text{wȝroþ}$ for $\text{wþro}$, 388, etc. ... Cpt. similar peculiarities in MS. B. I.4.39 \textit{[sic]}, Trinity College, Cambridge (thirteenth century) in W. W. Skeat’s \textit{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, \textit{The Siege of Troye}, Graz 1928, I, pp. 142 and 156 f.”; see Brunner, ed., \textit{The Seven Sages of Rome (Southern Version)}, EETS, o.s. 191 (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), ix-x.

\textsuperscript{58} Bahr, \textit{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.

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.” 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.” 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. 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.” 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

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60 Clark, “Myth,” 118-19.
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. wiȝ (‘with’) or -eȝ (-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 letteral 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 <ȝ> 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).


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 English 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 <ȝ> 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 [ȝ] 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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).

\textsuperscript{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).

\textsuperscript{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.\(^6\) 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:

\(^6\) 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. 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. (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. To my knowledge, Scribe 1 has not added cues for paraphs 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. 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. 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

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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:

```plaintext
Dan seide maister Bencillas,
"Whi artou wroht and for what cas?
Wiltou sle þin Owen child?
Ne were þou wone be god and mild?" (lines 535-8)
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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. 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.

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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

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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 *Simione*. 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 *Paternostor*. 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

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\(^80\) 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.” 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,

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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. 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-conscious 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.

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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. 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 seuven dedly sinnes.” 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. 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].” 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 Phillipa 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).


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 Worh of Witte: Florice and Blauncheflour: 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. 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. 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. 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.

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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 þue Crijenemen grace,  
Into þe holi lond to pace  
And þe Saraxins þat be þo riu,  
And lette be Crijenemen on liue,  
And saue 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. 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

\footnote{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 didactism. Kölbing 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. 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. 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. 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

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91 Kölbing, “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.
to the audience [the archbishop] intended to educate—and not just, as in Pecham’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,
Forþiue vs, louerd, our misdede
And help vs ate oure moste nede.
To þo þat habben laiser to dwelle,
Of holi writ ich wole ȝou telle,
And alle þat taken þerto hede,

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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 things:
In the fourtene poyntes that falles to the trouthe,
In the ten comandemente þat god has gyven us,
In the seuen Sacrament þat er in hali kirke,
In seuen dedis of merci until oure euen-cristen,
And in the seuen dedely sinnes that man sal refuse. (lines 51–58)

God wille quiten al here mede.\textsuperscript{95}

Here text itself takes on the role of teacher. The \textit{vs} 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 (\textit{ich}) and reading audience (\textit{zu}), 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:

\begin{verbatim}
Þer beȝ dedli sinnes seuene,
Þat letteȝ 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 beȝ to slowe.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{verbatim}

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.\textsuperscript{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

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{95} Seven Deadly Sins, lines 5-8.
\textsuperscript{96} Seven Deadly Sins, lines 9-16.
\textsuperscript{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.
\end{verbatim}
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. \(^9\) The poem does share some contents in common with primers (notably the prayers of its second section), but to view it

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\(^9\) 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 Pe 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 paraphs 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 ȝoure 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

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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. 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. (See figure 2.) Both the ‘Pater noster’ and the ‘Ave

\footnote{The 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 \textit{Seynt Mergrte} and \textit{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).}

\footnote{See f. 70vb.}
Maria’ terminate in *Amens* that signal the conclusions of these discrete prayers, and two painted initials enhance the visibility of the ‘Pater noster’ and the Creed. These demarcations render the

102 The 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.

103 The 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 be Godes hestes ten / Herkne3, 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.\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{quote}
And þe Pater noster and þe Crede,
þeroffe þe sscholden taken hede
On Englissch to segge what hit were,
Als holi cherche ȝou wolde lere;
For hit is to þe soules biheue,
Ech man to knowen his bileue.\textsuperscript{105}
\end{quote}

Three prescribed actions—pertaining to observation/consideration (\textit{taken hede}), speech (\textit{segg}), and
instruction/authorization (\textit{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 \textit{lere} embraces the church’s role in mandating knowledge of these prayers and in

\textsuperscript{104}See note 103. The ‘Pater noster’ was widely regarded as \textit{the} most important prayer in the medieval church on
account of its divine origin.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{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 paraphs for the first time within his stint to mark the transitions between the canonical hours as they figure in the narrative. 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. The paraphs encourage readers to recognize these temporal markers and

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106 There are three paraphs 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.” 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,  
þat hente þi bodi þat was so whit,  
þiue vs grace þis dai to ende  
In his seruise þe fend to sschende.  

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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 … / ȝiue vs grace …) to third person (In his seruise …), underscores the reader’s perspectival shift from an intimacy with Christ and his Passion to an internally directed meditation. The poem’s frame twice exhorts readers of this section to “habben” or “holdeȝ hit [i.e. the Passion] in minde” so as “to sturen out of dedli sinne.” 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.

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110 The 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. 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, ‘Pater noster _vndo_ on englissch,’ 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. The poem furnishes all of the rerenditions, 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.

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

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

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Pater noster 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, Pater noster 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 telleȝ in þe bok,
His apostles he hit bitok,
For þai sscholden habben hit in minde

\(^{114}\) Though the excision of most of f. 72r has left only a stub as witness to the concluding—or close to concluding—lines of Pater noster, 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 beȝ … / þe beste …” (Pater noster, lines 156-7). The most obvious referent for the plural subject would be the “seuen oreisouns” (Pater noster, 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 beter oreisoun iwis/ Þanne þe Pater noster is” (Pater noster, lines 16-18). The second paraphed line fragment, “Ech ma…” (Pater noster, line 160), echoes terms of address employed in the preface: “¶ Ech man hereof take hede” (Pater noster, line 7). The words and word fragments following this address seem to indicate a similarly didactic or prescriptive bent to these lines.


\(^{115}\) Pater noster, 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 *Pater noster* 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 *Pater noster* 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.

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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.” 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,

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118 *Pater noster*, 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 be3 inne  
Þat helpe3 men out of dedli sinne  
And ȝif ȝe wille3 a while dwelle,  
Al on Englissch ich wille ȝou telle  
þe skile of hem alle seuene,

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¹¹⁹ *Paternoster*, lines 1–6.

¹²⁰ Even *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 Medieval 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.  

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. Then follows a metrical English translation of the Latin—one that

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121 Paternoster, lines 21-26.
122 In 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 poem—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.

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

“The 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.

The 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.

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

“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 *Pater noster*, 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’. At the same time, Auchinleck’s *Pater noster* 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.” Even in a poem of a mere eighteen lines, the prayer’s structure offers a foundation on which a catechetically useful

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125 For 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 nobis 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 Sermone in Monte,’ PL 34.1276-308). *Pater noster* splits the first petition into two—“Pater noster qui es in caelis” (*Pater noster*, line 27) and “Sanctificetur nomen tuum” (*Pater noster*, line 50)—and combines the sixth and seventh petitions above into one: “*Et […] / Set liber[...]”* (*Pater noster*, lines 145-46).

network of associations may be erected. 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.” 

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.

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.’ 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

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127 This 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).


129 See Hanna, Speculum Vitae, lxxi.

130 See Hanna, Speculum Vitae, lxii.
rhetoric of framing in both poems, encourage increasingly self-conscious and sophisticated approaches to reading. Auchinleck’s *Pater noster* 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. *Pater noster* 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 *Pater noster*, to the exclusion of septenary catechetical materials, argues for the specificity of the poem’s priorities. *Pater noster* prompts its audience to ponder the implications of these metaphors’ resonances with their own experiences in life and as readers.

*Pater noster* 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”\(^\text{131}\) —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 /⁊ in terra”\(^\text{132}\) —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

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\(^{131}\) *Pater noster*, lines 68 and 104.  
\(^{132}\) *Pater noster*, 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.” 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 *Pater noster* 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. 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

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133 Huot, “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.

134 Though Auchinleck’s *Pater noster* 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).
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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Paternoster}’s explication of its first petition (\textit{Pater noster qui es in celis}) directs its audience to read their own narrative of inheritance in the words of the prayer.\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{verbatim}
Þanne mote we, so mote ich þe,  
If we willen hise children be,  
Fonden to liuen in god lif,  
...  
Þanne mowe [we] seggen, iwis,  
Þat Ihesu Crist our fader is.  
¶ 3if we wile be clene isschriue
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{135}This could have been a matter of carelessness; since it was Scribe 3’s prevailing practice to omit parahps 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.’

\textsuperscript{136}\textit{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 \textit{Speculum Vitae}) or as part of the longer petition \textit{Pater noster qui es in celis sanctificetur nomen tuum}. That said, \textit{Speculum Vitae}, for one, submits the first line of the prayer to an extensive explication that addresses the same subject:

\begin{verbatim}
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 deleyces withalle. (Hanna, \textit{Speculum Vitae}, lines 347-54)
\end{verbatim}
And in clene lif liue,
Þan we mowe we whan we beȝ of age
Claymen oure fader heritage,
Þe blisse þat lasteȝ wiȝouten 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 isbriue) 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 ἡ 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.\footnote{\textit{Pater noster}, lines 123–24.} \textit{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:

\begin{verbatim}
¶    3if ani man þat is in londe
     Liueȝ in nyht ofer in onde
     þourgh counsel of þe fendes red,
     He biddeȝ aȝenes his owene hed
     And makeȝ him heiere in erthe
     þan Ihesu Crist þat more is werthe.\footnote{\textit{Pater noster}, 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.}
\end{verbatim}

There are several grave issues that arise from withholding forgiveness, most particularly that implied by the fourth line in this passage: the \textit{sicut} in the prayer renders God’s forgiveness contingent on human forgiveness and one who prays the ‘\textit{Pater noster}’ having withheld forgiveness essentially prays that God likewise refuse forgiveness.\footnote{\textit{Speculum Vitae} treats this idea at much greater length; see Hanna, \textit{Speculum Vitae}, lines 2947–3106.} Rather than spelling this out, however, the passage expresses the spiritual risks in more visceral terms. It identifies action motivated by wrath and envy (\textit{nyht} and \textit{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 “makeȝ him [i.e. he who does not forgive] heiere in erthe / þan Ihesu Crist þat more is werthe”—conveys the spiritual harm of withholding
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. 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

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142 See 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 *Pater noster* 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

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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 under 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. 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. 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 unwifully conduct and lavish his love on a companion whom he trusts. Indeed, the burgess’s affections depend on trust: “þe burgis louede his pie, / For he wiste he couþe nowt lie.” 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

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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, “3a, now mi louerd is out ignon, / Þou comest hider for no gode, / I schal ȝou wraie bi þe rode.” 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 (*Þou 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

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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,” 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” —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?

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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 “tale (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 ȝit of hire kinne, / Þat ben al bilapped þerinne” and that it recounts “on of wommannes wrenche.”

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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,
De pie þat saide soht was ded.
Hadde he [i.e. the burgess] taken god conseil
His pie hadde ben hol and hail.”

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. 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. The word may instead point to a kind of moral

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10 Auchinleck Seven Sages, lines 2289–92.
11 According to the MED, most meanings attached to the word “föl (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 afeccioun’” (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, 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. 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

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13. The second sense of the word attested by the MED would be appropriate here: “an impius 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 bicouȝt.  
> Al þe werld 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 (_bicouȝt_) 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 amendement” 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

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₁₅ Auchinleck _Seven Sages_, lines 2299–2302.  
₁₆ Auchinleck _Seven Sages_, line 2298.
resoun sscherewed and nice,” 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. 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 “be fendes red,” the bad advice of the fiend. 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

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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*, “nice (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 wrencbe*—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 “Falseness”: 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.”

Indeed, in the case of this particular tale the narrator even addresses the poem’s audience with another such identification: “Nou euerich man þat loueʒ his hale, / Lestne wel Catones tale.” 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

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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 wiʒ þe acord,  
Ich am iwedd 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.\(^2\)

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.\(^2\) 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

\(^2\) Auchinleck *Seven Sages*, lines 318-19, 324-31.  
\(^2\) 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—“Þai were iwedded ... / And louede hem þourg 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:

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Seue ȝer hit is þat þou me nome
And made me emperice of Rome,
Þi make at bord and at bedde,
And o þing þou hast fram [me] hedde:
Þou hast a sone to scole itauȝt.27
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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 “couþe boþe qued an[d] god.” 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].” 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. 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

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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.”

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 ȝe nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?” 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 Sages*.

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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, “Pi louerd þe emperour is old; / Of kinde, of bodi he is cold.” 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.

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

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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.
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.” Her demands and the account that precedes them position the prince as an inhuman sexual predator, a fiend in prince’s clothing. 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 falsenesse to torne sop takes on a new and foreboding dimension. In her tales to Florentine and Diocletian, she demonstrates not only her gift

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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 vnrȝt.”\(^{40}\) 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 ] 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 “þi louerd” (*Auchinleck Seven Sages*, lines 320, 327), but never speaking of him as her own. Her expressed wish to Florentine, to be “þi 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 todai.”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
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

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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
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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, /

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And ich am, sone, þi moder der." 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 cloth was oþer yliche” and gives it no further thought. In the world of readers’ lived experience, girdles and gloves, like Gregory’s cloth and the empress’s

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46 Sir Degare, lines 667–68.
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 ȝe 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. 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 / Pat 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. Not only does Florentine usher in narrative resolution, but his character’s narrative arc makes sense of Diocletian’s seemingly nonsensical dithering.

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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. 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. 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

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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.

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.

Auchinleck Seven Sages, line 29.
that it contains all fruitful trees—and cultivation emblematize the project of the sages in respect to the prince.\textsuperscript{53} Like the orchard, he too is being cultivated in a comprehensive manner.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{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:

\begin{verbatim}
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.\textsuperscript{56}
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{53} Auchinleck \textit{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.

\textsuperscript{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 \textit{Floris and Blanchefleur} in immediate proximity to \textit{Seven Sages} would certainly have reinforced this association.

\textsuperscript{55} Auchinleck \textit{Seven Sages}, line 58.

\textsuperscript{56} Auchinleck \textit{Seven Sages}, lines 47-52. The presence of the term \textit{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 \textit{fisike} rather than either of these more familiar terms. This may reflect a usage in the French source material. In his edition of \textit{Seven Sages} Brunner notes that the same substitution occurs in some versions of \textit{Sept Sages de Rome} (see Brunner, \textit{Seven Sages}, 212, n. 171). The substitution has not to my knowledge been explained, perhaps on account of the scholarly reception of the word \textit{fisike} as denoting physics or medicine (these are the definitions of “phis[i]k(e (n.)” furnished in the \textit{MED} as well). I would propose that the substitution is quite significant and is indebted Brunetto Latini’s \textit{Livres dou Trésor}. According to Latini, \textit{fisique} is one of three disciplines pertaining to logic, along with dialectic and sophistic:

\begin{verbatim}
Logique est la tierse esciense de philosofie, 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 eis voir come nos metons avant. & ce est en .iii. manieres: dialetique, afisique
\end{verbatim}
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”—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

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

[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.\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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.”\textsuperscript{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

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{58} Gregory is “sett ... to boke” (Pope Gregory, line 377; my transcription) and eventually the text sums up his attainments as follows: “Gregoriì couþe wele his pars / þe welæ rad þæ song in lawe / ænderstode wele his ðæs” (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).
\item \textsuperscript{59} Auchinleck Seven Sages, line 211.
\item \textsuperscript{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.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
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 ȝer so tok he on, / He passede his maistres euerechon.”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,\textsuperscript{62} recalls Hugh of St Victor’s arboreal metaphors in the \textit{Didascalicon}. Specifically, the \textit{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 \textit{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 \textit{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:

\begin{quote}
þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þe Þ
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 / Wiȝat 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.
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: “[i]f we bring him [i.e. Florentine] biforn our lord,” Catoun warns, “[h]e sterueȝeate ferste word / Þat he schal in court speke” whereupon Diocletian “wil of ous be wreke, / To drawe ous oþer to hongi sone.”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;  
If I mai þis daies seuen  
Kepe me fram answering,  
I mai liue to god ending  
And sauue me to warisoun  
And ȝou fram destruccioun.  

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

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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
dissmissively that his masters may play a useful dilatory role—“Litel ȝe conne, par ma fai, / But
echon of ȝo 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 ȝer / 3if he [i.e. Florentine] ware wis and wer.”\footnote{Auchinleck \textit{Seven Sages}, lines 68-69.} 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 \textit{wis} and the awareness and skill implied by the word \textit{war}.\footnote{See “wis(e (adj.)” and “war(e (adj.)” in the \textit{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 \textit{Seven Sages} (within \textit{Amis and Amiloun}) and four times within \textit{Seven Sages}, where it is put to deliberate use (see below).} 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.”\footnote{Auchinleck \textit{Seven Sages}, lines 78-79.} When the sages ask for an explanation of his behavior, he responds:

\begin{quote}
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 niȝt heyer I lai,
\end{quote}
Certes þanne þisterdai.  

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.” 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 nigt beher I lai / Certes þanne þisterdai) 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,

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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. Situated at the site of his earlier testing, he “þouȝt al niȝt her and tar, / Hou þat he niȝt be wis and war / To overcome þe emperice.” 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. 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

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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 pe grounde / Pe 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.  
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

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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:

Herkneȝ nou a selli tiding.
Þing ihid ne þing istole,
Ne mai nowt longe be forhole.
Ne þing mai forhole be
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 “som squier or some seriant nice” 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.” 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 emblematizes the violence and estrangement that have erupted within his family,

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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 ensaumple 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

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\(^{84}\) 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

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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 BAILIOL MS 354

The man, as tellich 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 Amantis¹

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 divisioun,” and confusion, of which “divisioun / … 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 astat / Stant evermore in such debat” and that until “o part be overcome, / Ther may no final pes be nome,” 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. 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.” 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

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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.
privy 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 corruptioun / 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

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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. 

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. 

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. 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

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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. 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. 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.” 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. They also call attention to the divisions underlying music itself. Insofar as they resolve discord and impose pleasing order and

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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* “temprure (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

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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 noght 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.\textsuperscript{16} The meaning, and, indeed, the referant, of remenant 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 ymage of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and they all work against the fantasy of accord wrought by temprure and mesure. Beyond these applications, however, this troublesome remenant could be read with reference to Gower’s literary project and specifically the remaining text of Confessio.\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{16} Confessio, Prologue, lines 962-63.
\textsuperscript{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 *ynage* 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.\(^\text{18}\) The main thrust of his explication depends, moreover, on his ability not only to understand the significance of each of the *ynage*’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 divisoun. 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
1915. 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. 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

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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. 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. 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. 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

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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.


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 | ṣ balettes | ṣ dyueris reconynge.”

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. 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 paraphs, 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

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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. 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.

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. 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. 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. 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.
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 plentitude of its contents. Before addressing the distinctive manner in which Hill chose to present

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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, parahs, 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 parahs, 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 *ymege* 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.\textsuperscript{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 \textit{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 \textit{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\textsuperscript{ex}/xv\textsuperscript{in}); London, BL, MS Cotton Galba E.ix (s. xv\textsuperscript{in}); London, BL, MS Arundel 140 (s. xv\textsuperscript{1}); London, BL, MS Egerton 1995 (s. xv\textsuperscript{2}); and CUL, MS Ff.2.38 (s. xv\textsuperscript{ex}/xvi\textsuperscript{in})\textsuperscript{35}—bear witness to a continuum of scribal approaches to representing the narrative

\textsuperscript{34} See Pearsall, “Organisation,” 100.
\textsuperscript{35} For the dating of these manuscripts, see Whitelock, \textit{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.\(^{37}\)

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\(^{36}\) 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 þe mayster,” respectively, the scribe marked each subsequent tale as “A tal(l)e.”

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 (Þeotis, 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.
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. 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].” As in the annotated CUL MS Dd.1.17, these rubrics indicate

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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-lxvii: xlii-xlii and Brunner, Seven Sages, xvi. Ralph Hanna and Katherine Ziemann 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 seyn (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”\textsuperscript{42} and “Here bigins þe þrid proces”\textsuperscript{43}—as well as each tale’s teller—eg. “þe xij tale said maister Jesse”\textsuperscript{44} and “þe xiij tale said þe wyfe.”\textsuperscript{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

\footnote{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.}

\begin{itemize}
\item Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 114r.
\item Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 30v.
\item Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 127r and Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 40v.
\item Rawlinson poet. 175, f. 128v and Cotton Galba E.ix, f. 42r.
\end{itemize}
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 fyreste tale of the Emperasse,” 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. 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 cylde hys grehound with unryght.” 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. 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

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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).
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. 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

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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.” 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. 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,

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51 See Balliol 354, f. 54v.
52 A very preliminary examination of the first volume of *Colophons de manuscrits occidentaux des origines au xviè 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). As I will discuss further on, even where he confines his speech—this being the implication of the verb ‘quod’—to such concluding announcements, Hill’s assertions of his presence and agency within the book may extend well beyond an acknowledgment of his manual labor. 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. He effectively declares his presence as a textual mediator, as a compiler, not a抄写员。

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.

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53 I cite these phrases from ff. 117r (at the conclusion of On Graffyng), 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 bearing mals), respectively.

54 See “quethen (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 ʒ 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 source\(^\text{56}\)—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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egerton 1995</th>
<th>Balliol 354</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>His fadyr was olde and ganne to hoore;</td>
<td>The emperowr began to hore;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His sone thoo he sette to lore,</td>
<td>He thought to sett his sone to lore,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And lette thoo hym com sone</td>
<td>He lett call and befoir hym come</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vij sagys that were yn Rome.</td>
<td>Seven þe wyses þat were in Rome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hem he thought his sone take</td>
<td>He sayd to them, “Lordynges gent,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For to knowe the letters blacke,</td>
<td>After you I haue sent,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For they were wysyst men leryde</td>
<td>For ye be þe wisesst men leryd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That were amonge alle mydylrthe.</td>
<td>That be in all medyllerde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The emperoure sayde anon</td>
<td>My son I will betake to you</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{56}\) 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 Rome* (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?”
To teche hym well for your prowe.
Which of you shall I hym betake
To teche hym the lettres blake?”

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 be 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 stages, 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. To take one example, in the eleventh tale—“The Emprise tale how | Harowde lost his sight” according to Hill’s heading—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. 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

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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. 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.

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. 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

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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<sup>med</sup>); Tokyo, Toshiyuki Takamiya 32 (s. xv<sup>med</sup>); and CUL MS Ee.2.15 (s. xv<sup>3/4</sup>).

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 emblematizes, hence “A tale agein Pride” and “A tale that fill be twix covetous and Enuy.” 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. 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

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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 ἕποτασις ἕ ἐ measured” (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 lazart ἐ 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.” 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.” 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 |

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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.” 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 Graffyng, 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. Explicitly acknowledging his compilatory role in fashioning the treatise, Hill notes, “The maner of tretise is manyfold þ so comyn þat at þis tyme I wold not shewe of here most vsuall settynge but of prevy workes conteynyng the same maters and after everything in ordre appereth.” 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

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70 Balliol 354, f. 3av.
71 Of Graffyng 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 settynge*, 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 *everything 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 Graffyng* 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 *everything 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

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\(^{73}\) 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 Graffyng* 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 Graffyng* 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 divioun.

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.” 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. The Monk concludes his prologue with what amounts to a warning:

... I by ordre telle nat thys thynges,  
Be it of popes, emperours, or kynges,  
After hir ages, as men writen fynde,  
But tullen hem som bifore and som bihynde,  
As it now comth unto my remembraunce.

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

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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 cella. 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 before and some biblynde 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:

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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
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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

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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 compulsory 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 divisoun 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 Constaunce 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 begynneth the tale of an olde man

\(^{83}\) That said, “Lentilius tale how the wiff deseyved her husband” (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.”\(^\text{84}\) 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.\(^\text{85}\) 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*.\(^\text{86}\) 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 Clxxxvj” 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*.  

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more general designations to indicate clusters of related material, as in “Item dyueris good carolles
ff ij C iiij” or “Dyueris short tales ē balettes ff C xliiiij.” 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.
(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. In other words, Balliol 354’s
presentation and apparatus enable, and even promote, paratactic, non-linear reading.

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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
"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*. 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

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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 þ of þe knyght 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.” 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 þ 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 þ his wyff / That
cutte her thombe with a knyff.”

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 conteynynge 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.” 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,

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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 conteynynge ryghe [sic] fayre ṭ ryght ioyous narracions ṭ 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:

\[
\text{Thus endith of the vij. sages} \\
\text{of Rome which was drawen} \\
\text{owt of crowncyles \& owt of} \\
\text{wrytyng of old men \& many} \\
\text{a notable tale is ther in} \\
\text{as ys beffore sayde} \\
\text{Quod Richard Hill}
\]

\(^95\) 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.
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. 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 Graffyng*, 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*. 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

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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. Enprinted 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*. 233
conventional, 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. 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. 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.

Indeed, the Confessio tale headings follow closely on the heels of the Seven Sages tale headings in

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98 See MED “nötäble (adj.)”, particularly senses 1 and 2.
99 Balliol 354, f. 3av.
100 The only noticeable difference between this first heading and those that follow is that there are visible parahs preceding every heading beginning with “Item the empress tale of the pynot tree ff xxiiij” (f. 3av). Since Hill continues to employ these parahs 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 | ] the drenchyng of the child ff lj” and “The tale of Antioche | ] 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.
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.”\(^{103}\)

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\(^{102}\) Printed 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.

\(^{103}\) Here 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

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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.” 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

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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 pass—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

107 Balliol 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 Graffynge*, this configuration exemplifies the meaningful potential of assembling *worke conteynyng the same maters* and placing *everything 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 settynge*, 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 emblematize
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Booklet</th>
<th>Scribe</th>
<th>Quire number</th>
<th>Text by its modern name (and MS title)</th>
<th>Extant folios</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Legend of Pope Gregory</td>
<td>ff. 1r-6v, 6r</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>The King of Tars (<em>Pe King of Tars</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 7ra-13vb</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The Life of Adam and Eve</td>
<td>E ff. 1ra-2vb, ff. 14ra-16rb</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Seynt Mergrete (<em>Seynt Mergrete</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 16rb-21ra</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Seynt Katerine (<em>Seynt Katerine</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 21ra-24vb</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>St. Patrick’s Purgatory</td>
<td>ff. 25ra-31vb</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>The Desputisoun bitven the Bodi and the Soule (<em>Pe desputisoun bitven þe bodi þe soule</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 31vb-35ra</td>
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<td>The Harrowing of Hell</td>
<td>ff. 35vb-37ra</td>
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<td>The Clerk Who Would See the Virgin</td>
<td>ff. 37vb-38vb</td>
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<td>Speculum Gy de Warewyke</td>
<td>ff. 39ra-48ra</td>
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<td>Amis and Amiloun</td>
<td>ff. 48vb-61vb, 61r</td>
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<td>The Life of St. Mary Magdalene</td>
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<td>The Nativity and Early Life of Mary (...leuedis moder)</td>
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<td>On the Seven Deadly Sins (... sinnes)</td>
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<td>The Paternoster (<em>Pe pater noster vndo on englissch</em>)</td>
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<td>The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin</td>
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<td>Sir Degare</td>
<td>ff. 78rb-84vb, 84r</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>The Seven Sages of Rome</td>
<td>ff. 85ra-99vb</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Seven Sages and Floris and Blancheflour?</td>
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<td>Floris and Blancheflour</td>
<td>ff. 100ra-104vb</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>The Sayings of the Four Philosophers</td>
<td>f. 105ra-rb</td>
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<td>List of Norman barons</td>
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<td>Guy of Warwick in couplets</td>
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<td>Guy of Warwick in stanzas</td>
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<td>Sir Beves of Hamtoun (Sir beues of hamtoun)</td>
<td>ff. 176ra-201ra</td>
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<td>Of Arthur and of Merlin (Of arthour ĥ of merlin)</td>
<td>ff. 201rb-256vb</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>De Wenche ĥat Loved ĥe King (De wenche ĥat loved ...)</td>
<td>ff. 256vb, 256vra</td>
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<td>A Peniworþ of Witt (…worþ …tte)</td>
<td>ff. 256vb, 257ra-259rb</td>
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<td>How Our Lady’s Psalter was First Found (Hou our leuedi saute was fers founde)</td>
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<td>Lay le Freine (Lay le freine)</td>
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<td>Roland and Vernagu</td>
<td>ff. 262vb, 263ra-267vb</td>
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<td><em>Otuel a Knight</em> (<em>Otuel a kniȝt</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 268ra–277vb</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39 (and others?)</td>
<td><em>Otuel, Kyng Alisaunders, and possibly others</em></td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td><em>Kyng Alisaunders</em></td>
<td>L f. 1ra–vb, S A.15 ff. 1ra–2ra, 2vb, L f. 2ra–vb, ff. 278ra–279rb</td>
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<td><em>The Thrush and the Nightingale</em></td>
<td>f. 279va–vb</td>
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<td><em>The Sayings of St. Bernard</em></td>
<td>f. 280ra</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>David the King</em> (<em>Dauid þe king</em>)</td>
<td>f. 280rb–vb</td>
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<td><em>Sir Tristrem</em></td>
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<td><em>Sir Orfeo</em></td>
<td>ff. 300ra–303ra</td>
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<td><em>The Four Foes of Mankind</em></td>
<td>f. 303rb–vb</td>
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<td><em>The Short Chronicle</em> (<em>Liber Regum anglie</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 304ra–317rb</td>
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<td>47</td>
<td><em>Horn Childe and Maiden Rimnild</em> (<em>Horn childe ȝ maiden rimnild</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 317va–323vb</td>
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<td><em>Alphabetical Praise of Women</em></td>
<td>ff. 324ra–325vb</td>
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<td></td>
<td>49-51 (and others?)</td>
<td><em>King Richard and possibly others</em></td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>52</td>
<td><em>The Simonie</em> (<em>Je Simonie</em>)</td>
<td>ff. 328r–334v</td>
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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

I. theu, þat for vs wold die ·
  And was borne of maiden Marie, ·
  Forðije vs, louerd, our mistede ·
  And help vs at our molte nede ·
To þo þat hadde laifer to dwelle ·
  Of holi writ ich wolde ȝou telle, ·
  And alle þat taken þerto hede ·
  God wille quiten al here mede ·
Per þe þed dedli þinnes feuene ·
10  þat lette þe man to come to heuene ·
  And Ihesu Cristes hefes ten ·
  þa' children and wimmen2 and men ·
  Of twelue winter elde and more ·
  After holi cherche lere ·
15  Euerichone þai šicholden knowe ·
  But to lerne þai þe to folwe ·
  And þe Pater noster · and þe Crede ·
  Þeroffe 3e šicholden taken hede ·
  On Englifch to fegge what hit were ·
20  Als holi cherche ȝou wolde lere ·
  For hit is to þe foules biheue ·
  Ech man to knownen his bileue ·
  And also 3e šicholden habben in minde ·
  Cristene men þat were kynde ·
25  Godes pasſion biter als galle ·
  þa' he polede for vs alle ·
  To þuren out of dedli šinne ·
  Of þife þinges ich wille beginne ·
  Þat ich habbe here ifaid ·
30  Let hit in ȝoure herettes be leid ·
  Poure and riche, ȝonge and old ·
  And 3e šicholle here hit itold ·
  We šichulle bekowte to Ihesu Criſt ·
  And to his moder Marie ·
35  And to alle halewen ·

And merci hem crie ·
  Þat we habbe þim agult ·
  In flesches luſte our lif ipuſt ·
30  In pride we habben lad our lif ·
  And þoughhe heþe imaked frif ·
  In glotonie our lif ilad ·
  And ȝeþer men þarto irad ·
  Þourge pride and þourgh glotonie ·
  We habben iliued in lecherie ·
  Boþe ȝiþ dede and ȝiþ ȝought ·
  Þyngdliche ȝiþ mi boði wrouȝt ·
  In niþe · and onde we habben leyn ·
  And ȝiþ oure tonges men ileyn ·
  To coueitife our hertes ȝiuen ·
  In pride of richeſfe for to liuen ·
  In sleuþe we habben founden ofte ·
  And loked þe foule boði foste ·
  ȝife þe þed dedli fennes feuene ·
  Þat lette þe man to come to heuene ·
  Herkneþ nou, wimmen · and men ·
  Iesu Cristes hefes ten ·
  Þat we habben broken ofte ·
  And loked þe foule boði ful foste ·
  Nowt worſchiped God ȝif we ſicholde ·
  In coueitife4 lad our lif on molde ·
  Eueloþed our holi day ·
  Litel don þat þerto lay ·
  In mo Godes leued þan in on ·
  In tales, · in fantomes mani on ·
  On þe bok fællli sworn ·
  And ofte ȝals witneſfe boрен ·
  Þefliche we habben5 þing ȝifole ·
  And ȝeþer mennes þefte ȝholo ·
  Boþe in erneft 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 “coueitife.”
5 The word “habben” has been written at the end of the line; an insertion mark indicates its place between “we” and “þing.”
In ydel nemned Godes name; ·
Howe emcristene we habben iflawe ·
And wiȝ oure tounge al todrawe; ·
We habben in hoker and scornig ·
Oure emcristene drieuen to heying. ·

He fendes fonding, louerd.

In þi kyngdom, louerd,

Oute fader in heuene-riche, ·

Þi name be blessed euere iliche. ·
In þi kyngdom, louerd, ·

Þat milde art and fille,

Boþe in heuene · and in erthe

Fulfeld be þi wille. ·

Iheu, ful of grace, ·
Louerd, þat al do mai, 7

Our eueriches daies bred ·
Graunte vs, louerd, todai, ·

And forþuel vs, louerd, ·

Þat we habb3 agult,

Als we forþuel3 ober men, ·

In oure grace þa3 beþ pult. ·
In þe fendes fonding, louerd. ·
Ne let vs neuere dwelle. ·

Deliuere vs þourgh þi grace ·

Fram þe pîne of helle. Â-M-E-N ·

On EnglîfÞ þis is ·
3oure Patær · noster · iwis; ·
Lefnæ3 nou and taked hede, ·

100 And ich wille tellen 3ou 3our Crede. ·

We þículo billeue on ih3u Crist, ·

Fader alweldinde ·
Scheppere of heuene and of erthe ·
And of alle þinge, ·

And in ih3u Crist, fader and ßone, ·

And oure louerd icoren. ·

105 Ickenped of þe holi goft ·

And of a maiden iboren; ·
Vnder Pounce Pilate ·

He þolede pines fronge, ·
Vpon þe rode he was idon ·
And þolede deþ wiȝ wronge; ·

His bodi was iburied
Aman þo Jues felle;

115 Als his swete wille was,

Vpon þe priddel morewe.

To heuene he freygh3, þer he fit. ·

Pa3 al þe wyrld ßchal diȝte.

Vpon his fader ri3t hond, ·

Oure louerd ful of miȝte. ·

120 At þe dai of jugement ·
He ßchal comen to deme ·

Boþe þe quike and þe dede: ·

Ec man take 3eme. ·

We þículo billeue on þe holi goft,

130 And holî churche billeue, ·

And on alle halewen, ·

Pa3 no þing mai greue, ·

In remislfyon of oure finnes, ·

Pa3 we þículo vпрifè ·

135 And come bifoire ih3u Crist, ·

Pa3 ßchal be ri3t justice. ·

We þículo come bifoiren him ·

Alle on domes dai. ·

And after habbe þe lif, ·

140 Pa3 ßchal laft ai. ·

Gode men, fo God me spede, ·

Þis is on EnglîfÞ 3oure Crede, ·

And a while 3iȝ þe wulle dwelle, ·

Þe Ave Marie ich wille 3ou telle: ·

145 Heil be þou, Marie, ·

Leuedi ful of grace. ·

God is wiȝ þe leuedi, ·

In heuene þou haued a place. ·

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6 Here the manuscript reads "heying."
7 Lines 85-86 have been written as a single line within the manuscript.
Iblefled mote þou be, ·
150 Leuedi, of alle wimmen, ·
And þe frut of þi wombe, ·
Iblefled be hit. Amen. ·
Amen is to ßegge. ·

f.71ra “So mot hit be.”
155 þis [is] Pater·noster· and Crede ·
And Marie Ave. ·
Nou8 habbe þe herd þoure bileue. ·
Þat is maked to foule biheue; ·
Herkne a while, þe þat mowen, ·
160 And herkne Godes paffioun, ·
Þat he þolede for mankynde: ·
For Godes loue, holdeþ hit in minde. ·
In holi writ hit is told, ·
Þo Judas hadde Iheu fold, ·
165 þe Jeues tokene alle o red, ·
Þat swete Iheu fïcholde be ded, ·
And comen armed wîþ lanterne lîst ·
And nomen Iheu al be nîst ·
And ladden him forþt amang alle ·
170 Into Cayfæs halle, ·
And þere he was wel euel idîst, ·
Til on þe morewe al þat nîst. ·
On morewe, þo þat þe dai sprong, ·
Þei deden Iheu Crist wrong, ·
175 Bounden hïfe e3ghen and bußfated him for ßore ·
And þiþ he þolede mochele more: ·
Jwes, ful of pride and hete, ·
In his wîfage gonne ßpete. ·
Iheu, for þat foule delpit, ·
180 Þat hente þi bodi þat was fî whit, ·
þiue vs grace þis dai to ende ·
In his ßerüiþ þe ßend to ßîchende. ·
¶ In holi writ hit is ßfounde, ·
Þere Iheu ßtoed vpon þe gounde, ·
185 Þo hit cam to prime of dai, ·
Jwes dedin him gret derai: ·
Bïfore þe maïftres of þe lawe ·
As a þef he was idrawe, ·

Here and þere he was ipult, ·
190 And swete Iheu, he ne hadde no gult, ·
But al þe sorewe þat he was inne, ·

f.71rb Al togidere was for oure sinne. ·
¶ Iheu, for þat foule derai ·
Þat þou henteþ at prime of dai, ·
195 þiue vs grace of sinne arïþe ·
And enden in his swete serüïfe. ·
¶ þous telleþ þife wife men of lore, ·
Þat Iheu þolede for vs more: ·
Iheu þolede for to bïnde ·
200 At vndren hïfe honден him bïhinde ·
To a pïler and beten ßafte, ·
While þe scourges wolden laïfe. ·
Iheu for þat mochele forewe ·
Þaþ he tholede oure foules to borewe, ·
205 Brenge vs out of dedli sinne, ·
And alle þat liggen ibounden ßerinne. ·
¶ In holi writ hit telleþ þous: ·
Wel more þolede swete Iheuþ; ·
Iheu þolede at middai, ·
210 And nowt ones faiþe nai. ·
Jwes naien him on þe rode ·
For oure gult and for oure gode, ·
And wel mi[l]dliche he let ·
Þurle hïf hondes and hïf fet. ·
215 His heued was crowned – þat was fene – ·
Wîþ fïcharpe thornes and wîþ kene, ·
Þat euerich þorn hadde a wonde; ·
Þe fïremes ronnen doun to gounde. ·
Iheu, for þo harde fïroundes ·
220 Þat þou þoledeþt and bïtter wonden, ·
Forþiue vs þat we habbeþ agult, ·
And letes vs neuer in helle be pult. ·
¶ Als telleþ þe pröfetye, ·
A litel er he fïcholde dye, ·
225 Swete Iheu, þo hit was non, ·
To his fader he bad a bon, ·
He fïcholde forþiuehen hem þe gult, ·
Þat him hadden on rode ipult. ·
A bïtter drinkke him was iþoue

8 Here the manuscript reads “Þ ou.”
Vpon þe rode for oure loue, ·  
þourgh counself of þe Jwes alle, ·  
Aifl and swot menged wþsalle; ·  
Ihesu, þat was wonded more, ·  
Tafted herof and nolde nammore. ·  

235 At þat time, wþsouten boft, ·  
Swete Ihesu sald þe goft. ·  
† His swete bodi þat was so whit, ·  
3it þai deden hit more despit: ·  
þe Jwes token hem to red, ·  

240 þo swete Ihesu Crist was ded, ·  
At his herte þai maden a wounde ·  
Wþþ þere sicharpe igrounde; ·  
In at his like þe spere rof, ·  
Blod and water out þer drof; ·  

245 Moste no þing leue wþsijnne, ·  
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 Sende pees amang mankenne. ·  
† þe clerkes þat coune of letrur ·  
Finden in holi scriptur ·  
†a’ Ihesu, þat al þe werld had wrought, ·  
Heuene and erthe made of nowt, ·  

255 þo euensongtyme was icome, ·  
Doun of þe rode he was inome ·  
Wþþ Iofeph and wþþ òger mo ·  
Of hife deïspes þat were þo. ·  
þo oure swete leuedi feghþ ·  

260 His bodi hangen on rode heghþ ·  
His honden þurlode and his fet, ·  
Bittere teres and blodi he let. ·  
For þe bittere teres and smerte, ·  
þat comen fram his moder herte, ·  

265 Biseche we him, 3ïf his wille be, ·  
† In holi writ hit is irad, ·  

270 Ihesu, þat on þe rode was þprad, ·  
þo he hadde þoled his wo ·  
And þe dai was al ago, ·  
In holi writ hit is ifeid, ·  
In sepulcre he was ileid, ·  

275 And als we here þise clerkes telle, ·  
He liȝte adoun and herewedel helle, ·  
And tok out Adam and Eue ·  
And alle þo þat him were leue. ·  
þo he hadde brouȝt hem out of sorewe, ·  

280 He ros fram deþe þe ſridde morewe, ·  
To heuene he feighþ þourgh his miȝt, ·  
þat al þe werld fischal deme and diȝt, ·  
Eueremore þere to wone, ·  
Sohtfaȝt God, fader and fone. ·  

285 † Biseche we þanne God in heuene, ·  
For hife bleſfed names feuene, ·  
þat made boþe mone and iftere, ·  
Sende pees þere is werre, ·  
And ȝiue Cristenemen grace, ·  

290 Into þe holi lond to pace ·  
And þe Saraxins þat beȝ fo riue, ·  
And lete be Cristenemen on liue, ·  
And faue þe pes of holi cherche, ·  
And ȝiue vs grace fo to werche, ·  

295 þat we mowen gode acontes make ·  
Of þat God vs haueȝ itake, ·  
At þe dom whan he fischal fonden ·  
Wþþ blodi fides, fet and honden, ·  
And parten al þe werld atwo, ·  

300 þat on to wele, þat òger to wo. ·  
For, als we here clerkes telle, ·  
† þat o part, iwis, fischal to helle, ·  
And, forfeþoþ, 3if þai lie, ·  
þanne lieȝ þe þrofetie; ·  

305 And þat òger part fischal wende ·  
Into blisſe þat haueȝ non ende. ·  
To þat blisſe bringe vs he ·  
þat is, and was · and euer fischal be. ·  
AmeN ·
2. The Paternoster

f.72ra · Þe pater noster vndo on englisch

All e þat euer gon and riden ·
 þat willeþ Godes merci abiden, ·
 Lewede men þat ne beþ no clerkes, ·
 Þo þat leuuen on Godes werkes, ·

5 Lefteþ, and þe fischollen here, iwis, ·
What 3oure Pater · noster · is. ·

¶ Ech man hereof take hede. ·
 Godliche while Íheu þede ·
 In erthe wi þis his apostles twelue, ·

10 Íheu Crift made hit him felue, ·
And als hit telleþ in þe bok, ·
 Hífe apostles he hit bitok, ·
 For þai fícholden habben hit in minde ·
 And techen hit to al mankynde. ·

15 ¶ Of alle þe clerkes vnder fonne, ·
 Þer nis non of hem þat conne ·
 A beter oreifoun, iwis, ·
 Þanne þe Pater · noster · is. ·
 Þous feggeþ þífe clerkes wife ·

20 Þat mochel connen of clergiþe. ·
¶ Seuen oreifouns þer beþ inne ·
 Þat helpeþ men out of dedli finne ·
 And þif þe willeþ a while dwelle, ·
 Al on Englisch ich wille þou telle ·

25 Þe skile of hem alle feuene, ·
Wiþ help of Godes miþ of heuene. ·

f.72rb Pater · noster, · qui es in celis,1 ·
 ¿at is to segge þís: ·
 “Oure fader in heuene-riche, ·

30 Þi name he blesed euere iche.” ·
Dis is þe ferfe oreifoun of feuene. ·
 We clepen oure fader þe kyng of heuene, ·
 And þif þe house fader is, ·
 Þanne be þe wífe children, iwis, ·

35 And Íheu is ful of alle godnesþe, ·
Wiþ him nís no wikkednesþe. ·

Panne mote we, so mote ich þe, ·
3if we willen hífe children be, ·
Fonden to liuen in god lif, ·

40 Wiþouten contek, wiþouten fíríþ, ·
Wiþouten pride and enuye, ·
Couetíþe and glotonye. ·
 Panne mowe [we] feggen, iwis, ·
 Þat Íheu Críst oure fader is. ·

45 ¶3if we wíle be clene ifchriþe ·
 And in clene lif liue, ·
 Panne mowe we when we beþ of age ·
 Claymen oure fader heritage, ·
 Þe blífe þat latteþ wiþouten ende.3 ·

50 S auctificetur nomen tuum, ·
 Þat is to segge al and ðou: ·
 “Íheu, God in tríñíte, ·
 Þi name ibleþed mot hit be.” ·
 Þat is to vnderfonde þís: ·

55 When we bleßen his name, iwis, ·
 We bífechen swette Íheu ·
 Þat his name mote be wiþ ous ·
 And we ben clene ifschriþe ·
 And out of ñinne þenken to liue. ·

60 His name nel nowt wiþ ous be, ·
 To holden hit we ne habbeþ no poþte, ·
 But 3if we liuen in god lif, ·

f.72va In loue and charite wiþouten fíríþ; ·
 Panne wille his name wiþ ous dwelle ·

65 And faueuen vs fræ þe fend of helle. ·
Íheu þat boughte léwede and clerkes ·
Sçhilde vs fræ þe fendes werkes. ·
 A dueniat regnum tuum, · iwis, ·
 Þat is to fegge þís: ·

70 “Louerd, to þi kyneriche ·
 Lat ous komen al icleþe.” ·

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.

1 A cross has been drawn beside this line in the outer margin (not in Scribe 3’s ink).
Here we bisechen þe heuene-kyng  
Dat we moten comen to his wonyng  
And we be in gode liue inome;  

To his wonyng mowe we nowt come;  
Danne is oure bidding for nowt;  
But þat we ben in god liif kau;  
Perfoyre ech man amende him here;  
Dat we moten wenden al ifere.  

Into blisse þat ne haue3 non ende;  
To þilke blisse God vs fende.  
Per noman come3, maiden ne wif;  
But he be nomen in god liif.  

Fat voluntas tua.  

Sicut in celo 7 in terra,  
Dat is to segge þous:  
“Dat bidde3 to swete Ihesus,  
þat his wille be ido;  
In heuene and in erthe alfo.”.  

Dat is to vnderstonden þous:  
Dat we fícholden feruen swete Ihesus  
To his paie and to his wille;  
Oure bidding to fulfille.  
And þat we ne ferue him nowt ariþt,  

Ihesu Crist, bi houre miþt,  
Danne do we in þat bidding  
Nowt boþe fçornen oure heuene-kyng.  
Perfoyre ech man, þat he mai,  
Fonde boþe niþt and dai.  
f.72vb  
To ferue Ihesu Crist to wille,  
Oure bisechen to fulfille;  
For, forfothe, Gode wille is,  
Dat we ne fícholden nowt don amis.  

P anem nostrum cotidianum da nobis hodie.  

Is to segge, Þo mot Þe þe:  
“Oure bred ordined for eche dai,  
Louerd, þiueyt vs todai.”.  
Dat is to segge þous:  
We bisechen swete Ihesus.  
Dat he graunte vs alle pinges two:  
Soules fode and liif alfo.  

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]
Schilde [tear in page]
And del [tear in page]

150 Fram [tear in page]
Pat is [tear in page]
To cache [tear in page]
For to br [tear in page]

155 Euerer m [tear in page]
¶ Dise be3 [tear in page]
¶e 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]
¶ if [tear in page]
¶anne [tear in page]
¶Perfor [tear in page]

165 §onge [tear in page]
¶ if [tear in page]
Ani [tear in page]
And [tear in page]
Nist [tear in page]

170 ¶ an [tear in page]
¶er [tear in page]
¶er [tear in page]
At [tear in page]
¶er [tear in page]// [end of f.72ra]
3. THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN

Hit is tokning of loue,
5  Ṝat God him haue3 wraththe forʒoue,
   Ṝat bereʒ palm on honde.

 Pis is Ṝe ḫridde þing
   Ṝat palm bitokneʒ, wiʒouten leſing:
   Whan man had palm inome,
10  Ṝat man haueʒ in his riʒt
   Ṝourgh þe vertu of Godes miʒt
   Hiʃe enemis ouercome.

Þe ferthe þing is to wite,
   Afe Godes clerkes finde iʒwrite,
15  No leſing hit ne is:
   Ṝe man þat bereʒ palm aboute,
   Alle hiʃe enemis him ñʃchulle doute,
   Godes baner hit is.

Þat bitokneʒ, wiʒouten nay,
20  Þe palm on palmes Sonenday,
   Ṝat man is al aboue;
   Êf a man is clene iʃchiue
   And halt penaunce him is ʒiue,
   þan haueʒ he Godes loue.

25  Êf þi palm is riʒt inome,
   þan haueft þou ouercome
   Þe fend þourgh fleʃʃches fiʒt;
   Êanne beʒ þin enemis ouercome,
   And here miʒt hem is binome,
30  And ñou bere palm ariʒt.

Êorʃothe, we here clerkes telle
   Alle þe fendes þat beʒ in helle
   Beʒ in werre and wrake,
   Whan a Criʃtenelman in londe
35  Bereʒ trewliche palm on honde
   And haueʒ hiʃe fiʃnes forʃake.

Êand iʃeου and his moder Marie
f.73rb  And alle here swete compaignie
   þat beʒ in heuene iʃet
40  Êe glade whan we beʒ idʒt
   For to berenoure palm ariʒt,
   And habbenoure fiʃnes bet.

Ê For palm of alle flour is þris
Of rofe rode, of flour de lis,
45  Ṣat to oure leuedi was fent;
    Ṣat oure leuedi was clene of lif,
    Clene maiden and clene wif,
    Bitokneʒ verraiment.
¶ And clene virgine ȝhe was also,
50  Ṣat is heiere ṣan ȝhe two:
    Wif ȝopher maidenhede.
    For womman mai lese virginitie
    Wȝe3 wille and þout, fo mot i ȝhe,
    Wȝiȝouten fleſſichlich dede.
¶ But maidenhod mai non bi lorn
55 Of no womman Ṣat is iborn,
    Wȝiȝiȝouten mannnes mone,
    Ne no maiden wȝe ȝhilde gon,
    Ne neuer ȝiȝte ne dede non,
Saue oure leuedi al one.
60  ȝe was maiden and virginie
    And bar a child wȝiȝiȝouten pine,
    Ṣat men clepe ȝheuȝs,
    Ṣat in erthe man bicum
65 And bataille vn dernam
    ȝeȝen ȝhe fend for ous.
¶ Ṣiȝe beȝe ȝe toknes, wȝiȝiȝouten leſing,
    Whi ȝheuȝ, heuene-king,
    Sente here palm into erthe;
70 For þere nas neuerue womman bore,
    Neiȝer after ne bifoere,
    Ṣat was ȝo moche wyrthie.
¶ Oure swete leuedi milde and Ȝre –
    Ȝhered and heghed mote ȝhe be –
    ȝhe makeȝ ȝoure blifes newe;
    ȝhe tok ȝe palm Ṣat God here fente,
    And into here chaumber anon ȝhe wente
    And dede on clopes newe.
¶ Oure swete leuedi, maiden brieȝt,
75 Knelede adoun anonriȝt
    And feide here bileue,
    And bad a bone to God in heuene,
    For hife dereworhte names ȝeuene
    Ṣat no fend ȝifholde hire greue.
¶ Wel owghte Ṣan ne al mankenne,
    Ṣat habben ilein in dedli ȝenne
    Boȝe dai and niȝt,
    Of ȝe fend to ben adrad,
    Whan ȝhe swich a bone bad
90  Ṣat bar ȝe king of miȝt.
¶ ȝo ȝhe hadde bede Ṣat bede,
    ȝhe wente anon in ȝe fteede
    To sibbe and fremde ek,
    And made hem come togedere anon,
95 And to hem alle made here mon,
    And doelſulliche ȝhe spek.
¶ ȝhe ſaiȝe, “Thesuȝ, mi swete ȝone,
    Nelle no lengere ic heren wone,
    Swich fonde he haueȝe me fent
100 Bi an angel Ṣat cam fram heuene
    Wȝiȝ a ful milde ſeuen, 
    And ȝagen is went.
¶ And ichick ſeȝe ȝou par charite
    Alle Ṣat hider beȝe comen to me,
105 Boȝe heȝge and lowe,
    ȝif ich habbe don vnriȝt,
    Let me amenden be mi miȝt
    And be mi geltes aknowe.”

f.73vb\[All ȝat ſtouden here bi
110 Of ȝo wordes were fori,
    For ȝhe was ȝo hende,
    And feide, “Leuedi, what is ȝi ȝowt?
    Haue merci on vs and leue vs nowt.
    Whi wiltou fram vs wende?
115 In muchel forewe and muchel wo
    Ŝchulle we liue whan ȝou art go,
    Boȝe dai and niȝt.
    Ibleſiȝed be ȝou, swete leuedi,
    To vs ȝou haueft be ful redi
120 To ſeruen vs day and niȝt.”
¶ Ŝous ȝai ſaide alle wȝiȝ tonge,
    ȝai wepen fore and honden wronge;
    In hertie hem was ful wo,
    ȝe poure ſinges ȝat feke weren,
125 ȝo ȝai herden wȝiȝ here heren,
    ȝat ȝhe wolde go.
¶ Ŝanne ſaiȝe oure swete leuedi
To alle þat froden hire bi,
þat wopen and wrongen,
130 “Ne wepe þow nowt. Holde þou stille.
Ich mot do mi ðone wille.
I ne mai hit nowt wï¿½fonde.”
¶ Hire herte armede oure leuedi briþt
And gan to wepe anonriþt
135 For pite þat ȝhe fêghȝ.
þo made þai alle reuliche mone
And bigonne to wepe ech one,
Alle þat froden hire neghȝ.
¶ þo kam ȝone feint Jon
140 And fêghȝ oure leuedi make hire mon
And feide, “Mi leuedi dere,
Tel me, leuedi milde of mod,
¶ Whaþe ȝeï¿½d þe ouwþ bote gôd?
Whi makeft þou swuche chere?”
145 Marie anfwerede wîþ milde ûteuene,
“Jôn, me kam a fônde fram heuene
Bi an aungel briþt;
Mi ȝone, þat bowghte man fo dere,
Nelle no lengere þat ich be here –
150 Ibleffed be his miȝt.
¶ Þerfore ich wepe and mai nowt blinne;
For we ñchullen parten atwinne,
Min herte armes fore;
And wel fawe ich wolde fey
155 Mi ȝone – ibleffed mote he be –
I ne fæghȝ him nowt wel ȝole.”
¶ þo Jôn herde hou hit was,
He fîȝte fore and saïde, “Allas,
Hou gog þis worlds winne!
160 Leuedi, what ñchal be mi red?
Certes, nou ich wolde bi ded,
Nou we ñchulle parten atwinne.
¶ Mi louerd, þat deide on rode tre,
Into heuene is went fram me,
165 þat i ne mai wîþ him ñpeke,
And þou wult, leuedi, wende me fro?
Allas, allas, what me is wo,
Whi nelle myn herte breke?”
¶ “Jôn,” quad oure leuedi þo,
170 “Þerfore be þou no þing wo,
To heuene ȝif ich am nome.
Ich wille bifecherche mi ðone dere.
þat þou ne ñchalt nowt longe dwellên here;
To me þou ñchalt come.”
175 ¶ Þous oure leuedi and faint Johan
Either to oþer maden here mon,
¶ Alle þe apostles weren went to þreche,
In diuerfe fôdes þe poeple to teche,
In bok als ȝhe moun here;
And alle hem cam toknyng
180 Pite hit was to here.
¶ Áles God hit wolde for þe nones,
Alle þai komen þider at ones,
Aþe manie þeere were,
¶ Sauue feint Thomas of Ynde –
Wo was him, he was bihinde –
He ne was nowt þere.
¶ Anon aþe þe apostles ñeghen,
Seint Johan wep wîþ his egHEN,
190 Thai weren amaid alle.
“Jôn,” quad PETER, “leue fere,
Whi makst þous foule chere,
What is þe bифalle?”
¶ “PETER,” quad Johan, “iwis,
200 Formesft þou ñchalt telle me þis:
Hou be ȝhe hider ilad?
Hou was ȝoure counseil inome,
þat ȝhe bȝeþ alle hider icome,
þat were fo wide ifprad?”
¶ Peter and hife ñeawes echon
Answereden ñeint Johan,
Aþe manie aþe þere were;
¶ “Feaden þai hadde wonder alle
Of þe kas þat was bifalle,
210 Hou þei komen þere.
¶ Nou wolle ich telle,” quad ñeint Johan,
“Wherfore ich make mi mon
And whi ich wepe fo fore:
An angel cam fram swete Iheus
And to oure leuedi feide þous:
3he ne ßichal ben here nammore.
† For no þing þat mai bitide
3he ne mot here no lengere abide
Ne libbe but daies þre.
220 Swich tiding haue3 þe auangel broun
Fram hit þat al þe werld had broun –
Ißleefed mote he be.
† Perfore 3he be3 hider ifent,
To ben at here enterement,
225 Mi leuedi milde and fre.
Nou moue 3he counforte me in þis kare,
Whan mi leuedi is fram me fare;
Welcome mote 3e be.”
† Þo wifte þai Iheu fente hem þider,
230 And wenten forht alle togider
To oure leuedi, and feiden þous:
“We be3 at þi comauement,
Hider to þe ous haue3 ifent
Þi fone swete Iheus.”
235 † Panne feide maiden Marie
To Peter and to his compaigne,
“Welcome mote 3e be.
Ißleefed wurht he dai and ni3t,
Mi fone Iheu ful of mi3t,
240 Þat fente 3hou hider to me.
† And ich bißeche 3hou for his loue,
Mi fone þat ßit vs alle about
Þat hider 3you had ifent,
Ne lete3 no Jwes ful of enuye
† Do mi bodi no vilainye,
Whan þe foule is went.”
† Þo oure leuedi þous hadde iseid,
In a bed 3he was ileid
And held hire bere ful stille;
250 Alle þe apostiles seten hire bi
And lokeden oure swete leuedi,
To abide Godes wille.
† Alle ßillen aßlepe echone,
Sauue oure swete leuedi alone.
255 No slep wi3 here þer nas;
Drede of de3 was in here þout,
Perfore 3he ne slep nowt,
And no wonder hit nas.
† Of de3 3he mopse ben aðrad;
260 God þat on þe rode was sprad,
Als telle3 þe profilte,
A3ens de3 þat was to come,
Er he was wi3 Jues nome,
He was afered to die.
265 † Holi wriþ telle3 þous,
† Þat oure louerd, swete Iheus,
† Þat is fo milde of mod,
For al his power and his mi3t
Of de3 he was fo fore aðr3t,
270 Þat he swatte blod.
† Perfore Iheu, ful of mi3t,
Sente adoun an angel bri3t
To his moder þer 3e lai;
For he1 wifte wel þourgh his mi3t,
275 Þat 3he wolde ben aðr3t
A3en here de3da.i.
† Þe aungle li3t doun bi here bed
And ßaid, “Marie, be nowt adred
f.75ra Of deht, þat is negh3,
280 For nowt þat þou ßichalt here fe.
Þous fente þi fone word bi me,
In heuene þat ßit on hegh3.”
† Quad oure leuedi milde and fre,
“Ißleefed mote mi fone be,
285 Þat me þat fonde fente.”
And þe aungel þat was fo bri3t
Tok his leue anon ari3t
And into heuene wente.
† A3hens oure leuedi ßicholde 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 brount

1 Here the manuscript reads “3he.”
Of al þat grete wonder.

295 ¶ Sone after þat anon
þe apostles woken euericohon;
þanne þe þe ðe leuedi briȝt,
“Mi time comeþ þat I fíchale fare
Into bliffe out of þis kare.

300 Wakeþ a litel whíst.
¶ Bi toknes þat ich habbe iherd and fein,
On þele þe þe habben lein,
lich wot mi deȝ is neȝȝ3.
Iheried and heighed mot he worthe,

305 Swich tokne mi ðone fente nouþe
Out of heuene on hegh.”
¶ Boþe niȝt and eke dai
Oure leuedi in here chaumber lai,
To bide here ðones wille;

310 And þe apostles were ful hende,
Nolde neuer on fram here wende,
But helden hem þere al tille.

f.75rb Þe ðe fend to habbe no ðiȝt,
For þe loue of me.”
¶ “Moder,” quad Þe ðes, “ne doute þe nowt,
350 Hit ne cam neuer in mi þou,
Þat þou fîcholdest habben a ðiȝt
Of no fend, 3if ich mai,
But joie and murthe þat lefteȝ ay,
Boþe dai and niȝt.”

f.75va Þe swete leuedi was glad þerfor
And þele þe time, þat he was bore
And in hire bodi lîȝte;
And mildeliche, wîȝouten pîne,
Anon þe deide, þat swete virgine,

360 Þat bar þe king of miȝt.
¶ And as hit telleȝ in þe bok,
Þe foule out of here bodi he tok,
Þe ðes ful of miȝte,
And wîȝ murthe of aungeles feuene
365 Hit was ibore to þe bliffe of heuene,
Þere alle murthes be diȝte.
¶ Þo þe foule of maide Marie
Wîȝ al þat faire compagnie
To heuene was iwert,

370 Alle þe apostles þat þere were
Leiden þe bodi vpon a bere
Þourgh Godes comauement.
¶ Þanne feide Þe ðes anon,
“Peter, tak þine felawes echon,
375 And niȝȝ vp þe bere,
And þe þichulle finde a redi paþȝ3
Into þe val of Josephahtȝ3,
And burieʒ mi moder þere,
¶ And a palm þat ich here fente
f.75vb Bi an aungel þat to here wente,
To warn here ʒe fichage de,
Johan, þat palm þou ðichalt bere,
Mi moderes bodi for to were
Fram Þwes ful of enuye.”

385 ¶io Iheu þous hadde ifeid,
þe bodi þat on þe bere was leid,
þere hit lai al frille;
Iheu ʒaf hit his bleffing
And ðrghʒ to heuene þer he was king,
390 As hit was his wille.
¶ Wel oughte we þat ben in erthe,
Were þai neure fô litel wurthe,
For to werschipen louerd oure,
When sweþe Iheu ful of miþ
395 Cam into erthe fram heuene-liʒt,
His moder for to onoure.
¶ And whoso nelle nowt be war,
To honoure þe moder þat him bar,
And his fader at nede,
400 Sweþe Iheu, heuene-kyng,
Haueʒ graunted hem luther ending
And fícioht lif to mede.
¶ And whoso honoureʒ be his miþ
His fader and his moder aríst,
405 Als þe fichage do,
He ðichal habbe ate bygynning
Long lif and god ending
And heuene-bлифθ þerto.
¶ Io Iheu was to heuene went
410 And þe soułe þider was fent,
Þanne ðeife feint Johan,
“Ga we đon af God vs het,
f.76ra Ga we forþʒ vpon oure fet
Więʒ þis cors anon.”
415 ¶ Foure apostles þat þar were.
Token vp anon þe bere,
Þei nolde no lengere dwelle;
Þei wenten þoroughhout þe toun
Więʒ a fair proceffloun
420 Amang þo Þwes felle.
¶ þe Þwes þa’ weren Godes fon
Herden þe apostles fingen echon
And fenten for to enquire
Of þe noife þat þai herde,
425 Wuche manere hit ferde,
And wat noife hit were.
¶ Men tolde þe Þwes ful of enuie
Þat hit was houre leuedi Marie
Þat was borne þourgh þe toun
430 To buriing, richeliche iʒt
And wiʒ mani torches liʒt,
Więʒ fair proceffloun.
¶ Þan feide þe Þwes – ful mote hem falle –
“Dis is a gret despit wihtalle,
435 Þat ani man ðichal here.
Marie, þat bar þat foule traitour,
Þichal be bore wiʒ swich honur
Among vs alle here.
¶ Ga we don hem ðichame inow
440 And cafte þe bere amiddes þe flow.”
And anonriʒt
A Þw laide hond vpon þe bare,
And al fást he cleued þare
Þourgh vertu of Godes miʒt.
445 ¶ Oþer þat comen to don hire ðichame,
 Isle.wexen boþe blinde and lame –
Foule mote hem falle.
Bleffed be þe king of miʒt,
Þat fo fauede his moder riʒt
450 Amang þe Þwes alle.
¶ þe apostles hadde god game.
Þat þai þede fo to ðichame,
Al was here plei.
Þei nere no þing agafe,
455 But fongen euere ickname fafte
And wenten forht here way.
¶ þe Þw þat cleued þe vpon þe bere,
Knew Peter, þat was þere,
An[d] feide wiʒinne a stonde
460 “Bid þi lord þat is fo hende
Deliure me vt of þis bende
Pat ich am inne ibounde."

Peter anferede þo
To him pat was ibounden fo
And in forewe browt,
"Pa' Iheu, mi louerd, is ful of miȝt,
Nou þou miȝt fe bi fiȝt,
Pa' þi bileue nis nowt.
3if þou wilt bileue þis,
Pat Iheu almiȝtis is,
Pat deide vpon þe tre,
Is Iheu þat oure leuedi bar,
Ich wille bidden him, als I dar,
Habbe mercy on þe."

Pe JW þat hangede on þe bere
Aman alle þat þere were
Turnede anon his þought
And feide, "Ich bileue þis,
Pat Iheu almiȝtis is,
And al þe world made of nowt,
And was born of Marie,
And for þe poeple wolde die,
For me and oþer mo;
And bidde him, 3if his wille be,
Pat he habbe pite of me
And bringe me vt of wo."

Anonriȝt in þat stede
Swete Iheus herde his bede
And liured him of bondes;
And he held hife hondes vpriȝt
And þonked Iheu ful of miȝt
Alle hife swete fonde.
Alle þe Jwes þat þere were
On him þat hangede on þe bere,
In weie þer he' ȝede,
Spatten on him anonriȝt,
For he leuede on Godes miȝt,
And he ne tok non hede.
Peter bad him gon and preche,
And þat he ficheholde þe Jwes teche,
Which was Godes miȝt;
And he wente and was ful glad
To do þat feinte Peter bad,
And bileued ariȝt.

His bileue was triȝt and god,
And ful wel he vnderstod,
Who browte him out of wo,
And þechede þat er þe þridde dai
He made leuen on Godes lay

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
Into þe val of Josephaȝtȝ
An[d] buriede oure leuedi anon.

Po oure leuedi was buried þere,
Alle þe apostles þat þere were
To þe cite þai ȝede;
And in þai wenten anon,
And were ful fori euerichon,
To murthe þe toke non hede.
For er þe paſfe(n)den fram þe fton,
Þer cam to hem an aungel anon

In þilke felue fiȝde
And bad hem wende forht to þeche
And þe poeple for to teche,
Alþ ȝe ere dede.
Litel mete þat dai ȝhe eten,
But at þe mete longe þai feten
And maden mourninge chere;
Euerich to oþer made his mone,
Pa' oure leuedi was fram hem gone,
Pa' was hem lef and dere.

While ȝhe feten in þat place,
Swete Iheu ful of grace
Kam þilke felue dai
Wiȝ campaigne of aungeles briȝte,
And into Josephaȝtȝ he liȝte,
Þere oure leuedi lai.
Ibleſfed he hife names feuene.
He browte here foule vt of heuene
Into erthe amang mankenne;

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2 Here the manuscript reads "ȝe."
I heu, as hit was his wille,
Wente to þe body al stille
And putte þe soule þerinne.
¶ ſous swete Iheus wis of red
Suffred his moder to be ded,
To fulfille þe profecie,
550 For in þe bok hit is told,
Þat al þe worlde, 3ong and hold,
Al þat liue, ðichal die.
¶ Perfore Iheu ful of miȝt
Brouwe þere soule fram heuene[ne] liȝt
Whȝ murther of aungles feuene;
And soule and body and fleȝch and bon
3he was borne vp anon
Into þe blisse of heuene.
¶ ðough a man miȝte dwelle,
560 Per nis no man þat mai telle
Þe ioie in heuene was diȝt
Aȝenes our leuedi brȝt and fisȝene,
And þere sȝe was corouned qwene
Wȝ Iheu ful of miȝt.
565 ¶ On of þe apostles þer was,
Þat was ihoten seint Thomas
And was borne in Hynde,
Kam to þe buriing ward
And brak hif felawes foreward –
He was to longe bihinde.
¶ And bi þe weie als he ȝhede
To Iosephahtȝ, Thomas tok hede,
And wȝ is egheȝn he feghȝ
Oure swete leuedi, seinte Marie,
Wȝ Iheu and his compagnie,
To heuene where ȝhe feghȝ.
¶ Seint Thomas was agaȝt anon
Of hife felawes echon,
For he nas nowt þare;
580 He was affchamed, seint Thomas,
And ful fôr þerfore he was
And in muchele care.
¶ “Swete leuedi,” quod seint Thomas,
“At þi buriing nowt i nas,
As ich þicholde habbe be;
¶ I þat ich bodiliche telle mai,
¶ I þat ich fauȝh þe here todai,
Som tokne fend þou me.
¶ But þou fende me þom tokning,
590 Mine felawes will leue no þing,
¶ Pa’ i fauȝh þe here.
Help me, leuedi, leue lif,
Lefte þer wede bitwene vs ftrif,
Whan we comen ifere.”

f.77rb Oure leuedi – bleffed mote ȝhe be.
Of Thomas hadde gret pite,
In kare þat was ibounde;
Þe gerdel of hire middel smal,
Nowt a gobet þerof but al,
3he let falle to grounde.
¶ And Thomas was war of þat,
Vpon knowes þere he sat,
And þe gurdele he tok;
And oure leuedi feghȝ,
600 And nammore of hire he ne feghȝ,
As witnesȝe ȝoli bok.
¶ Seint Thomas ne refte neuere on gronde,
Her he hadde hire felawes founde,
¶ Per þei feten on rowe;
610 And anon as ȝhe were mette,
Wȝ feire wordes he hem grette
And meked him to hem lowe.
¶ Þe god apoftel, seint Johan,
He spak to Thomas anon,
615 Þo he tok of him hede,
And seide to him, “Thomas of Hinde,
Euerie þou art bihinde.
Where were þou at þis nede?”
¶ Þous þe apoftel, seint Johan,
620 Blamede seint Thomas anon
For he nas nowt þere,
And echon þat euer þer was,
Alle blamede seint Thomas,
Afe manie als þer were.
625 ¶ Thomas of Hinde fôd al stille

3 Here the manuscript reads “founder.”
And let hem habben al here will
And seggen al here þout:
I saugh oure [leuedi] latter þan 3he,
þerfore ne chide þe me nowt.”
¶ “Thomas, Thomas,” quad seint Johan,
“We laden hire in a þrough of fton,
And þere we here lete.
Which manere miȝt hit be
f.77va Pat þou here seȝhe latter þan we?
We ne dede feþthyn but ete.”
¶ “Felawes,” quad Thomas þo,
“Forþoþhe, 3he is þenne igo
And went ellesware.
Icch warne 3he wel, fo mot ich þriue,
Þough 3he highen neure fo blue,
3he ne þichulle nowt þinde hire þare.”
¶ “Pous þou ferdeft,” quad Peter þo,
“Þo swete Iheus was ago
645 And riþen þourgh his miȝt:
Er þou haddeþ þiþelfi siþouunde,
Wþ þin hond his bitter wonde,
Þou noþdeþ nowt leuën hit riȝt.”
¶ “Peter,” quad Thomas, “fo mot ich þe,
650 Icch leue miþelfi bet þan þe;
Icch knowe oure leuedi ful wel.
Wþ þo þe myn eghen iþ hit þeghþ
Into heuene where 3he þeghþ,
Boþe þe[f]s]c[h] and fel.
655 ¶ And ich or trowede in mi þought,
Pat ȝe nolden leue me nowt,
And ich bad hire a bone:
3he þicholde þende me fom tokmyngh,
Pat ich was toward here burying.
660 And ȝhe graunted me fone.
¶ Þer iþ fþ wþn mi kne,
Leuedi, bleþed mote ȝhe be,
Flour of wommen alle,
Þe gerdel þat ȝhe werede in herthe –
665 Ihered and heþhed mote ȝhe werþe –
Bifore me ȝhe let falle.
¶ And ȝif ȝhe nellȝ nowt leue me,
Here ȝhe þichulleþ fone ife,
I ne þegge nowt amis.
670 þe gerdel þat ȝhe werede herefelue
3he fente tokne to ȝou twelue,
And, lo, here hit is.”
¶ Þo feint Johan þe gerdel þeghþ,
He held vp boþe honden on heghþ
f.77vb And kneled aliþoun ful lowe,
And kufe þe gerdel anonriȝt,
Þo he hadde þeroþe a fȝt,
And feide, “Þis gerdel ich knowe.
¶ Mi god felawes,” quad feint Johan,
680 “In Jofephaþ in þe fton,
Boþe were buried ifere;
Þo þe þrough was ifchet,
Þe gerdel was aboute here knut.
Hou hit euere kam here?
685 ¶ I rede we wenden and enquere
Wheþer þe swete bodi be þere
Pat þar swete Iheus,
Oþer ȝhe is out of monument
Iriþen and to heuene went,
690 Als Thomas telleþ vs.
¶ Wende we þider alle twelue
And þe we þe foþhe oure felue.
Þanne mowe [we] be ful bold.
3if ȝhe nis nowt in þe fton,
695 þanne hit is leþing non,
Þat Thomas huþeþ vs told.”
¶ Alle twelue were at on
And wented to þe þrough of fton
Þere oure leuedi was leid.
700 No þing in þe fton þer nas.
Þo wiþte þai wel þat foþht hit was
Þat Thomas hadde iþed.
¶ “Lo! felawes,” quad Thomas þo,
“Þe swete bodi is ago
705 Þat hider was ibrowt;
For ȝe nold nowt leue me,
Now ȝe monen ȝourefluen ȝe
þat ich ne gabbed nowt.”
Þo wenten alle þe apoftles anon,
Alle abouten þe fton
And knouedyn adoun,
To honoure þer þe bodi lai;
Al an houre of a dai
Þei leien in oreifoun.

And anon Ihesu Crist
Sente a swithe gret misf
Aboute þe apostles twelue.
And echon in diuerfe frede,
To prechen, aþi here deden,
Was boren bi hiþelue.

Alle were awondred in here þowt,
Hou fone ȝhe were atwinne ibrowt,
And no wonder hit nas;
But swete Ihesu ful of miȝt,
Þat made boþe dai and niȝt,
Aþe he wolde, alþo hit was.

Iþbled þe he, swete Ihesu,
Þa swich a loue had kud vs
Þour[gh] his mochel miȝt,
To crownen a womman of oure kinde
Qwene in heuene – habbeȝ hit in minde,
And þerue God ariȝt.

A greþ loue he kudde vs anoþer:
He bicam in erthe oure broþer,
And oure fader he is
And bowte vs out of Þeruage
And ȝafous to oure heritage
Heuenriches blis.

Wel owte we be blithe of mod:
Heuen is oure þourgh kinde of blod,
Oure and oure childre;
Swete Ihesu deide þerfore
And bowte hit þo hit was lore
Þourgh treþas of oure eldre.

He were a fol þat miȝte cheþe

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4 Here the manuscript reads “gret.”
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.
4. Sir Degare

f.78rb

Kniȝt[excision from page]
Feri fele wolde fonde
And fechen auentures bi niȝt and [d]ai,
Hou ȝhe miȝte here strenthe afaî.

5
So dede a kynȝt, Sire Degarree.
Ich wille ȝou telle wat man was he.

In Litel-Bretaygne was a kynȝt
Of gret poer in alle þing,
Stif in armes vnder ßicheld
10
And mochel idouted in þe feld.
Þer nas no man, verraiement,
Þat miȝte in werre ne in tornament
Ne in juftes for no þing
Him out of his fadel bring

15
Ne out of his ßitirop bringe his fot:
So ßtron[g] he was of bon and blod.

Þis kynȝt ne hadde non haire
But a maidenchild fre and fair;
Here gentrie and here beaute
Was moche renound in þe countre.

20
Dis maiden he loued als his lif.
Of hire was ded þe quene, his wif;
In trauailing here liȝf þe les.
And þo þe maiden of age wes,

Kynge fones to him speke,
Emperours and dukes eke,
To hauen his doughter in mariage
For loue of here heritage.

Ac þe kynȝt anfwered euer,
Dat no man ßîchal here halden euer,
But þif he mai in turneying
Him out of his fadel bring
And maken him lefen hife ßitiropc bayne.

f.78va

[excision from page]
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1 Scribe 3’s guide mark for a paraph that was never painted.

f.78vb

Bote þe damaiȝfe alone.

3he wente aboute and gaderede floures
And herknede fong of Wilde foules.
So fėr in þe launde ȝhe goht, iwis,
Dat ȝhe ne wot neure whare ȝe is.
To hire maidenes ȝhe wolde anon,
80 Ac hi ne wifte neuer, wat wei to gon.
Whenne hi wende beft to hem terne,
Aweoward þat hi goȝ wel zerne.
"Alas!" hi feide, “þat I was boren;
Nou ich wot ich am forlorn.
85 Wilde beftes me willeȝ torgrinde,
Or ani man me ßchulle finde.”
Þan fegh hi ßwich a ßȝt:
Towardȝ hire comen a kniȝt,
Gentil, zong and iolif man;
90 A robe of scarlet he hadde vpon;
His vifage was feir, his bodi ech weies;
Of countenance riȝt curteis,
Wel farende legges, fot and honde;
Per nas non in al þe kynges londe
95 More apert man þan was he.
“Damaȝele, welcome mote þou be.
Be þou afered of none wiȝȝte.
Ich am comen here a fairi-knyȝte.
Mi kynde is armes for to were,
100 On horfȝe to ride wiȝ cheld and ßpere.
Forþi afered be þou nowt;
I ne haue nowt but mi swerd ibrout.
Ich haue iloued þe mani a þer,
And now we beȝ v feluȝe her.
105 Þou beft mi lemman ar þou go,
Weþer þe likeȝ wel or wo.”
Þo no þing ne coude do þhe,
But wep and criede and wolde fle;
And he anon gan hire athole
110 And dide his wille what he wolde.
He binam hire here maidenhod
And feththen vp toforen hire ßtod.
“Lemman,” he feide, “gent and fre,
Mid ßchilde I wot þat þou ßchalt be;
115 Siker ich wot hit worht a knaue.
Forþi mi ßwerd þou ßchalt haue;
And, whenne þat he is of elde,
Þat he mai him selþ biwelde,
Tak him þe swerd and bidde him fonde
120 To fechen his fader in eche londe.
Þe ßwerd isȝ god and auenaunt;
Lo, af I faug[þ]t wiȝ a geaunt,
I brak þe point in his hed,
And fiththen, when þat he was ded,
125 I tok hit out and haue hit [þ]er
Redi in min aumener.
3þt peraunteȝre time biȝ,
Þat mi fone mete me wiȝ,
Be mi ßwerd I mai him kenne.
130 Haue god dai. I mot gon henne.”
Þe kniȝt paffede af he cam.
Al wepande þe ßwerd ȝhe nam
And com hom fore ßkend,
And fond here maidenes al flepend.
135 Þe ßwerd ȝhe hidde als ȝhe miȝte
And awaked hem in hiȝte
And doht hem to horf anon
And gonne to ride euerichon.
Þanne feghien hi ate laȝt
140 Tweie ßquierys come pri kend ßaft.
Fram þe kyng þai weren iȝent
To white whider his daughter went.
Þai browt hire into þe riȝte wai
And comen faire to þe abbay
145 And doȝ þe ßruȝfe in alle þingges,
Mani maffȝ and riche ofrignmentes.
And whanne þe ßruȝfe was al idone
And iypassed ouer þe none,
Þe kyng to his castel gan ride –
150 His daughter rod bi his fide –
And he ȝeneȝ his kyngdom ouerul
Stoutliche, as a god king ßchall.

Ac whan ech man was glad an[d] blithe,
155 Here wombe greted more and more;
Þer while ȝhe miȝte, ȝhe hidde here fore.
On a diȝ as hi wepended fet,
On of hire maidenes hit vnderȝet.
“Ma dame,” ȝhe feide, “par charite,

2 Here the manuscript reads “his.”
Whi wepe ȝe? Now telleȝ hit me.”
¶ “A, gentil maiden, kinde icoren,
Help me ofer ich am forloreng.
Ich haue euere ȝete ben meke and milde,
Lo, now ich am wiȝ quik e ȝchilde.

3if ani man hit vnderȝete,
Men wolde fai bi ȝsti and ȝfrete,
Þat mi fader þe king hit wan;
And I ne was neuere aqueint wiȝ man.
And ȝif he hit him ȝelue wite,
Swich forewe ȝchal to him ȝmyte,
Þat neuer bliȝe ȝchal he þe;
For al his ioie is in me.”
And tolde here altogether þer,
Hou hit was biȝete and wher.

“Ma dame,” quad þe maide, “ne care þou nowt.
Stille awai hit ȝchal be brouȝt.
No man ȝchal wite in Godes riche,
Whar hit bicomȝe but þou and iche.”
¶ Her time come, ȝhe was vnbounde

And deliured al mid ȝounde.
A knaue ȝchild þer was ibore;
Glad was þe moder parfoure.
Þe maiden feruede here at wille,
Wond þat child in cloȝes stille

And laid hit in a cradel anon
And was al preȝ þarwiȝ to gon.
3hit [h]is moder was him hold:
Four pound ȝhe tok of gold
And ten of ȝeluȝe alfo;

Vnder his fote ȝhe laid hit þo
“For swich þinges hit mihoure.”
And feththen ȝe tok a paire glouȝe
Þat here lemman here ðente of fairi-londe,
Þat nolde on no manne honde,

Ne on child ne on womman ȝhe nolde;
But on hire ȝeluȝe wel ȝhe wolde.
Þe glouȝen ȝe put vnder his hade,
And fiththen a letter ȝhe wrot and made
And knyt hit wiȝ a feltene þred

Aboute his nekke – wel God ȝped –
Þat who hit founde ȝcholde iwite.
Pan was in þe lettre þous iwrite:
¶ “Par charite, ȝif ani god man
þis helples child finde can,
Lat crifien hit wiȝ presþes honde
And bringen hit to liue in londe,
For hit is komen of gentil blode.
Helpeȝ hit wiȝ his owen god,
Wiȝ treȝ þat vnder his fet lis.

And ten ȝer eld whan þat he his,
Takeȝ him þif ilke glouȝen two
And biddeȝ him, whereuer he go,
Þat he ne louie no womman in londe,
But þis glouȝes willen on hire honde,
For, siker, on honde nelle þai nere
But on his moder þat him here.”
¶ Þe maiden tok þe chil[ð] here mide
Stille awai in auentide;
Alle þe winteres longe niȝt
Þan was hiȝ ȝe war anon
Of an hermitage in a fion;
An holi man had þer his wonyng.
Þnder ȝhe wente on heying

An lettre þe cradel at his dore
And durfte abide no lengore
And paȝfede forȝ anonriȝt.
Hom þhe com in þat oþer niȝt
And fond þe leuedi al drupni,
Sore wepinde and was fori,
And tolde hire altogether þer,
Hou ȝhe had iben and wher.
¶ Þe hermit aros erliȝe þo,
And his knaue was yppe alfo,
An[ð] feide ifere here matynes
And feruede God and hif þeins.
Þe litel child þai herde crie
And clepede after help on hie.
Þe holi man his dore vnded}[e]
¶ fond þe cradel in þe fede.
He tok vp þe cloȝes anon
And bihelde þe litel grom.
He tok þe letter and radde wel fone,
Pat tolde him pat he scholde done. He was fo feir and fo fre.
245  
\[p\]e heremite held vp boëe his honde An[d]l] honked God of al his fonde Ofer ten wynter ofer more.
And bar  pat child into his chapel, And he was of twenti 3er,
And for joie he rong his bel. Sfaleworth he was, of swich pouer
He dede vp \[p\]e glouen and \[p\]e trefour  
\[p\]at  
250  
And crisyned \[p\]e child wïç gret honur It was a fair child and a bold,
In \[p\]e name of \[p\]e trinite; And haluendel he tok \[p\]i honden, and ek his fader \[p\]at him wan,
He hit nemnede Dega\[r\]re. And nam his leue an\[d\] wolde go.
Dega\[r\]re nowt elles ne is And he wende wel and \[p\]e moder alfo
But þing  pat not neuer what it is,
255  
O[r]  \[p\]e  þing \[p\]at is neg3 forlorn alfo; He wes, And haluendel he tok \[p\]i honden.
Forþi \[p\]e schild he nemnede þous  ßo. Stalewortht he was, of swich pouer
\[p\]e  
260  
Hadde hire ispouged into \[p\]at cite. \[p\]at  
To hire \[p\]at schild he fente ßo He toke him  þe letter to rede;
Bi his knaue and ße siuer alfo. “O leue em,\[\textsuperscript{5}\] par charite,
And bad here take gode hede Was þis letter mad for me?”
Hit to forster and to fede, “Ye, bioure lord, vs helpe ßÞal,
265  
And ʒif God almiʒt\i\ waðeÞus hit was.” And told him al.
Ten ʒer his lif holde, He tolde hit wiþo fre.
Aʒen to him [h]i scholde hit wife; He was a wif;
He hit wolde teche of clergi and for ioie he rong his bel.
\[p\]e litel child Dega\[r\]re  
270  
Was ibroug into \[p\]at cite. He knelede adoun alfo ßwïç
\[p\]e wif and hire louerd ifere And swor he nolde ßinte no ßtounde
Kept hit, aƒe hit [h]ere owen were. Til he his kinrede hadde ßfounds.
Bi  ßat hit was ten ʒer old, For in þe lettre was ßþous iwrite,
\[f.80ra\] Hit was a fair child and a bold,  
275  
Wel inorísʃched,\[\textsuperscript{3}\] god and hende: \[p\]at  
Was non betere in al ßat ende. For on hire honden hiþ wïle
He wende wel ße gode man Wich were his moder and who,
Had ben his fader ßat him wan, 3hip ßat ßche liuede ßo;
And ße wif his moder alfo  
\[f.80rb\] On and non oþer hiþ nolde.
280  
And ße hermite his vnkel bo. \[p\]at  
And whan ße ten ʒer was ßipent Ich wil haue fïrt anoþer þïng.”
To ße hermitage he was ßént.  
And he was glad him to ße;

\[\textsuperscript{3}\] Here the manuscript reads “inorísʃcher.”
\[\textsuperscript{5}\] Here the manuscript reads “wan.”

269
He hew adoun bo þe grete an[d] grim
To beren in his hond wiȝ him
A god faplōng of an ok.
When he þarwiȝ ȝaf a ftronk,
Ne wer he neuer Þo stronge a man
Ne þo gode armes hadde upon,
Dat he ne sholde ðalle to grounde –
Swich a bourdon to him he founde.
Dþe þenne God he him bitawt,
Me aþer fram oþer wepyng rawt.
C hild Degarre wente his wai
Dþourgh þe forrest al þat dai;
No man he ne herd, ne non he ȝez, Til hit was non ipassfed heȝ.
Þanne he herde a nose kete
In ò valai an dintes grete.
Blite þider he gan to te;
What hit ware he wolde ife.
An herl of þe countre, stout and ȝers,
Wiȝ a þynsted and four þquiers
Hadde ȝonsted a der þoper two, And al here houndes weren ago.
Pan was þar a dragon grim,
Ful of filth and of venim,
Wiȝ wide þrote and teȝ grete
And wynges bitere wiȝ to bete;
As a lywn he hadde fet,
And his tail was long an[d]l grete.
Þe smoke com of his nose awai
Afe ȝer out of a chimenai.
Þe knyȝt and þquiers he had torent,
Man and hors to deþe chant.
Æe dragon æe erl anþaile gan,
And defended him af a man
And youltliche leid on wiȝ his swerd
And strone þrokes on him gerd;
Ac alle his dentes ne greued him nowt,
His hide was hard Þo jren wrouþ.
Æerl lei fram tre to tre,
Fein he wolde fram him be,
And æe dragon him gan aþail.
Æe doughti erl in þat batail

365 Offegh þis child Degarre.
“Ha, help,” he seide, “par charite.”
Þe dragoun feȝ þe child com,
He laft þe erl and to him nom,
Blowinde and ðeniend also,
370 Alþe him wolde swolewe þo.
Ac Degarre was ful strong;
He tok his bat grete and long,
And in þe forehefd he him batereȝ
Dat al æe forehefd he tospatereȝ.
375 He fil adoun anonrȝt
And frapte his tail wiȝ gret miȝt
Vpon Degarres ðide,
Dat vȝ to doun he gan to glide.
Ac he ðert vȝ aþe a man
380 And wiȝ his bat leide vpan
And al toþruft hit him ech a bon
Dat he lai ded, ðistle as a fton.
Þerl knelede adoun biliue
And synked æe child of his liue
385 And maked him wiȝ him gon
To his caftel rȝst anon
And wel at hefe he him made
And þroferd him al þat he hade:
Rentes, tefor an eke lond,
390 For to holden in his hond.
Þanne anþweredeg Degarre,
“Lat come ferȝt bifor me
Þi leuedi and oþer wimmen bold,
Maidenes þ widues, ȝonge ȝ olde,
395 And oþer damoþeles ﬂwete.
Þif mine gloun heȝ to hem mete
For to done vpon here honde,
Þanne ich wil take þi londe;
J þif þai ben nowt fo
400 Ich wille take mi leue and go.
Alle wimman were forȝt ibrowt,
Wide cuntreis and forȝt iȝowt.
Eþ æe gloun anþaile bigan,
Ac non ne miȝte don hem on. 6
405 He tok his glouen and vp hem deede
And nam his leue in þat frede.
Þe erl was gentil man of blod
And zaf him a frede 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 zaf him a swith brest,
And dubbed him þer to knyȝt
415 And swor God almȝiȝti
þat he was better worthi
To viȝn hors and armes alþo
Þan wiȝ his bat aboute to go.
Sire Degarre was wel blithe
420 And þanked þe erl mani a þipe
And lep vp on palefrai hiȝs
And doht him forȝ in his wai.
Vpon his frede riȝte his man
ȝ ledde his armes als he wel can.
425 Mani a iorne Þai ride and Þette.
So on a dai gret folk þei mette,
Erles and barouns of renoun,
Þat come fram a cite-toun.
He alked a feraiant, “What tidinge?”
430 þ whennes hii come þ “What is þis þing?”
“Sire,” he feide, “verraïent,
We come framward a parlement.
f.81ra þe king a gret counëfeil made
For nedes þat he to don hade.
435 When þe parlement was plener
He lette crie fer and ner,
ȝif ani man were of armes fo bold
Þat wiȝ þe kinge iȝti wold,
He ÿcholde 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 affaiȝeþ þ mai nowt do,
445 Mani erl þ mani baroun,
Kniȝtis and fquiers of renoun.
Ac ech man þat him iȝteþ wiȝ, tit,
Hæp of him a foul deþpit:
Some þe brekeþ þe nekke anon
450 And of some þe rig-bon,
Some þourgh þe bodi he girt;
Ech is maimed oþer hiȝt.
Ac noman mai don him no þing:
Swith wonder chaunce hæþ þe king.”
455 Sire Degarre þous þenche gan
“Ich am a ÿtaleworht man,
And of min owen ich haue a frede,
Swert and þpere and riche wede;
And þif ich felle þe kynȝ adoun
460 Euere ich haue wonnen renoun;
And þei þat he me herþe ðore,
No man wot wer ich was bore.
Whþer þeʒ þer lif me ðitide,
Aȝen þe king ich wille ride.”
465 In þe cite his in he takeþ
And reþeþ him and meri makeþ.
On a dai wiȝ þe king he mette
And knelede adoun and him grette.
“þere þing,” he faide, “of muchel miȝt,
470 Mi louerd me fende hider nou riȝt
For to warne ȝou þat he
Bi þi leue wolde iuȝte wiȝ þe
f.81rb And winne þi dowter, þif he mai,
As þe cri was þis enderdaþ;
475 Justes he had to þe inome.”
“Do þar deþ,” waþ 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 winneþ al ÿshall take.”
Amorewe þe iustes was ȝiset.
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,
Pe masse he herde of pe trinite.
To pe fader he offre3 hon flornie
And to pe sone an oyer also fine
And to pe holie gost pe bridde.

490 Pe prest for him ful zerne gan bidde.
And to pe seruise was idon,
To his in he wente wel son
And let him armi wel afe
In god armes to justi in.

495 His gode stede he gan bistride;
His squier bar his sschaft bistide.
In pe feld pe king he abide gan,
As he com ridend wiʒ mani a man
Stoutliche out of pe cite-toun,
Wiʒ mani a lord of gret renoun.
Ac al þat in þe felde beʒ,
þat þe iustes iseʒ,
Seide þat hi neuer zit iseʒe
So pert a man wiʒ here egʒe,

500 As was þis gentil Degarre;
Ac no man wiste whennes was he.
Boþe þai gonne to justi þan,
Ac Degarre can nowt þeron;
Þe king hæþ þe gretter schaft
And kan inowgh of þe craft.
To breke his nekke he had iment;
In þe helme he set his dent,

505 Þat þe ðchaft al tosproung.
Ac Degarre was fo strong
Þat in þe fadel fitle he feþ
And in þe stropes held his fet.
For þoþe I seie, wiȝoute lefing,
He ne couþe nammore of iuſting.
“Alas!” quaþ þe king, “Alas!

510 Me ne ﬁl neuerse swich a cas,
Þat man þat ich miȝte hitte
After mi þrok miȝte ﬁtte.”
He takeʒ a wel gretter tre
And swor, so he moþte iþe,

515 “3if his nekke nel nowt atwo,
His rigg ðchal ar ich hennes go.”
He rod eft wiʒ grez raundoun
And ðought to beren him adoun
And girt Degarre anon

520 Riȝt æsein þe breft-bon.
Þe ðchaft was sreþ and wonder god,
And Degarre ﬂede afoþod,
And al biforn he roz on heghʒ,
And þo was he ifallen neʒʒ.

525 But, af God almiʒt wold,
Þe ðchaft braþ and miʒt nowt hold,
And Degarre his courz outritte
And was agrimed out of his witte.
“Alas!” quaþ he, “for vilayne;

540 Þe king me hæþ ifimente þrie,
And I ne touchede him nowt þete.
Nou I ßchal [alvife me bette].”
He turned his ﬂede wiʒ herze grim
And rod to þe king and he to him,

545 And togider þai gert ful riȝt
And in þe ðcheldes here ðrokes piȝt,
Þat þe ðperes al toriȝez
And vriȝt to here honde ﬂiueʒ,
Þat alle þe lordings þat þer ben,

550 Þat þe iuſting miȝte þen,
Seiden hi ne þeþe neuer wiʒ egʒe
Man þer mighte fo longe drehʒe
He miȝt flît noȝter fer ne ner.
Pe king was strongly and harde fât;
Pe fêde rof vp biforn wiȝ þat,
Þ fire Degarre fô þrifre him þan,
Þat, maugre whofo grochhe bigan,
Out of þe fadel he him caft,
Tail ouer top riȝt æte laft.
Þan was þer long houting and cri;
Þe king was for afchamed forþi.
Þe lordinges come wiȝ miȝt and mein
And broughte þe king on horfe aȝsein
An[d] feide wiȝ o crîng, “Iwis,
Child Degarre hâp wonne þe pris.”
Þan was þe damaiȝle fôri;
For hi wiȝte wel forwiþi:
Þat hi fîcholde îþoufèd ben
To a kniȝt þat þîc heuer had fên,
And lede here lif wiȝ swich a man,
Þat þîc he ne wot who him wan
No in what londe he was ibore.
Carful waf þe leuedi þerforé.
J an feide þe king to Degarre:
“Min hende fone, com hider to me.
Lo, her biforn mi barons bolde
Mi douwter I take þe bi þe hont
And fêise þe her in al mi lond;
King þou ichalt ben after me.
God graunte þe godman forto be.”
Þan was þe child glad and bliȝe
And þonked þe kyn mani a þîthe.
Gret purueance þan was þer iwrouþ;
To churche þai were togidere ibróþ;
Þ spoufed þat leuedi, verraiment,
Vnder holi fàcement.
Lo, what chaunȝe and wonder strong

Bitideȝ mani a man wiȝ wrong,
Þat comeȝ into an vncouþe þede
And îþoufèd wiþ for ani mede
j knowes no þing of hire kin
Ne þîc he of his neiȝter more ne min
And þeȝ irwedded togider to liþbe,
Par auenture, and þeȝ neghȝ fîbbe.
So dede þire Degarre þe bold,
Spoufed þere [h]is moder [ Þ ];
And þat hende leuedi alþo
Here owene fone was îþoufèd to
Þat þîc vpon here bodi bar.
Lo, what auenture fil hem þar.
But God, þat alle þingge mai þere,
Wolde nowt, þat[þ] þai þinned ifere.
To chirche þai wente wiȝ barouns bolde.
A riche fetþe þai gonne to holde,
And wan was wel ipaffed non
And þe dai was al idon,
To bedde þai fîcholde wende, þat freþ
þe damaiȝele and þire Degarre.
He fôd fille and biþouwerþ him þan,
Hou þe hermite, þe holi man,
Bad he fîcholde no womman take
For faiured ne for riches fake,
But þe miȝte þis gloues two
Liȝtliche on hire hondes do.
“Allas, allas!” þan faiede he,
“What mechaunce is komen to me.
Awai! wîtes wrecche ich am.
Ich hadde leuere þan þis kingdame,
Þat is iseifed into min hond,
Þat ich were faire out of þis lond.”
He wrang his hondes and was fori;
Ac no man wiȝte þer forewiþi.
Pe king parçyued and faiede þo,
“Sire Degarre, wi faret þou fo?
Is þer ani þing don ille,
Spoken or feid aȝen þi wille?”

8 The rhyme word appears to be missing from this line.
273
“3a, fire,” he saide, “bi heuene-king.
Ichal neuer for no ṣpoufing,
Words while I liue, wîst wîmman dele,
Widue, ne wif, ne dammeidele,
But the þe þis gloues maie take and fonde
And liȝtblich drawn upon hire honde.”
His ȝonge bride þat gan here,
And al for þou chaunged hire chere,
And ate laste gan to turne here mod,
Here viȝage wex afe red afe blod.
3he knew þo gloues þat wer hire,
“Schewe hem hide, leue ﬁre.”
Schœ tok þe gloues in þat fede
And liȝtbliche on hire hondes dede
And þil adoun wîst reuli cri
And feide, “God, mercy, merci!
Þou art mi lone haft spoufed me her,
And ich am, fone, þi moder der;
Ich hadde þe loren, ich haue þe founde.
Blesfed be Iheu Grif þat founede.”
Sire Degarre tok his moder þo
And helde here in his armes two,
Kesfe and clepe þere mani a ﬁpe;
Þat hit wa[s] þe, he was ful bliþe.
Þe kyng great wonder hadde,
What þat noife [was] þat þai made,
And meruaile[d] of hire crying
And feide, “Doughter, what is þis þing?”
“Fader,” þe feide, “þou schalt there.
Þou weneef 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 foret as I wes.
And þis is mi fone, God hit wot;
Bi þis gloues wel ich wot.”
3he told him al þat folþ þer,
Hou þe child was geten and wher,
And hou þat he was boren alfo.

To þe hermitage ȝhe fente him þo
And þehþen herd of him no þing.
“But þanked be Iheu, heuene-king,
Ich haue ifounde him oluiue.
Ich am his moder and ek his wiue.”

“Leue moder,” fêide sire Degarre,
“To þe þe fothe, þar charite,
Into what londe I mai terne,
To feke mi fader swithe and ȝerne.”
“Sone,” þe saide, “bi heuene-kyng,
I can þe of him telle no þing;
But þo þat he fram me raȝt,
His owen swerd he me bitauȝt
And þad ich ßholde take hit þe forþan,
3if þou luedefþ and were a man.”
Þe swerd ßche fet forþt anonriȝt,
And Degarre hit outpliȝt.
Brod and long and heui hit wes,
In þat kyngdom no swich nes.
Þan feide Degarre forþan,
“Whofo hit raȝt, he was a man;
Nov ich haue þat I kepe,
Nȝt ne dai nel ich slepe
Til þat I mi fader þe,
3if God wile þat hit fō be.”
In þe cite he refte al nȝt.
Amorewe, when hit was dai-liȝt,
He aros and herde his maffe.
He diȝte him and forȝ gan paffȝe.
Of al þat cite þan moȝte non
Neiȝþer wîȝ him riden ne gon
But his knaue to take hede
To his armour and his frede.
Forȝ he rod in his wai
Mani a pas þ mani iurnai.
So longe he paffedde into weft,
Þat he com into þeld forþt,
Þer he was biȝeten fom while.

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9 This line and the previous one have been written as a single line separated by a faint slash-mark.
10 Both “am” and “ek” in this line have been preceded by a vertical mark.
11 Here “me” has been altered from “mi.”
Here the manuscript reads “he ſe a water cler
And amidde a riuer
A fair caſtel of lim and ſton;
To his knaue he feide, “Tide wat tide, O ſte forſer nel i ride,
Ac here abide wille we
And alke herberewe par charite,
If ani quik man be here on liue.”
To ſe water ſai come als ſwiſe.
ſe brege was adoune ſo
ſe gate open alo
And into ſe caſtel he gan ſpede.
First he stabled vp his ſtede.
He ſaiede vp his palefrai;
Lnouſ ſe fond of hote and hai.
He bad his grom on heying 12
Kepe wel al here ſing.
He paſſed vp into ſe halle,
Biheld aboute ſi gan to calle;
Ac neiſer on lond ne on ſe
No quik man he ne ſeʒ.
Aſmid ſe halle flore
A fir was bet ſtark an ſtore.
“Par ſai,” he ſaiede, “ich am al ſure,
He ſat bete ſat ſure
Wil comen hom ſi t to niſt.
Abiden ich wille a litel wiſt.”
He ſat adoun vpon ſe dais.
And warmed ſiſſe wel eche wais,
And he biſheld and vnδernam,
Hou in at ſe dowre cam
Four dammaſeſles gent and fre.
Ech was itakked to ſe kne;
ſe ſew bowen an[d] aſwen bere,
ſe ſer two iſhared were
Wiſ ſe venſouſ riche and god.
And Degarre vp ſtōd
And gret hem wel fair, apliſt.
Ac ſai aſwered ne wiſt,
But ʒede into chaſmbrace anſon
And barred ſe dowre after fon.
ſone ſerafter wiſalle
Œr com a dwerw into ſe halle.
Four ſet of lengthe was in ſi,
His viſage was ſſouſ and grim;
Boſe his berd and his ſax
Was criſp an[d] ſhalew as wax;
Grete ſſoſhoſdres and quarre;
Riſt ſſouſliche lokeſ he.
Moſhele were hife ſet and honde
Aſe ſe meſte man of ſe londe.
He was iſcloſed wel ariſt,
His ſſhoſn icouped aſ a kniſt;
He hadde on a forcoſt ouert,
Iforſed wiſ ſlaundĕner, apert.
Sire Degarre ſim biſheld and lowg3
And gret ſim fair inowg3.
Ac he ne aſwerede ſeuere a word,
But ſette treſfles and laid ſe bord;
And torches in ſe halle he liſte
And redi to ſe ſoper diſtete.
Pe ſer com out of ſe bour
A dammeſeſle of grete honou.
In ſe londe non ſaier nas;
In a diapre cloſed ſhe was.
Wiſ hire come maideṇes tene,
Some in iſcarle, ſome in grene,
Gent of bodi, of ſemblaunt swete.
And Degarre hem gan grete.
Ac hi ne aſwerede ne wiſt,
But ʒede to ſe ſoper anſrīſt.
“Certes,” quaſ ſie Degarre,

12 Here the manuscript reads “heſing.”
“Ich haue hem gret and hi nowt me;
But þai be domb, bi and bi
þai ðchul speke first ar I.”
Þe leuedi þat was of rode so bríst;
Amide þe he fat anonriþt,
And on aþer half maidenes fiue.
Þe dwerw hem ðeruede alsþo bluþe
Wȝi riche metes and wel idiþt;
Þe coppe he þilleþ wȝi alle his miȝt.
Sire Degarre couþe of curteiþie.
He þet a chaier biforn þe leuedie
And þeriu him Þeluþ fet
1 toþ a þnif and carþ his met.
At þe foþer liþel at he,
But biheld þe leuedi þre
And þeȝ aþ feþer aþir a winþman,
Als he heuere lokeþ an,
Þat al his herte and þis þout
Hire to louþ was ibrowt.
And þo þai hadde souþep anowȝ,
Þe dwerw13 com, and þe cloþ he drouȝ.
Þe leuedis weþici þeuþerion
And ȝede to chaumber quik anon.
Into þe chaumber þe com ful fone.14
Þe leuedi on here bed þet
And a maide at here þet
And harpede notes gode and þine;
Anopþer brouȝte ðpiþces and wine.
Vpon þe [bedde] he þet adoun
To here of þe harpe fouþ.
For murþhe of þe notes fo þichille
He þel adoun on þleþe þtelle;
So he þlep al þat niȝt.
Þe leuedi weþiȝ him warm, aþliȝt,
And a þilewer vnder þis heued dede
And ȝede to bedde in þat þrede.
A morewe whan hit was dai-liȝt,
Sche was vpþe and redi diȝt;
Faire þche awaked him þo.
And saide þus in here game,
Þou art wþorþ to suffri þchame,
þat al niȝt aþ a þeft sleptef
And non of mine maidenes ne keþeft.”
“O gentil leuedi,” þeide Degarre,
“þou þe me ofte winþman, 
And whi her be so feþe winþman
Allone wiȝouten ani man.”
Þe dameifele ðore ðiȝte
And bighan to wþep anonriþte.
“þire, wil fain ich þelle þe wolde,
3if euere þe þetter be me þifholde.
Mi fader was a riche barouþ
And hadde mani a tour and toun.
He ne hadde no child but me.
Ich was his [h]air of þis cuntre.
In mene ich hadde mani a kniþ[t]
And Þquiþers þat were gode and liȝt,
An[d] Þaleworht men of melteþ
To ferue in court fer and ner.
Ac þanne is þar hereþiþde
A þerne kniþt iknawe ful wide;
Ich wene in Bretaine þer be non
So strong a man fo he is on.
He had ilouþe me ful þore;
Ac in herte neuere more
Ne miȝþe ich louie him aþeþin.
But whenne he feþȝe þer was no geþin,
He was aboute wiȝ maþriþ
For to rauþþe me awai.
Mine kniþþes wolde defende me,
And ofte fowȝten hi an[d] he:
276

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.
890  Pe best he flowgh pe firfte dai  
And fefen an ohe[r], par ma fai,  
And fefen pe Þridde and pe Þerpe,  
Pe befre þat miȝte gon on ethe.  
Mine fquiers, þat weren fo ßoute,  
Bi foure, bi Þue Þai riden oute  
On hors armed wel anowȝ  
His houn bodi he hem flough.  
Mine men of mefter he flough alle  
And ðeper pages of mine halle.  

900  Þerfore ich am ðore agaft,  
Left he wynne me ate laft.”  
Wiȝ þis word ßche ßil to  
And lai afwone a wel gret frounde.  
Hire maidenes to hire come  
And in hire armes vp hire nome.  
He beheld þe leuedi wiȝ gret pite;  
“Loueli madame,” quap he,  
“On of þine ich am here.  
Ich wille þe help be mi pouere.’  

910  Þe, Þire,” Þe faide, “Þan al mi lond  
Ich wil þe Þiue into þin hond  
And þi wille bodi mine,  
þif þou miȝt wreke me of hine.”  

915  Po was he glad al for to ßiȝte,  
A[כ] wel gladere þat he miȝte  
Haue þe leuedi so briȝt  
þif he flough þat ðeper kniȝt.  
And als Þai ßtod and Þap ifere  
A maiden cried wiȝ reful chere:  

920  “Her comeȝ ooure enemi fafte vs ate.  
Drauwe þe bregge and ßchett þe ȝate.  
Or he wil ßlen ous euereichone.”  
Sire Degarre fiȝt vp anon,  
And at a window him ȝeȝ,  

925  Wel i-armed on hors hegh,  
A faiuer bodi þan he was on,  
In armes ne ßegh he neuer non.  
Sire Degarre armed him bluie  
And on a ßrede gan out driue  
Wiȝ a ßpere gret of gayn.  
To þe kniȝt he rit aȝein.  

930  Pe kniȝte spere al toþprong.  
Ac Degarre was fo ßtrong  
And fo harde to him þraft.  
But þe kniȝt fat so falt,  
Þat þe ßte ßdige tobrek  
And fel to grounde and he ek.  
But anon þir[t] vp þe kniȝt  
And drouȝ out his swerd briȝt.  

940  “Aliȝt,” he faide, “adoun anon.  
To fiȝt þou ßchalt afo te gon.  
For þou haȝt swawe mi ßte,  
Deȝ-dint ßchal be þi mede,  
Ac þine ßte ßle I niƚe;  
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 strokes gret plente,  
And he him aȝen alfo,  
Þat helm and ßcheld cleue atwo.  
Þe kniȝt was agreued fore,  
Þat his armour toburfe þore.  

950  A fiȝk he ȝaf sire Degarre,  
Po was he glad al for to fiȝte,  
Ac Degarre was fo ßtrong  
And fo harde to him þraft.  
But he fiȝt vp anonriȝt,  
And swich a fiȝk he ȝaf þe kniȝt  
Vpon his heued fo harde iȝfet  
Þat helm and heued and bacinet,  
Þat to grounde fallen is he.  
But he fiȝt vp anonriȝt,  
And swich a fiȝk he ȝaf þe kniȝt  
Vpon his heued fo harde iȝfet  
Þat helm and heued and bacinet,  
Þat to grounde fallen is he.  

960  Þat ate breft ßtod þe dent.  
Ded he fil doun, verraiment.  
Þe leuedi lai in o kernel  
And biȝeld þe batali eueri del.  
3he ne was neuer er fo bliȝe;  
Sire Degarre com into caȝtel;  
Aȝein him com þe dammaiȝel  
And þonked him ßwayne of þat dede.  
Into chaumberland þe gan him lede  
Aȝein him com þe dammaiȝel  
And þonked him ßwayne of þat dede.  
Into chaumberland þe 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 ȝiue
And mi felue, whil þat I liue.”
“Grant merci, dame,” faide Degarre,
“Of þe gode þou bedeñt me.
Wende ich wille ınto ofer londe
More of hauentours for to fonde.
And þis twelue moneþe be go
Aþeine ich wil come þe to.”
Þe leuedi made moche mourning
For þe kniȝteþe departiñg
And þaf him a feþe god and fur,
Gold and fiȝuer an[þ] god armur
And bitauȝt him Þhesu heuene-king;
And fore þai wepen at here partiñg.
Forht wente sere Degarre
Þurh mani a diuers cuþtre;
Euermor he rod weft.
So in a daþe of o foynt
He mette wiȝ a douȝtȝe kniȝt
Vpon a feþe god and liȝt
In armes þat were riȝte and fur
And þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
At was of armes riȝte and dere,
Aþen hþer a þîchaȝt he bare.
To bere him doun he hadde imiȝt;
Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Þe þîchaȝt brak to peceþ al
Þe fader tok his cours þare,
Aþen þis fader a þîchaȝt he bare.
To bere him doun he hadde imiȝt;
Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Wolg þat þe maide him ȝaf, faun fail,
For whom he did raȝer batail.
A þîchaȝt he keft aboute his fwere,
Þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
Wolg þre maideþen heuedes of fiȝuer briȝt,
Wolg crounes of golþ preciouȝ of fiȝt.
A þîchaȝt he tok þat was nowt smal,
Wolg a kene coronal.
His æþere tok anoþer ðære,
Bi his louerd he gan hit bere.
Lo, swich auenture he gan bitiȝe:
Þe fone aþeine þe fader gan riȝte,
And noþer ne knew oþer no wiȝt.
Nou beginneþ þe fîrste fiȝt.
Sire Degarre tok his cours þare,
Aþen þis fader a þîchaȝt he bare.
To bere him doun he hadde imiȝt;
Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Wolg þat þe maide him ȝaf, faun fail,
For whom he did raȝer batail.
A þîchaȝt he keft aboute his fwere,
Þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
Wolg þre maideþen heuedes of fiȝuer briȝt,
Wolg crounes of golþ preciouȝ of fiȝt.
A þîchaȝt he tok þat was nowt smal,
Wolg a kene coronal.
His æþere tok anoþer ðære,
Bi his louerd he gan hit bere.
Lo, swich auenture he gan bitiȝe:
Þe fone aþeine þe fader gan riȝte,
And noþer ne knew oþer no wiȝt.
Nou beginneþ þe fîrste fiȝt.
Sire Degarre tok his cours þare,
Aþen þis fader a þîchaȝt he bare.
To bere him doun he hadde imiȝt;
Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Wolg þat þe maide him ȝaf, faun fail,
For whom he did raȝer batail.
A þîchaȝt he keft aboute his fwere,
Þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
Wolg þre maideþen heuedes of fiȝuer briȝt,
Wolg crounes of golþ preciouȝ of fiȝt.
A þîchaȝt he tok þat was nowt smal,
Wolg a kene coronal.
His æþere tok anoþer ðære,
Bi his louerd he gan hit bere.
Lo, swich auenture he gan bitiȝe:
Þe fone aþeine þe fader gan riȝte,
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Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Wolg þat þe maide him ȝaf, faun fail,
For whom he did raȝer batail.
A þîchaȝt he keft aboute his fwere,
Þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
Wolg þre maideþen heuedes of fiȝuer briȝt,
Wolg crounes of golþ preciouȝ of fiȝt.
A þîchaȝt he tok þat was nowt smal,
Wolg a kene coronal.
His æþere tok anoþer ðære,
Bi his louerd he gan hit bere.
Lo, swich auenture he gan bitiȝe:
Þe fone aþeine þe fader gan riȝte,
And noþer ne knew oþer no wiȝt.
Nou beginneþ þe fîrste fiȝt.
Sire Degarre tok his cours þare,
Aþen þis fader a þîchaȝt he bare.
To bere him doun he hadde imiȝt;
Riȝt in þe þîchaȝt he fett his dint.
Wolg þat þe maide him ȝaf, faun fail,
For whom he did raȝer batail.
A þîchaȝt he keft aboute his fwere,
Þat was of armes riȝte and dere,
5. The Seven Sages of Rome

For he made of me feruise
Tac me þi fone to loke and lore;
Of mi feruise kep I nammore;
And I þe wille ponke conne,
And al þe clergie þnder fone
Ich wille into his bodi diȝt,
Boþe bi dai and bi niȝt.”

Dioclician þe maiftres herde,
He þrok his herd and þchok his þzerde,
And on hem made milde chere
And spak þat hi alle miȝte ihere,
“Þonke I þou kan, gode lordingges,
Of þoure gentil anfwerungges
I kan þouþ þonke of þoure speche,
þat þe defere mi fone to teche,
þoure compaignie is faiȝt and gent,
Nel ich hit deparþe verraiȝment.”
He tok his fone bi þe hond anon,
An[þ] baþþte him to hem euerichon.
Þai vnderfenen him wiȝ cher bliȝe
And þonged him a þouvand þifte.
þe feuþe wiȝgh þet glorie,
þaȝ child ladde to conþiftorie,
þaȝ is a þrede wiȝinne Rome,
þer men makeþ wiȝe dome.
þif feuþe wiȝe men in boke
Here confeil þere togider toke
þaȝ he scholde nowt in Rome bilaue,
For burgeis, maiden, oþer knaue
Miȝte him in þom riȝt fette
þat al his lore he þcholde lette.
þer þai toke togideres alle
þai wolde make a riche halle
Wiȝouten Rome in on verger
A mile þennes bi o riuer –
Tiber hit hatte wiȝouten dout
A mile long al about.
Alle þre þerinne were,
þat ani frut an eþte bere.
Amideweard þai founden a space,
An euene and a grene place,
þerinne þai fet an halle anon
Boþe of lim and of fton.
Quaire hit was wiȝ chaumbres feuene,
Was non fairer into heuene.
þe halle was a midewerd
þe fairest of þis midelerd.
þerinne was paint of donet þre pars,
And eke alle þe feuen ars.
þe þirþe so was grammarie,
Mufike and astronome,
Geometrie and ars metrike
Reþtorike and ek fisiike.
þe fegh was in þe halle
þe ars to bihelde alle.
Whan o maifter him let anoþer him tok,
He was euer vpon his bok,
And to his lore tok grete kepe,
But whan he ete oþer he flepe.
þe þerþe þer, hit was no douȝt,
Wiȝ his maifter he gan to deþpout,
þe þifte þe[r] he gan argument
Of þe fterre and of þe firmament.
þei wolde proue in þe feste þer
þiþ he ware wiȝ and wer.
Leues þai tok fextene
Of juy þat were grene.
Vnder eþ stapel of his bed
þat he nisþe four þai hid.
þe child þede to bedde aniȝt
And ros arliche amorewen, apliȝt.
Hiþe maiftres him bifoþe tode,
Open heþ, wiȝouten hode.
þe child lokede here & tar,
Vþ and doun and eueri whar.
Hiþe maiftres aþke wat him was.
“Par þai,” he seide, “a ferli cas.
Oþer ich am of wiȝe dronke,

1 Here the manuscript reads “mutike.”
Ofere þe firmament is ifonne,
Ofere wexen\(^2\) is þe grounde
80 þe ðiknes of four leues rounde.
So muche to niȝt heyer I lai
Certes þanne ȝisterdai.”
þe maifres þo wel vnderfode
He coude inow of alle gode.
85 þe feuende ȝer fo Þok he on,
He passede hif maifres euerichon.
Togider þai made grete folas,
\(^{f.85va}\) Ac fone hem fil a ferli cas.

Dioclician þat was in Rome,
90 A riche man and wis of dome,
Hisse barons comen to him on a dai,
And, “Sire, par nostre fai,
3e libbeȝ an alenge lif;
3e scholde take a gentil wiþ.
95 þat ȝou miȝt som folas do,
And biȝeten children mo.
Inow ȝe habben of werldes won,
To make hem riche euerichon.”
þe mperoure was wel ipaied
100 Wȝȝ þat þe mperoure\(^3\) had seid,
Sone he let him puruai
An emperice of grete noblai.
He went him self and fent his fond
Widewhar into fele lond
105 Fort þat þai ani founde
A dammesele of grete mounde.
þai brouwte here tofore þe mperoure.
He fegh ßche was of feir colour,
He wot ßche was of hegs parage;
110 Anon þai alked þe mariage.
þai weren iwedded bi commûn dome
Anon in þe gife of Rome,
And louede hem þourge alle þing.
Herkneȝ nou a felli tiding.
115 Þing ihid ne þing iſtole,
Ne mai nowt longe be forhole.

Ne þing mai forhole he
But Godes owen priuete.
Som ȝquier or som feriant nice
120 Had iſtoled þemperice
Al of þemperoures fone,
Hou he wiȝ þe maifres won.
And hire schilde scolde be bastards
And he ßchal haue al þe wardes
125 Vnder heft and vnder hond
Of empeire and al þe lond.
Þan couþe ßche boþe qued an[d] god
And fone ßche gan to pekke mod,
And þoughte, fo þeþmoder dor
130 Into falfenesse [to] torne ßoþ
And brew swich a beuerage
\(^{f.85vb}\) þat scholde Florentin bicache.
Ac mani weneȝ ðer to herte
And on hem felue falteȝ al þe ßmerte.
135 þemperour and his wiþ
þat he louede als his lif
In chaumbre togidere þai ßete.
Gladliche þai dronke and ete;
“Sire,” ȝhe faid, “gentil emperour,
140 I þe loue wiȝ ßn amor
And þou nowt me Iike[r]li.
Sire, ȝh 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 haft fram [me] hedde.
Þou haft a fone to scolc ituȝt;
Lat me him se, warn me him nauȝt.
Hit is þi fone and þin air,
150 A wis child and a fair.
þi moſt time þou haft ben kyng
Þou draweft faſt to þin e[n]ding.
Fond we, fire, in joie liȝbe
And haue joie of oure sibbe.
155 For þi fone I tel mine
Alſe wel als tou doſt þine.
Parauenture hit mai falte so
Þat neuer eſt ne tit vs mo.
3if þou me loue st ani wiȝt

160 Let me of him han a siȝt."
“Certes, dame,” feide þemperour,
“Hit ne þchal nowt be long foïour.
Tomorewe ar vnder tide of ðai
þou fchal him fen, par ma fa.”

165 And þe feide wiȝ chere blithe,
“Graunt merci, ïre, a þouned4 fiȝthe.”
A morewe þemperour gan riȝe,
And cloȝed him in riche giȝe.
Mefflages he clepede [to]5

170 And quik þai com toforn him bo.
He ñhargaed hem wiȝ his mefflage
And bad hem grete þe feuen fage,
“And þe þæt hem, wiȝ words bonair,
Mi fone þat þai atte riȝe,

175 And brenge him hom in faire manere,
For ich wil quik of him here,
Hou he had ñped þis feue ȝer
Me þinkeȝ þat þer ne r er.”
Þe mefflages anon forht sproung

180 I not bi waie 3if þai fong
Til þai come to þat inne
Þer þe maiftres wooned inne.
And æf we fiinden wiȝen in bok,
Aiþer oþer be þe hond tok

185 And in þai wente riȝt euene
And founde þe maiftres alle feuene
Disputen in hire latyn
Wiȝ þat child Florentyn.
Þe mefflages on knes hem fette

190 And þe feuen wife þai grette
In þemperours bihelue,
And þe child be him felue,
And feide þat emperour het
His fone þat þai bringe him fket

195 To Rome toune to his prefens.
“3our trauail and 3oure defpens

He wil aquite for eche a þer
After þat þe worthi wer.”
Þe mefflagers were welcome,

200 And bi þe hond quik ynome
And at þe mete tales hem telde
What þe fonne gan to helde.
Hout wente þe maiftres feuene
And bihelden yp toward heuene.

205 Þai þeghe þe constillacioun
Þe wifte in þat so was Katoun;
He gan to loke in þe mone,
And seide þat him þoughte fone.
“Lordinges,” he faide, “for Godes fond,

210 To mi telliug vnderfond.
Þenperour to ous had fent
To brenge him his fone gent.
3if we him bring biforn our lord,
He ñterueȝ ate ferfte word

215 Þat he ñchal in court speke.
Þanne he wil of ous be wreke,
To drawe ous oþer to hongi fone,
Þis I ñe wel in þe mone.”
Þe oþer faide wiȝouten op

f.86ra Þat Catoun hem faide foht.
S child Florentin was lerid in boke
And in a ñer he gan to loke
Whiche þat fat next þe mone,
And faide þat him þoughte fone

225 Þat he wîst þourgh alle þing
Of þat ñerre þe tokynge.
Þanne faide þe maiftres to Florentin
“What fextoù, leue child, þarïn?”
He faide, “Maïfter, I ñchal wel liuen,

230 3if I mai, þis daiies feuen;
Kepe me fram anþwering,
I mai liue to god ending,
And faue me to warïoun
And you fram deftruccíoun.”

235 Þe maiftres han wel deviȝe
[þe] childes tale was god and wife.
Þan feide maïfter Bâncillas,
“He is now a ferli cas.

f.86rb
Counfel we al her vpon

240 Hou þat we mai beft don.”
Þan fāide þe fchild, “Saunȝ fail,
Ich ȝou ȝiȝt wil counfel
Þis feuen daies I nel nowt ſpeke
Nowt o word of mi mowht breke.

245 And ȝe beȝ maïftres gode and wife,
In al þis werld of meft prifé.
Litel ȝe conne, par ma fai,
But echon of 30 mai faue me a dai.
Þe aȝteden dai ich me felue

250 So þe ax pelt in þe helue
Þat fchal hewe þe wai atwo
Þat had wrouṭ me þis wo.”
Þan fāide maifter Bancillas,
“So God me helpe and feint Nicholas,
Þe fchal þe waρanti o dai.”
“And I,” quaþ Catoun, “par ma fai,
Schal þe waρant anoþer alfo.”
Alle þe maïfres ſpeken þo;
Þai wald [wiȝ] wit and refoun,

260 Saue þe child fram deſtrucciuon,
Fram ſchame and fram vilani.
“Maïfres,” he fāide, “graunt merci.
Certes, hiſt bihousȝ fo

f.86va For I fchal þo boli mochel wo

265 Gret deſpit and strong turment,
But þe be queinte of argument.”
Wiȝ þis word þai ben alle
Departed and conen to halle
And maked at efe þe meſſagers

270 Wiȝ god ſemblant and glade chers.
And whan hit com to time of niȝt,
To riche bed þai were idʒt,
And Florentin þe fchild alfo
To his bed he gan to go;

275 And þouȝt al niȝt her and tar,
Hou þat he miȝt be wiȝ and war
To overcome þe emperice
Þat he nere nowt iholden nice.
Þe niȝt paſſeȝ, þe dai comen is,

280 Þe ſeuen maïfres arifen iwis.

f.86vb Was wiȝ hem non oþer man.
Be his ſide ȝhe ſet hire faȝt,

285 Þai dede hem out of þat gardin,
Þat is icycle þe bois of feint Martin
And here way toke to Rome.
Þe maïfres here wai aȝen nome.
Tiding had ſemperour

290 His fone com wiȝ gret honour.
Anon he let a frede diȝt
"Rod him aȝen wiȝ mani a kiȝt;
When he him feȝȝs þan was he bliȝe
Kniest and erl and mani baroun
Kiste þe emperours foun
And ladde him wiȝ gret noblais
To ſemperour palais.
Þe emperice him wil honour,

300 Do him ſende into hire bour;
Scho ladde fram bour to bour
And dede here mene make retour.
Þe ſichette þe dore and ſet him on benche.
Wil ȝe nou ihere of wommannes wrenche?

305 Þe emperice was queinte in dede,
And [in] hire wrenche and in hire faſheid.
ȝhe and þe fchild alone wer þan,

310 On him ȝe che gan her egȝen kaſt
And faide, “Mi leue ſiȝe ſet hire faſt,
I haue icaſt to þe mi loue
Of al worthliȝt þing aboue.

315 þi louerd þe emperour is old,
Of kinde, of bodi he is cold.
I swere, bi fonne and bi mone,
Wiȝ me ne hadde he neuer to done.
But for ich herde telle of þi pris,

320 þat þou were hende, gentil, and wiȝ.
For to haue wiȝ þe acord,
Ich am iwedded to þi lord.
Kes me, lemmman, and loue me,
If ich lengere on him fee.”
“He ðicha abigge,” saide þemperour,
And cleped forht a tormentour.
3if God me helpe, for he hit wot,
To þe ich haue ikept mi maidenhood.”
365 Quik he het hif fone take,
þ spoli him of cloþes naeke,
þ beten him wþc scourges stronge,
þ afterward him hegge anhonge.
Here the manuscript reads “maindenhod.”
370 þ tok þe child swithe rathe,
And ladde him forht porkh þe halle
Among þerles and barons alle.
“Bleþeliche,” þe boyes quaþe,
O word nole he speken her to.
375 And asked anon of þis cas.
þai ðaide here lordes hefte hit was.
Anon þai ronnen into þe bour,
Biforn here lord þe emperour,
Euele þai gonnen him bisen,
And blamed him he dede þat dede,
380 Wþþouten counself þ rede,
þ bad him þat þilke forewe
Most be repit til amorewe,
“And þanne faue him of þer fen,
Bi confeil of þi gentil men.”
385 þe emperour þan þpared his fone,
þ het him caste in his prifone.
þe emperice was fol wþþ, 
þat þe child was þpared, for soht,
And wel mochel hit here traid,
390 Sche þought wel more þanne þe said.
An euen late þe emperour
Was browt to bedde wþþ honur
þe emperice his worhtli fere
To him cam wþþ lourand chere
395 And þe emperour asked why
f.87ra Wþþ me he hadde don his wille.
And but þe hadde þe raþer icome,
Par force he hadde7 me forht inome.
Wþþ me he hadde don his wille.
And but þe hadde þe raþer icome,
Par force he hadde7 me forht inome.
355 Lo hou he [h]ad me torent,
Mi bodi þ 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;
Binde him, þre, and lede han,
For wod of wit þichað be,
360 Binde him, þre, and lede han,
For wod of wit þichað be,

6 Here the manuscript reads “maindenhod.”
7 Here the manuscript reads “dhadde.”
Ne schalt tou neure fe þat dai
405  þat he fchal haue ani miȝt
    Me for to don vniȝt:"
    "Pais, fire, what halt hit heled
    Todai þo haft himfram deþ ifpeled,
    Afe wel mot hit like þe
410  Als dede þe pinnote tre
    Of his yepe þat he forht broutve:"
    þe emperour lai & more þougȝte
    þat bad hit wiȝ þemblaut fre
    Tellen him of þat ilche tre,
415  And of þe yepe 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 andþ of pirie,
    Foules fange 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 ðicench.
    Certes þerinne was al his plaiyng
430  In time of solas þ and his refting.
    So biefel vpon a dai,
    þe burgeis fram home tok his wai,
    He bouȝte marchaunyde þ his chaffare
    And bileued oute al a þare.
435  Alþo fone 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.
440  þanne feg þe weye a litel ñreyn,
    A song yepe vt of his rote;
445  þe burgeis cleped his gardiner.
    'Lo! he faide, 'lo, me her.
    Sette[ ]þou þis yepe of gret mounde?
    Canþ þou me telle, gode bounde,
    Whi hit is fo ðichort wering?'
450  '3a, fire,' he faide, 'be heuene–king,
    þe grete bouȝ þat ouer him is
    So him bifchadeweȝ, iwis,
    þat hit mai haue no þedom.'
    'Steȝe vp,' he faide, 'mi gode grom,
455  þak awai þe grete bouȝ,
    þat hit ne do min yepe no wouȝ.'
    þe gardiner, as his louerd het,
    Hew awai þe bouȝ al swet,
    And afked ȝif hit was wel ido.
460  Anoþer he bad him kit þerto,
    'þan mai, wiȝtounet lettiug,
    Min himpe iolifliche ñpring.'
    Nou ben hife bowes awaie ðichore,
    And mochel of his beauyte forlore.
465  þe yepe had roum and wexeȝ faȝt.
    þe olde tre his vertu gan acaȝt.
    For no wonder hit nis:
    Of þe maiȝter rote hit is
    Out ñpringe ȝout ðichet.
470  And his bowes awai iket,11
    þarfore þat olde tre les his pride,
    ȝ afcred bi þat o side.
    þe gode burgeis on a dai,
    His yepe þriuende he fai,
475  Fair iwoxe and fair ñprad,
    But þe olde tre was al abrad.
    He clepid his gardener þo
    And afked þe olde tre verd fo.
    He anwered, als he wel couȝe,
480  'Sikerliche, ich telle þe nouȝe,

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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.”
The text contains a mixture of Old and Middle English, with some Latin phrases. The text is a fragment from a larger work, possibly a medieval manuscript. The content includes references to the actions of men, gods, and nature, with a focus on the natural world and human behavior. The text is filled with poetic language and references to the divine and natural phenomena.
As fel vpon a gentil kniȝt
And of his graihond þat was fo wiȝt.”

565 “O maifter, for Godes mownde,
Hou bifel þe kniȝt of his graihonde?”
“Þer while, Þere, þat I tolde þis tale,
Þe fone miȝte þolie deþes bale;
Þanne were mi tale forlocre.

570 Ac offende þi fone þerfore,
And ȝif him reþpit of his bale,
f.88rb And þou ſÞcalt here a foul fair tale.”
Þemperour fãide, “Reþpit I graunt.
Þec him hider a serentaun.”

575 Quik ran þe meþlæger
Wiȝ god femblant and glade cher,
He louted his maifter þat com him bi,
As he was lad to þrifoun þi.

580 “Maiſter,” feide þemerour, “tel þis cas.”
“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 turne,
Of men þat were of gret noblai.
Þe kniȝt in þe mede hadde o maner,
Al biclofed wiȝ o riuer,
Of chaumbres and of heȝȝe halle
Of old werk, forcræfed alle.

590 Þe kniȝt hadde a fair leuedi,
A wel fair child þe þe hadde him bi.
Hit hadde of þre norices keping:
Þe ferfte þaf hit foukeþing,

595 þat oþer norice him ſþolde baþe
When hit was time late and raþe,
Þe þridde norice him ſþolde wafþe;
Þe child was keped tendre an[d] neþe;
Þe kniȝt hadde a graihond,
þ[er] nas no better in lond ifound.
Alle þe beþte 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 feþe,
And armed wel in ðren wede,
Þe ſÞchelde aboute hïf nekk þe þpere on hïf hond
And burdised wiȝ þe kniȝtes of þe lond.
Þe leuedi þtod in pointt tournis,

610 For to bihelde þe burdis.
Þe norice went out of þe halle,
þet þe cradel vnder þe walle.
Mani feþe þer ran and lep,
To hem men toke gode kep.

615 An Addre was noriþchëd in þe wale
f.88va And herde þe riding and þe noife al,
And pelt out here heued to þe þat wonder,
þeg þat þchild ligge þervnder.
He creþ to grounde quik anon,

620 In þe cradel þe child to ﬂon.
Þe graihond þeghȝ þe adder red,
Griflich, rough, strong, and qued.
Anon he gan hire to aƒail,
And hente here in his mowþ faun fail.

625 þe adder fo þe graihond ﬂang,
þe feled þe þite fo ﬂang.
Anon he let þe adder gon,
Vpon þe cradel ȝhe ﬂeȝʒ anon,
þ was aboute þe child to ﬂing,

630 þe greihood com þerne ﬂingging,
þe hente þe þadder in ﬂronȝger
þ flapped here al aboute his er.
Bitwene þe þadder and þe graihond
þe cradel turnd vp fo doun on ground.

635 Vp fo doun in hire feghyþing,
þat þe child lai diueling.
þe ſÞpeles hit vp held al quert,
þat þe child nas nowt iherþ.
þadder fo þe greihowan bot,

640 Bi þe fide, God hit wot.
He cried and on þe cradel lep,
þ bleþe þeron a wel greþ heþ.
þan þan þe ﬂmer þas al igon,
To þat addre he ſterte anon,

645 And bi þe bodi he him hent
And al to peces here torent.
He ðeghȝ ðe adder ðe greihound flówȝ, 690
He hadde flawen his greihond wiȝ wouȝ.
He cryde ð made mochel forewe, ‘Ne ðe ðat man neuere iborewe,
But in euel water adreint ðat euer leue wimmannes pleint.’
695 Eft he makeȝ a gret cri,
And he clepeȝ ðe leuedi,
ʒ on ðe kînȝtȝes and swines alȇo,
ʒ pleined him of his mochel wo,
ʒ fîchewed his child hol and found,
700 ʒ slawen was his gode greihond,
For his proueȝfe and his god dede,
Al for his fole wiues rede.
‘O greihound,’ he feide, ‘wîȝt and fîrȝong,
689va I schal mi fêlue abigge ðat wrong,
705 ʒ tache oþer kînȝtȝes saun faiȝ,
To leue here leuedis confeif.’
710 And wenȝe him forht al barfot,
Wisȝout leue of wif and child,
Into defert fram al men;
Wolde he neuer come aȝen.
715 He ðolede mani a biter founȝde
For ðe wrong of his greihonde.
720 Als to ðe greihound dede ðe kînȝtȝ.
Pourȝȝ ðe counfeil of his wiȝf
He ðloughȝ his greihond nowt geltif.”
“O maiȝter, bi Petȝr ðat ich haue founȝt,
So schal hit bifarle nowt.
725 Nou bi God ðat I schal fêrue Todai more ne schal he fêrue.”
Pe court wenȝe, ðe maiȝter tok leue,
Hit gan fône to wexen eue.
730 ðe meperour com to chambre anon,
 Pompeȝce him loured vpon.
“Temperour saide, “Dame, artou wro3?”
“3e, sire,” 3e saide, “for foht.”
“Tel me how, sweetin6 fre.”
“Pou woft wel, fo mot ich fe,)
For I ƃe warni of þine fon,
And ƅou ne kanft me þank non.
Þou clepeft þi fone, he is þe deuel,
He þichal þe do wel mochel iuel.
But ƅou me of him wîl awreke,
Al folk mot hit wite and speke.
He mot þe bringge to swich ending,
Als hadde þe bor for his cracheing.”
“Þe bor, dame, tel þat me,
Whi for cracheing deied he?”
“Sire now þou wilt wite þat cas,
Ich wille þe telle hou hit was.”
“Sire,” quéþ þe leueði, “here bi weft
Per was a fair riche forrest.
A bor was norischt þaranne,
Fram a pig to a swine.
Of þe bor was swich los
To gon þerinne ech man agros.
Ne dorf þer come kniȝt ne swine.
In þe forrest was a plein,
And in þe pleyn a tre of hawkes
þat ripe were be þo dawes.
Þe bor hem gan ful fone afmelle,
Ech [dai] he het þerof his felle.
In þat forrest wonden an herd,
Þat of befestes loked an[d] fterd.
O beþ his was arauȝt,
Widewar he hit hadde ifouȝt.
Be þe hawe tre he gan come
þ þouȝte to have þerof fome.
Ful he gaderede his barm,
ȝet ne þouȝt he of non harm.
In his þeþt lappe he gaderede fome,
Þe felle bor bicam to come.
Þe herde him feghȝ3 and was ofdrad,
He dorȝt nowt fle, he was fo mad.
Vp13 to þe hawe tre he feghȝ3,
Þe bor him com swiȝe neghȝ3.
And he ne fînde þaw nôn,
Af he was iowment to don.
He loked vp and fegȝ þe herd
He criede and makede rewli rerd.
He wette his tofȝches and his fet,
Þe erthe wiȝ his snowte he bet.
Þourh þe mouȝt þe fom was wȝȝt,
Þe tufȝches in þe tre he fimit.
Þe tre aresede af hit wold falle,
Þe herde was fori adrad wiȝalle.
And he gan fone on knes to falle.14
Þ[o] iseȝ3 þe herd man
Þat þe bor falle bigan,
He kêt þe bor doun hawes anowe
And com him self doun bi a bowe.
Wiȝ þe left hond he heng,
And wiȝ þe riȝt hond on þe bor he feng.
He clew þe bor on þe rigge,
And he bigan adoun to ligge.
He clewe him eft vpon þe wombe,
He fil adoun als a lombe.
He lek his egheyn and gan to flape,
Þe knif drouȝ þe herde knape.
Out he drouȝ fcharp an long,
Þe bor to þe herte he fong.
Þe herd15 þous wiȝ his long knif
Biraft þe bor of his lif.
He went him forþ and let him ligge.
Lo! fire emperour, I þe ﬁgge,
Þou art þe bor, þi maiȝer þe clawes,
Wiȝ fals reﬂoun and wikkede fawes,
And on þe he whettern his teȝ,
Til þai þe bringge to þi deȝ.

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.”
Here the manuscript reads "unkek."
890 Þo Ypocras\textsuperscript{24} wel he fond
Bi craft of þe childes hond,
Þat he couþe al his maistrie,
ȝ braft neþ for onde ȝ vie.
So bifel þpon a time [a] þing:\textsuperscript{25}

895 Of Hongrie þe riche king
Hadde swich a fone gent,
To Ypocras\textsuperscript{26} anon he sent,
Þat he fïcholde come his fone to hale,
And habbe gold ful a male.

900 Ypocras\textsuperscript{27} wende ne mïst
But cleped his neueu anonriþt,
And bad him wenden to þat lond,
And þat þchild take an hond.
And whan he hadde fo ido,

905 He fïcholde æþen comen him to
Þe þchild was fet on a palefray
And forht he tok þe riþte way.
And whan he com to þat lond
Þe king him tok bi þe hond

910 And ladde him to his fike childe –
Now Crist of heuene be ous milde.
Þe zonge man feþ þe childes peyne
þ tafted his ðenewe and his veyne,
He takþ an vrinal for to ðen.

915 He ne feþ nowt of þe kyng, but of þe quen.

And of þe child, God hit wite,
He feþ hit was amis biþete.
He gan þe leuedi afide drawe.
‘Dame,’ he faïde, ‘be aknawe

920 What man had biþete þis child?’
‘What,’ ȝe faïde, ‘artou wild?
Who fïchulde him biþete but þe kyng?’
‘Dame,’ he faïde, ‘þat is foht no þing.

925 ‘Let,’ ȝe faïde, ‘fwich wordes ben
Oþer I schal do bete þe fo
Þat þo schalt neuere ride ne go.’
‘Dame,’ he faïde, ‘bi fwich tale
Þi fone scha[l] neuere more ben hale.

930 Ac tel me, dame, al þe cas,
Hou þe child biþeten was.’
‘Belami,’ ȝe faïde, ‘fo.’
‘Par fai, dame,’ he faïde, ‘no,’
And fchok his heued vþon þe quen.

935 ‘Dame,’ he faïde, ‘þai þe wille me flen,
I ne mai do þi fone no bot,
But ȝif I wite þe foþe rot,
Of what man hit was biþete.’

940 ȝif mi conþeil were vnhele,
Ich were iflawe bi riþte fkele.’
‘Dame,’ he feïde, ‘fo mot ich þe,
I nelle neuere biwraie þe.’

945 ‘O meïter,’ ȝe feïde, ‘fo hit bifel,
Þis enderdai on Anueril,
Þerl of Nauerne com to þis þede,
Wel atired in riche wede,
Wiþ mi louerd for to plai,
And so he dede mani a dai.

950 þat ich erl I gan to loue
Al erthliche þing aboue,
And fo, par greþ druri,
I let þat erl ligge me bi,
And þous hit was on me biþete.

955 A, leue maïter, let no man wite.’
‘Nai, dame, for foþe, ȝwis,
But for he was biþeten amis,
Hit mot boke drink and ete
Contrarius drink, contrarius mete.’

960  Beues flech ȝ drinke Þe brok,
He ȝaf Þe child anon Þe rof,
Þe child warificht fair and wel.
Þe kyang ȝaf him mani a juel,
To Þe leche, of ñluer and goold,
Als mochel als he nime wold.
He wente hom wiȝ Þat eȝte.
And Þpocras 28 anonriȝt,

f.90va
He asked ȝif Þat Þe schild was found.
‘ȝe ñire,’ he saiȝe, ‘bi ñeint Simond.’

970  He asked, ‘What was his Medicine?’
‘Beȝ and boȝȝ gode a[nd] fiyn.’
‘What Þan was he an auetrol?’
Þou feȝȝt foȝȝt, ñire, be mi pol.’
Quȝ Ypocras, 29 ‘Þi ȝe gode dome,
Þou art biȝe al to wiȝ a grome.’
Þer he pouȝȝte, aȝen refoun,
To don him strong trefoun.
So bifel vpon a dai,
He and his nueu ȝede to plaȝ.

980  In a fair grene gardin,
Þerin wex mani an herbe fiyn.
On Þei feȝȝen in Þe grende,
Þat was an herbe of gret mounte.
He tok and ñechwiȝd hit Þpocras 30
And he feide a better þer was
For he wald his neweȝu bikeche.
Þe child ñouped eȝe ñich on to reche,
Þer while Þpocras 31 wiȝ a knifi
Binom Þat schild his sweete lif,
And let him birie ñikerlich,
Als he were ñتورeui ñodainlich.
And fone þerafter swithe zerne
He let alle hife bokes berne.
Ac God almȝiþi, heuene-kynɡ,

995  He ouerfeȝ alle ğing.
He ñent Þpocras 32 for his trefoun
Sone þerafter þe menefoun.
Wel wiȝt Þpocras 33 for his qued,
Þat he scholde fone be ded.

1000  For al þat heuer he mishete do
His menefoun miȝt nowt ñtaunche þo.
He let offende, moche and lute,
Hife neycebours him to viȝite,
And tolde al riȝt anon,

1005  Hou his deȝ wi[s] comen him on,
Wiȝ gret riȝt and nowt wiȝ wouȝ,
For his neweȝu þat he flowȝ.
An empiȝi tonne he let feȝt
And of wateryr of a pet

1010  He let hit ñifle to Þe mouȝe,
For he walde hife werkes were couȝe.
Þe trefoun he gan hem alle reherfe.

f.90vb
In a þouȝȝand stede he let þe tonne perece,
þȝ he hadde mad holes fo fele,

1015  In ech he pelt a dofele
And ñmerede þe holes al aboute,
And euerich doȝeil he braid ouȝt,
No drope of wateryr vi com þan,
Meruaille hadde mani a man.

1020  ‘Lo!’ he saiȝe, ‘wateryr hi can þop,
Þat hit ne mai nowt bi bores drop,
Ac I ne mai nowt þop mi menefoun
And þat is al for mi trefoun,
Wiȝ gret riȝt and nowt wiȝ wouȝ

1025  For mi neweȝu þat I flow.
Icȝ him flow þikerliche,
For he was wifer man þan iche.
Icȝ ne no man vnder fonne
Meȝ ziȝ help nou ne conne,

1030  But mi neweȝu alie ware.
Riȝt is þat ich hennes fære.’”
“Lo!,” saiȝe þe maȝfter, “hou Þpocras 34

28 Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”
29 Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”
30 Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”
31 Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”
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,
Mîst hit him ani þing profite?”
“Nai,” faide þemperour, “moche ne lîte.”
I biseke God omnipotent,
1040 Þat þif hou do þi fone to ded
And hife maistres, be þi wiues red,
Þat on þe falle swich a cas,
As dede on maister Ypocras.”
Þ e maister had fo ifped,
1045 Þemperour fone was his frend.
Þe maister was owai inome
Þemperour was to chaambique icome.
Þe he fond his empericce,
Wiȝ lourand chere and wiȝ nice,
1050 Hond wriqingging and loude koupe,
And here vifage al biwope.
“Dame,” he faide, “pluk vp þi cher,
Oþer tel me whi þou makest swich cher.”
“Sire,” þe faide, “hit is wonder non;
1055 Hi þe þi honur al igan.
I se þe wede waxe ouer þe corn,
Allas! allas! þat I was boren,
And þat I schal þis dai iþe,
Þat we schulle departed be.”
1060 “What, dame, is hit comen þerto
We scholle be departed fo?”
“þe, ﬁre, bi Adam þ bi Eue,
For þou nelt nowt me ileue
Of him þat þou clepefte þi fone.
1065 Certes he had þe deueles wone.
He þe procureþ niþt and dai,
Al þe schame þat he mai.
Þine barouns and þine gentil men,
Alle þai holden þe aþen.
1070 Þai schal wele fone for nithe an hete,
Put þe out of þi kinges fete,
And fette him frede inne þine;
þat ware mi deþ and mi pine.
Ich hadde leuere to ben anhonge,
1075 Þan þat I scholde lye fo longe.”
A! ou winmen conne hit make,
Whan þai wil an man lake.
“Ac, ﬁre, þij hit falle fo,
þat þempire is diþt him to,
1080 On þe falle swich a cas,
As dede on him, þat his heued was
Of his fone icaft in a gong,
Wiȝ felonie and wiȝ wrong.”
“O- dame, who miþt þat be
1085 Wolde do his fader swich vilte?
Tel hit me, for God aboue.”
“Lat be, ﬁre, for mi loue,
Þou ne loue nowt of mi telling,
Hit schal þe rewe bi heuene-kyng.”
1090 “þis, dame,” he faide, “lat here þe speke,
And ich wil þone þe awreke.
Sei on, dame.” Þ þeþe bigan
To tellen als a fals winman.
“A emperour was in þes toun,
1095 A riche man of gret renoun,
Octouien was his name,
Wide þprong his riche fame.
Gold and ﬁluer to wille he wan,
And more he hadde þan ani man.
1100 He made Creßent, þat riche tour,
Þerinne he pult his trefor.
Seue wife men þer were in Rome,
Pe 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 3iue and lef to spende;
And þat oþer lef to pinche,
Boþe he was scarfe and chinche.
1110 þ als we ﬁnden wrihen in boke,
Þemperour him tauþt his trefor to loke,
þ hit kept bi al his miþt,
35 Here the manuscript reads “Þpocras.”
36 Here the manuscript reads “þhe.”
Bohte bi daies an bi niȝt.
For þe wreche man, faun fail,
1115 Wende þe erthe ßcholde him fail.
Þe large wife wiste wel
Of þis trefor eche a del.
He faide to his fone, ‘Tab a pike, 
Toniȝt þou fchalt wiȝ me strike.’
1120 ‘Whider,’ feide his fone.
Þerof haue þou noȝting to done.
Aris fyn quik, and wiȝ me go, 
And do als tou felt me do.’
For[þ] hai went wiȝoute foiour, 
1125 To Crefent þat riche tour,
An hole þai bregen al wiȝ ginne, 
And bohte þai wented þerinne, 
Þ token trefor, I þou þwere, 
Als þe moche als þai miȝt bere, 
1130 And beren hom wel on haft, 
And maden hem large whiles hit laft.
Amorewe aros þat sinatour, 
And þithen tovbregen 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 aþen, 
For he þouwte wel þat hit left, 
Wolde come aþen efþ. 
1140 For þef of fieling wil nowt blinne, 
Til he honge bi þe chyne.
Niȝ cuene bi þe hole, 
Þer þe catel was ßfholde, 
Þe wife man dede make a dich 
1145 Ful of lim and of pich, 
Þat ȝif he aþen wald come, 
Þat þe tratþu ßcholde bi nome. 
ß.91va Þe ßtolen catel ßpended is, 
Þe wife bicomȝ ȝa fol, iwis.
He tok hiȝ fone, aþen he went 
To þat tour þat hiȝt Crefent.
An hole þay broken al bifitore, 
Þe fader lep in bifore, 
Into þe limed diche. 
1155 Loude he gan to crye and ßkriche, 
And faide, ‘Sone, com her þou nowt, 
For ich ham nomen and bicauȝt.’ 
‘Hou ßo, fader, ich wil fechche help.’ 
‘Nai, fone, mak þerof no ȝeȝp.
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 haftliche gird of min heued.’ 
1165 ‘Nai arft mi lif ßcholde me bi bireued, 
Ar ich mi fader ßcholde fle.’ 
‘Sikerliche, fone, hit mot fo be, 
Oþer ich and tou and alle mine 
Beȝ ifchen’ wiȝouten fine. 
1170 Bettere hit is þat ich on pasfe, 
Þan al mi ken, more and laȝfe. 
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 finne.’ 
His fader heued he fmoþ of þare, 
And awai wiȝ þim hit bare. 
Ac he ne wiste for non nede, 
Whar he miȝte hit beft ihede. 
1180 But als he com bi a gong 
Amidde þe þit he hit ßlong, 
And wenete hom and made wo, 
His brethren and his sufften alfo. 
Amorewe aros þat sinatour, 
1185 And feȝh tobroken his louerdes tour, 
And feȝ þer ftonde anȝ ȝeuedles man; 
Knowe him nowt he ne can. 
He lookd bifoer and bihinde, 
Knowleching ne couthe he finde. 
1190 He let him drawe out of þe þit, 
And his feth ȝafte ȝikan, 
Wiȝ traȝs an two ȝstronge hors, 

37 Here the manuscript reads “loueredes.”
38 Here the manuscript reads “and.”
39 In the manuscript “fet” has been written twice.
f.91vb And hete to Rome drawen his cors,

1195 He het him nime þat ðelche tide.
‘Quicliche breng him me biforn,  
For of þat kyn he was ibore.’
Pe heuedles bodi alfo ðekte
Was idrawe þourgh euéri ðrete.

1200 Fort he come æsen þe paleis
 þat aȝste þe ded burgeis.
þere was cri an[d] wail a wo,
Of þroþer and of ðutzer alfo.
þe fone þat wiste of al þat dede

1205 Stirþ him in þi greþ drede;
He braid out his knif on heghȝ
And fnot him felue þourshout þe þegȝ.
þe kinges seriaunt faþte hide
To nyme þat folk þat faþte cride.

1210 þai ðÞchewed iwondered here þroþer,
þai seide þai wepte for non oþer.
þai ðeghen alle þe wonden man,
And leued hem wel and went ȝoȝan.
Lo! þire, swich a foul wille,

1215 æsen refoun and riȝt ðkille;
Was nowt þe boi of wit bireued
When he tok his fader heued,
In a viȝ gone long hit inne?
þe mȝ[t] han don a better ginne,

1220 ßibiried hit over þrieliche.”
“Þou faȝt þop, dame, ðikerliche,  
An vnykke boi hit was.”
“3a, on þi heued falle þat cas!
þi fone, þe deuel him mote anhonge,

1225 But he caft þin heued in a gonege.”
“Dame, I ðchal ðeme me fram care,  
Certes tomorowe he ðchal forhþ farte.”
“Sire, I leue þe nowt, ðikerliche.”
“3is, dame, hardiliche.”

1230 “Graunt merci,” þhe faide, “þire gent,”
And kif him to acordement,  
And let here word swithe fone,  
And þede to bedde middone.  
Dioclician, þeperour,

1235 Amorewe wente out of his tour,
And let offende his gentil knaue,
No man ne moþt him faue,

f.92ra And het him lede forht ðikerlik40
And bidelle him alfo quik

1240 þat he neuer, for no þing,
Herde of him more tiding.
He was forht lad wiȝ boies felle.
þe burgeis and þe danmeisefle,
þai guine arere swich a cri,

1245 þat hit schillede into þe iki,
And faide, “Wailawai! whi wiȝ wronge
Schal þeperours fone ben anhonge?”
þan com ridende Lentilioun,
A wis maifter and a fair þayoun.

1250 þe childes þridde maifter hadde iben,
For reþe he ne miȝt him nowt ifen.
And þeperour wel fone he fond,
He gret him faire, ich vnderftond.
þeperour faide, “So God me ðede,

1255 Traiour, þe ðÞchal be quit þi mede.
For mi fones miflerning
3he ðÞchulle habbe euel ending.”
“O þire emperour of pris,
In dedes þou ðÞholdeft be war and wis.

1260 3if þou wilt þi fone ðÞchende,
Wiȝouten aften of barouns hende,
And doft vs qued for oure godnesfe,
On þe falle swich a deftreffe,
So dede on þe riche gome,

1265 þat wiȝ his wif was overcome.”
“O tel me, maifter, hou ani wiȝman
Miȝte bigile ani man?”
“Blêþeliche, þire, fo God me amende,
3if þou wilt þi fone offende,

1270 For 3if he were þerwiles iflawe,
For nowt I telde þe mi tale.”
þe riche emperour alfo ðket
His fone æsen fechehe he het.
þe child was don þe þrisoun in,

40 Here the manuscript reads “ðikerlik.”
1275 ¶e maifer his tale he gan agin.
Per was a burges in þis toun,
A riche man of gret renoun,
Dat wolde ñoue no neyhebours" child,
But wente fra hom af a moppe wild.
1280 He let his neyhebours child for o vice,
And wente fra hom hem als moppe and nice,
And browȝte hom a dammaiefele,
Was ful of vices wþithe fele,
He feghȝ hire fair and avenaunt,
For to habben hire to wiue
And euere more to riȝte liue.
He ñoued hire and ladde hire hom,
Hire forme lernman hire after com,
1290 Dat hire ferued mani a frounde,
When on flepe waþ þe [hus]bounde.
Þan was þe lawe in Rome toun,
Dat wheþer lord or garfoun,
Dat after corfû bi founde rominde.
1295 Faire men scholden hem nimen and binde
And kepen him til þe fonne vriþing,
And þan bifoþre þe folk32 him bring
And þourgh þe toun him villiche driue.
Þe burges aparfeiuð of his wiue
1300 Fele niȝtes was gon him fram,
And in þe dawying zæn þe cam.
He ñaide nowt wel longe while
But euer he fouched him of gile.
O niȝt he him afe dronke made
1305 And zede to bedde blithe and glade,
And lai frille als þe flepe fone.
Sch þal awai mididone
And wente to here lotebi,
And he hit aparfeiuð ñikerli,
1310 And went him out and fegh an[d] herd
Al togider hou sçhe misferd,
And wente him in out of þe strete
And fchet þe dore swiþe ñkte,
And spak out ate windowe
1315 And faiðe, 'Dame, God ȝiue þe howe,
Þis ñou ne miȝt forfake for non nede,
Iþ haue inorne þe in þis dede
Wij Þi lechour, wiþ him ñou go,
Of þe ne kep I neure mo.'
1320 'A, lat me in, fire, par amour,
Men fëchal fone ringle corfour.'
'Nai, dame, ich þe forfake,
In þi foli þou worfe itake.
Al þi ken fëchal witen and þen,
1325 What mefter womman ñou haueft iben.'
1330 'Drenche þi felue oþer anhonge,
For here ñou haueft liued to longe.'
3e tok vp a gret fton
And wente to þe welle anon,
An[d] faiðe after a wommannes wrenche,
1335 'Her now, fire, I fëchal me adrenche.'
3e let þe fton falle in þe welle
And ñterte vnder þe dore wel snelle.
þe feli man bigan to grede,
'Allas! Wat fëchal me to rede?'
1340 Anonriȝtes he wente him owt,
And foughhte his wif in þe welle about,
And swiþe loude he bigan to crie,
And þhe ñert in wel an hire,
And fïchitte þe dore swithe faþ,
1345 And he gan vp his heued caþt,
'What,' he faiðe, 'who is þare?'
'Ich,' þe faiðe "God ȝiue [þe] kare.
Is hit nou time, bi þi ñoute,
For to ben þous longe þeroute?'
1350 'A, dame,' he faiðe, 'ich was afïchreint,
Iþ wende þou haddeft ben adreint.
Lat me in, dame, par amour,
Men fïchal fone ringle corfour.'
'þe deuel honge me þanne bi þe toþ,
1355 þe waites fïcholle wel þe þoþ.
Here the manuscript reads “and.”

43 Here the manuscript reads “and.”
1435 He let offend him a leche.
In vrne he fegh he miȝte libbe,
He laide a plafre vnder his ribbe.
Barli brede he et for gode,
And barli water þat was iȝode,
1440 Til he hadde of his membres bote.
Øan faide þe leche, ‘Ar ȝe mote
Haue womman to pleie ariȝt
3if ȝe wil be hol, apliȝt.’
‘I ßchal wel,’ þe eloped his stiward,
1445 And he com als a leopard.
‘Lo me her, ûre, what wil ȝe?’
‘But a lemanent fech þou me,
þat I miȝt toniȝt wiȝ [hire] plai.’
‘I ne wot non, ûre, in þis contrai,
1450 þat be þi bodi ligge dar,
For þi los is boren so far,
þat þiȝne membres ben to swolle.’
’Bihote hem pans an handfolle.
Bihot twenti mark fom leuedi
1455 O niȝt for to ligge me bi.’
Þanne þout þat stiward coueitous,
‘Øat filuer ßchal bileue wiȝ ous.’

f.93rb To his wif he went anon
And faide fche moft on his arnede gon.
1460 ‘Bletheliche, ûre, ac whiderward?’
‘To þe king,’ faide þe stiward.
‘þou ßchal plai wiȝ him in derk,
And winne oys gode twenti mark.’
‘A, ûre,’ þe faide, ‘ﬂil!’
1465 Hit is foul man to liggen bi,
And þat wot euerich womman wel.’
‘þou ßchal, bi feint Michel.
Whio þat feluer winne nelle,
Lefe he mot wiȝ riȝt ﬂille.
1470 þou ßchal ouþ þe peniyes 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 ﬂil, riȝt and lawe,
1475 To do bi me as bi þin awe.’
To þe kinges chaumbre he went ægain,
And drof out boþe kiȝt and swayn,
Blewe out þe torches and let in his wif.
To þe king ßche wente bilif.
1480 þe fals stiward to bedde went,
þe king þe leuedi in armes hent.
What helpeȝ hit ani more feid?
þat niȝt he was ful wel apaid.
þe wrecche stiward ne miȝt nowt flape,
1485 Ac in þe morewening he gan v[p]rape.
To þe kingges chaumbre he went faun fail;
þe king þat niȝt hadde ben in travaile,
In trewe loue witouten arm,
And ﬂep in þe leuedis arm.
1490 þe stiward made moche forewe,
Til hit were half-waȝ midmorewe.
He held him selȝ mochet wreche,
þous þe kinges chaumbre he went a giȝt
þat leuedi wende awai.’
1495 Lat þat leuedi wende awai.’
þe king faide, ‘I ne haue no rape,
For me left ȝit ful wel flape,
Þ pleie twies and ones,
For to hele mine bones.’
1500 ‘Nai, ûre, hit is mi leuedi,
þat al niȝt haȝ laien þe bi.’
1505 Whi had þi wif bi me lain?’
‘Sire, for þe winn[i]ng of þi mone.’
‘Perfore,’ 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 “bi.”
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.”

298
Here, if God will.
I wil do bi, ȝif God wil.
Par fai, dame, ȝat is skim,
I wil do bi ȝe, ȝif God wil.

"Sire," ȝe faide, “wiȝouten fai,
Ȝou dof bi a god counfeil.”
Morewe cam, af ȝe mowe here,
Ȝeperour aros wiȝ foule chere,
Into his palais he wente ȝare.

And his barouns he fond ȝare.

His fone toward ȝe deȝe bringge.
Hit was ido wiȝouten letting;
Toward ûec he was ibrou.
Mani a man hit ofȝout.
Ȝourgh Rome ȝretes, wide and ëde,
ȝe ferth the maifter ȝer com riðe.
Malquidras was his name,
In his herte was no game.
His dciplic outed him to,
ȝe maiftres hert braft neȝ for wo.
He went into ȝe halle-ȝlet,
Ȝepeperour wel faire he gret.

"Merci, fire,” faide ȝe wife man.
"Sire what haue we ȝe miȝfelt?
Oure gode dede fchal ben iuel iȝelt.”
"Sire,” quam Ȝepeperour, “be min hed,
Worthy art to suffri ded,
For to ȝe and ȝine fere,
I bitok mi fone to lere,
For to han itauȝt him god,
ȝe he imade ȝiuel ȝi vnder.

Mi wif he wolde haue forlai;
Ȝepeper ȝe fichulle al dai.”
“O, fire emeperour of pris,
In dedes ȝou ficholdeȝt ben war and wis.
ȝif ȝou wile ȝi fone slo,
Wiȝouten afteȝt of99 barons mo,
And for oure godnesȝe do ys qued,
Swich a cas fal on ȝin heued,
As hadde ȝe olde wife of his wiue,
Er ȝou parte out of ȝis liue.”

“O maiȝter ȝat was wel ifaid,
Hou was ȝat olde man ȝitraid?”
“He was nowt bitraied, for he wis was.”
“A! leue maister, tel me ȝe cas.”
“Bleȝelige, wiȝouten ȝtrif,
So ȝou repȝite ȝi fones liȝf,
Til to morewe ȝat hit be dai,
Ȝan I ȝe fchal ȝe tale fai.”

48 Here the manuscript reads “til.”

49 Altered from “of.”

299
Temperour Dioclician

And into prisoun he was ihaft.

Whilom was a man old [\(\ddagger\)] wis
And hadde inow of worldes \(\ddagger\)ris.

In his 3[ou]e, in middel of his liue

He hadde iwedded two iolif wiues.

He liuede and bo[pe] hem ouerbod
And was longe in his wideuho.

He liuede so longe \(\ddagger\)at he hor was, and
And hadde of womman no folas.

His [feriau]nt3 ofte to him come,
And of alangenes him vndernome,
And \(\ddagger\)at [bad] him take a wif iolif,
To folace wiȝ his olde lif.

Bi\(^50\) her rede he tok a long womman,

Afe wone is of old man

Long womman for to [spoue]e
\(\ddagger\)anne be wraw and geloue.

Litel \(\ddagger\)ai mai do, wiȝouten gabbe,
\(\ddagger\)at longe womman wolde habbe.

Alfo ferde \(\ddagger\)at olde wife,

He dede his wif wel smal seruise.

\(\ddagger\)e zonge wif, \(\ddagger\)pon a dai,
Com to chirche, par ma fai,
\(\ddagger\)ond hire moder \(\ddagger\)are,

To tolde hire al of here kare.

\(\ddagger\)aide, ‘Moder, I \(\ddagger\)ole a cas:
Mi louerd dôp me no folas.
Ich mofte haue fom ô[er] loue.’

‘Nai, dowter, for God aboue.

Old men ben felle and queinte,
And wikkede wrenches conne ateinte.

Misdo nowt, doughter, but do bi rede.’

‘Lat ben, moder, for hit is nede.’

‘Doughter, \(\ddagger\)i louerd h\(\ddagger\)̂ o gardin,

1625 A wel fair ympe\(^52\) is \(\ddagger\)arín.

A fair herber hit ouer[spred]e,3
Al his folas \(\ddagger\)erinne he lede3.

Nou ne bere[̂]p hit lef non,
And whan \(\ddagger\)i louerd is out igo,

1630 Doughter, tak \(\ddagger\)i gardiner,

And lat it hewe to \(\ddagger\)e fer.

And 3[if] he fa[i] to \(\ddagger\)e ani refoun

Answere him wiȝ his echefoun:

1640 \(\ddagger\)e gode burgeis was hom icome,

And g[ɔ]p to his gar[di]n, af was his wone,
And fond his ympe\(^54\) vp ihewe

‘O,’ \(\ddagger\)ou3te he, ‘her was a ficherewe.’

3he faide fche dede hit for non arm,

1645 But for he f[\(\ddagger\)i]holde his bones warm.

He hit tok on iuel strong,

But he ne monede hit nowt long.

He wentte to bedde and tok folas,

\(\ddagger\)at niȝt neuer \(\ddagger\)e better hir nas.

1650 \(\ddagger\)e zonge wif anô[er] dai

To chirche tok \(\ddagger\)e riȝte wai,

And fond eft hire moder \(\ddagger\)are
And of bliffe fche was al bare,

For neîer be niȝt no be dai

1655 Hire louerd nolde wiȝ hire plai.

‘Ich mot louie,’ \(\ddagger\)e faide, ‘dame.’

‘O doughter, hit were gret ficherame,

3[if] \(\ddagger\)ou f[\(\ddagger\)i]holdeft \(\ddagger\)i gode kende

\(\ddagger\)ourgh dede of vilanie ficherende.

1660 For 3[if] \(\ddagger\)ou doʃt a folie,

\(\ddagger\)i louerd hit wile fone afpie

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\(^{50}\) The “i” in “Bi” 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 “hmpe.”

\(^{53}\) Here the manuscript reads “hmpe.”

\(^{54}\) Here the manuscript reads “hmpe.”
And he him wolde fellich awreke.
Herkne daughter what I schal speke:
A grai bichche þi louer[d] gi涅す louie

1665 Ouer alle oþer beftes aboue;
And whan þe fit bi þe glede
And þe bichche liȝs in þi grede,
Mak þe wroþ and draw þi knif
And binim þe bichche here li;

1670 And loke þou be þerafter queynt,
And were þe wiȝ a wiues pleint.’
Þe ȝonge faiðe hit ðeðolde be fo,
Hom ðiche gan hire wai to go.
Was hit nowt longe afterwar[d]

1675 þe ȝonge leuedi and hire lord
Sete an euen bi þe fer,
Biforen hem stod here ðquier.

f.94va þe hadde on a pilche of pris
And a chaïef ðeron, 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,
þe pilche and chieðel al biblyed.

1685 þe lord roþ and ȝede to bed.
For al hire wrenche and al here ginne,
þe more loue ðche ne miȝt awinne.
þe þridde time to scherche þeche went
And hire moder þer þeche fint

1690 And ðaide, ‘Dame, for al þi lore,
I finde loue neuer þe more.
Moder, ich mot louie algate.’
‘Doughter, ich rede þat þou lat.
Ac, tel me, daughter, for God aboue,

What man haftou ment to loue?’
‘Dame,’ þe ðaide, ‘þe þreft, bi ðkil.’
‘Nai, daughter, þis þif God wil,
While þou miȝt haue squier or kniȝt.’
‘Nai, moder, mi trewþe I pliȝt,

1700 I nelle come in no kniȝtes bedde,
He hit wile make wide ikedde,
And I þe faie, ðkerliche,
þe þreft I mai loue þriueliche.’

‘Nai, daughter, her a queinte ginne,
1705 þi louerdes loue hou þchal winne.
þi louerð þchal fone make a fett
Of riche men and honest.
þou þchal be bifaire þat ilke dai.
Hunge at þi gerdel mani a kai

1710 And fette þe haiëst ate bord,
In a chaier æzen þi lord.
þi kai in þe cloþ make þou fa[t,
After, fþirt vp an haft,
þai þou felle coppe oþer cloþ.

1715 Go þorþ and fþirþ nowt þerof.
And þan þou þchal fone ife
What þerof wil be.’
þe ȝonge wif to hire moder said,
‘Hit ðchal be don, bi Marie maid,

1720 And wite I þchal, moder, bi þan,
3if he wil plaie, þat olde man.’

f.94vb Wel fone þerafter, ðkerli,
þe olde kniȝt and þe leuedi,
A wel fa[r fe]te þai made þare,

1725 ð[þ] frendes þat hem leue ware.
Sire, what helpeþ hit longe tale?
þe wif serued of bred and ale,
And after þet hire advoun fone;
þe kai made moche to done,

1730 For þe feld boþe cloþ and cop,
Naþeþ þai ware gadered vp.
Swithe fœre þeche 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 louerdt let make a gret fere
And let offende a neygeber,
Ich vndeþtonde a god barbour,

1740 And fet his wif þorþ fote–hot
And hire miȝdedes hire atwot,
And faide he molte chafti hire ginne,
For iuel blod was hire wȝinne.
Hit moste be quik ilaten out,

1745 þat ðiche ne helde hire nowt fo frouit;
In the manuscript "me red" has been written twice.

1750  An[d] faide sce fácholde die alfo wifhe,
For ȝhe neuer lat blod in hire liue.
 Perthof ne þlod hym non owe,
 He rent hir fënok to þe elbowe
 And fîthen ðet hire on a fœl,
1755  For he ne wolde nowt fîche were a fol.
 And gan to fîmen hire on þe veyn
 And fîche bledde wîʒ gret meyn,
Grete diffîchfolles two.
 Als swithe here arm was ftraunched þo,
1760  He dede þat ofer arm forht drawe,
 Þan wende ðfÞøo wel to ben islawe
 And loûde fîche gan to wepe and crié,
‘Hit helpeþ þe nowt, be ðeinte Marie.’
 Þe barbour in þe veyne hire ðموت,
1765  Sche bledde wel til fîche was hot
f.95ra  þe þríde diffûcful νpriȝt;
 Anon þhe les colour and miȝt.
 þe louerd hit þegþþ and dede hire ftraunce,
 And in a bed he dede here launche,
1770  And faiðe, ‘Þries þou breddeþt wod,
 þerforþ þou bleddeþt þre diﬀîchfoul of blod,
 And ȝif þþou breddeþt wod ani more,
 ȝit it þîchal doubbe þi fore.’
 Sche wende to deþgþþe, fîche was aɡaft,
1775  And fent after here moder on haft.
 Hire moder com and fîche faiðe,
‘A, mercy, moder, for Mari maide.
 I þîchal deþgþþe, nou red me red.’
 ‘Doughter, what þîchal þat ȝifed?’
1780  þou moﬆ telle what is þis.’
 ‘Mi louerd me haþ neþ flawen, iwis.
 For mine þre vnwarft dede,
 þer diﬀîchfol of blod he let me bledde,
 Þat I ne mai liue, bi Godes ore.’

1785  ‘Doughter, left þe loue more?’
 ‘Nai, moder, bi God almîþt,
 I nelle neiþer louie clerke ne kniȝt.’
 ‘No, doughter, I feide ful wel,
 Þat olde men beþ queynyte and fel;
1790  þai connȝ more qued bijenche,
 Þan þou kanþt do wîʒ ani wrenche.
 Hold þe to þine hofebounde,
 And þou fîchal haue al þe mounde.”
 ‘Lo þere,” quad Malquidras,
1795  “Ne was þis a wonder cas?
 þries mîþde þis womanald bald,
 And þre vengances he hire ȝald.
 þerforþ fîche hadde elles idon,
 Þat had ben werft of euerciȝon.
1800  þe þrefþ hi kaf þe hire loue to,
 Þat noman miȝt haue vndø.
 So fareþ þe quen wîʒ hire refoun,
 Wîʒ hire leþings and fals trefoun
 þi fûne to þe þor to þorþing;
1805  Ac ȝif þþou leweþt hire leþing,
 Þan [ ]57 þe falle a werþe aprîfñe,
 Aþ dede þat þat elde wiȝe.”
 “Par fai, maisther, þat ware lawe,
 To dai ne þîchal he nowt be flawe.”

55 Here the manuscript reads “vreyn.”
56 In the manuscript “me red” has been written twice.
57 Something has been effaced here.
1825 Ac hit turned him to euel fin.
“Ma dame,” he faide, “tel þat me,
Of Sire Crefius, hou ended he?”
“Bleþeliche, ﬁre, fo mot ich þe,
So þat ȝe wil þe better be.
Uvirgil was whilom a clerk
þat coude of nigramancie werk.
He made a fair conjuring
Amideward Rome cheping,
þat no man quenchte ne mist
1835 Wiȝ no water, I þou pliȝt.
Alle ȝe 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 And þer biﬁde on a donioun
He keft a man of cler latoun,
And in his hond an arblæft heldand
And þerinne a quarel tafand,
And in his foreheued was writen wiȝ blac,
1845 Lettres þat ȝif word spak:
‘Þif me ﬁnte3 ani man,
I þîchete him anon ȝesan.’
So hit biﬁel on a dai
A lumbard com wiȝ gret noblai
1850 And seȝ þe merueile, faunȝ dout,
And faide to þe folk about
‘Wil þe þat I ﬁnte þis man
To loke what he do can?’
£.95va And þai faide, ‘3a,’ and he him ȝîmette
1855 þe ymage in þe ﬁr þîchette.
þ[le] ﬁr aqueinte for euere mo.
Sire, was þis wel ido?”
“Nai, dame,” he faide, “bi heuene-king,
þat was no riȝt wiȝ doing.”
1860 “No ﬁre,” þe faide, “wiȝouten fail;
Ac Virgil dede ȝit more meruail.
Vpon þe eft ȝate of þe toun
He made a man of ﬁn latoun
And in his hond [ ]60 of gold a bal.
1865 Vpon þe ȝate on þe weft wal
Virgil keft an þmage61 ofer,
Riȝt als hit were his own broþer,
þat al þe folk of Rome said.
Wiȝ þat bal togider þai plaid.
1870 þat on hit hente, þat ofer hit þrew,
Mani a man þe foþe ikenew.
Amideward þe cite on a ﬂage
Virgil made anoþer ymage,62
þat held a mirour in his hond,
1875 And ouerfegȝ al þat lond.
Who wolde pes, who wolde bataille
Quik he warned þe toun, faunȝ faile,
Aboute Rome feuen journys;
Þous he warned niȝt and dais,
1880 And þo þat were rebel ifounde,
þe Romains gadered hem in a ﬂounde.
Þai wente þider quik anon
And deþtruþe here fon.
þe kyng of Poile hadde gret enuie
1885 þat þe Romayns made swich maifrie
For he ne miȝte for non nede
Aȝen Rome in batail ﬁpede,
þat he ne was euer more biwraid,
Outeoomen, venkud and bitraid.
1890Upon a dai he þend his fond
After alle þe wife men of his lond,
And tolde hem alle his greuauance
And faide he wolde hegliche aauance
Who miȝt þat ymage63 ﬁl adoun,
1895 He wolde him ȝif his warifoun.
Twei clerkes, breþer, þat were in Rome
þat maiftri on honde þai nome,
£.95vb And þe king hem made feur
Of warifoun and gret honoure.

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58 Here the manuscript reads “o.”
59 Here the manuscript reads “þmage.”
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  Pâi dede þe king fille twoi forcers
Of riche gold ġ of cleris
And dede hit lade wiȝ þriuete
Into Rome þat riche cite.
Pât o forcer þai doluen nowt late
1905  In Rome ate ef ȝate
Vnder þe ymage\(^{64}\) þat þe bal held.
Pâs was a dede queintate and held.
Pât oþer forcer ful of gold
Pâi bidolu en in þe mold
1910  Vnder þe weft gate þat noman wift.
Pâs was a dede of queint lift.
Amorewen þai fîchewed hem in Rome
\(\gamma\) bïiforn Sire Creffus come
An[d] fîaid, ‘Al hail, þir emperour,
1915  It falleþ to þe tol of trefour.
We come to do þe vnderftonde
Of híd trefor in þi londe.
Þif þou wilt half parte wiȝ ous,
Þou fîchalt hit haue, Sire Creffus.’
Pëmperour fâide, ‘Þat I not,
Ich haue förlofn þat eueri groot,
\(\gamma\) þe ðorfe fрендes I graunt ȝou,
Pât ȝe mai finde wiȝ ȝoure vertu,
Þe haluendel in alle þingge.
1920  Pëmperour fâide, ‘Þat I not,
Ic hau þorlofn þat eueri grotn,
Þe ðorfe þrendes I graunt ȝou,
Pât ȝe mai fyn ì wiȝ þoure vertu,
Þe haluendel in alle þingge.
1925  Go we aboute þe findinge.’
‘Nai, certes,’ fâde þe elderer brôther,
‘Arft we mote don anôther,
Ich mot mete a sweuen toniȝt,
\(\gamma\) tomorrowen, what hit is liȝt,
Sîre, þou fîchalt haue þîne wille.’
Þou þai were þat niȝt þille.
S one amowre wiȝ good entent
Sîre Creffus to þe ef ȝate went.
Þe clerkes doluen in þe mold
1930  And fond a forcer ful of gold.
And ȝaf hit vp to þemperour
And he hit ðeng wiȝ gret honur.
Amorewe þe æonger fâide wyl euyn,
‘Sîre toniȝt me mette a sweuen

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1940  A richer fôrcer þan þat
We fîchulle finde ate weft ȝate.’
1945  A richer forcer þer þai founde
Ful of red gold ȝraue,
And vp to þemperour þai hit haue
Pëmperour\(^{65}\) held hem fo wife
In al þe world was hire pris.
1950  Þan 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.’
Þai þede to bedde and rîfen amorewe
1955  Pëmperour to mochel forewe.
Þan fâide þe eldere to þemperour,
‘Vnder þe ymage\(^{66}\) þa\(^d\) halt þe mirour
In al Poile ne Romanye
Ne is fo mochel treforie.
1960  Moste we delue þerwnder,
Þou fîcholdeft habbe gold a wonder.’
‘Nai,’ quaþ þemperour, ‘for Æȝte non
Þat ymage\(^{67}\) wolde ich mîldon.’
Þan fîeþe þe æonger to þemperour
1965  Þer is al Virgiles trefour.
We fîchulle þe ymage\(^{68}\) fo vnderfette
Þat we ne fîchal hit no þîng lette,
\(\gamma\) whan we han þe gold in þe grounde,
We fîcholle hit make afe we hit founde,
1970  For we þe þez mazouns quinte of caft.’
Þan fâide Creffus, ‘Goþt an haft.’
Þai bigonne hire werk ëaunȝ dout
And fette poftes al about,
And bigan to mini vnder.
1975  Herkneþ now a selkouȝ wonder.
Þai torent þton fram þton,

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\(^{65}\) Here the manuscript reads “Pëmpour.”
\(^{66}\) Here the manuscript reads “Þmage.”
\(^{67}\) Here the manuscript reads “Þmage.”
\(^{68}\) Here the manuscript reads “Þmage.”
Pe fondement tobrañ anon.
Al dai þai mined doun riȝt
Til hit come to þe riȝt.
1980 On þe morewe þai faide to Crefius stille,
‘Of gold þou þichal haue þi wille.’
Þemptour wente to his palais,
Clerkes alſo and mani burgeis,
Ech man wente to his inne,
1985 þe clerkes þoughte anoþer ginne.

f.96b Whanne ech man flepen, grete and Þmale,
þe clerkes to þe ðiage ðiale,
And bet a þir strong and ðterk.
þe þir fleghþ vp into þe werk,
1990 Þ falled þe ðiment and þe fton,
þe Þmage ouþþrew anon.
And þo þe clerkes þegþen þis,
Awai þai ðlown for Þote ðwis.
Morewe þemptour aros,
1995 Of þis dede him Þore aþros;
In his herte was kare and howe,
Awai he wolde han ðlowe.
þe Þmale and þe þopple of Rome
To þire Crefius þai nome Þone
2000 Þ tolde him for coueitife
He hadde iloren Romes prifé.
þai ladde þorþ in þat Þrounde
þ to a table Þat him bounde,
þ red gold quik þai melt
2005 þ nose and mouht ful þai helte
þ eren and eþen alfo,
þer whiles a drope wolde in go,
þ faide, ‘Sire, for Godef loue,
þou haft mad þral þat was aboue.
2010 Nuþ artou ful, nou make þe heit,
Nou wiltou nammore coueit.’
Nou is he ded wiþ moche fchame.”
“O, þou feeþ fob,” he faide, “dame.”
“3a, þire, for his leſingege
2015 þat he leued twaie falle gadelinges
He turned to wel iuel fin.

Sire, swich ðichal be ending þin.”
“Nai, dame,” he faide, “3iþ God wile.”
“3is, þire,” fche faide, “bi riȝt ðike,
2020 For þou leueþ wel flaterie,
þat þe maifters conne to þe lie,
J defire to make þin ai,
He þat ðichal þe schende vair,
For he is þe fendes chike,
2025 þer whiles he liueþ þou mai þike.”
“Dame, I þichal kepe me fram kare,
Riȝt tomowere þe ðichal forþ fære.”
“Sire,” fche faide, “bi feint Michel,
þanne doſt þou wiþliche and wel.”

f.96va Morewe com, af þe mowe here,
Þemptour aros wiþ wroþ chere,
And to his pales he gan wende,
Riȝt bifořen his barouns hende.
He let brenge forht his owen fone,
2035 And when he com out of þrifoun
Aþiwarde Rome toun,
þan com ridden maifter Catoun.
þe folk of Rome on him gan crie
And faide, “Catoun, þiþ þe maiftrie,
2040 Help þi diſciple in þis nede.”
Catoun liȝþ adoun of his ßede
And grette þemptour on his kne,
And vneþe he wold him fe;
He feide to him, “Maifter Catoun,
2045 þou haſt me don wel gret traſfoun
For to þe and þine fere
I bitok mi fone to lere.
Þe taugeþ him to nimen forþ min emperice.”
“Sire,” quaþ Catoun, “swich wordes beþ nice.”
2050 “iþ Þe fpeche is forlore.”
“Nai, þire, and he finde 3oure grace bifoře.
Þi wif wolde he forlain haue nowt,
3if þou hit leuęt, þou art bicouþt.
Ac 3iþ þou do þi fone dureſfe,
2055 On þe falle swich a deſtreſfe
And swich a maner vileynie,
As hadde þe burgeis for his pie.”
“O maifter,” he faide, “what, what?
I þe praien, tel me þat.”

2060 “Sire,” he saieth, “what helpeþ hit mi fawe, 3if þi fone þer whiles þeþ iflawe?
Ac let him feche che quik þ3ain
And I þe fîchal mi tale fain.”

þ e emperour of Rome, Dioclician,

2065 His fone he het feche anon.
Nou euerich man þat lon3 his hale,
Lestne wel Catones tale:
A burgeis was in Rome toun,
A riche man of gret renoun.

2070 Marchaunt he was of gret auoir
1 had a wif was queint and fair.
But feche was fikel vnder hir lok,
And hadde a parti of Èue smok.

£.96vb And manie ben 3it 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 þe þe lemmans kommen 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 ðeche71 couþe nowt lie.
So hit bifiþ vpon a dai,
þ[e] burgeis fram home tok his wai,
And wente aboute his marchaundise,
þe wif waited anon hire prife,
2090 And tente here copiner fore;
þ whanne he com to þe halle dore,
He ne dorffe nowt in he
For þe weying 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 igan,
þou comeft hider for no gode,
I fîchal you wraie bi þe rode.’

2100 þe wif þouȝt ðechent 3e was,
A wrenche 3he þouȝte nalelas,
And clegede a mai3e 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 ñchadde vpon þe pies swer.

2110 Wiȝ bacyn beting and kandel liȝt
þa[i] bobbed þe þe bi niȝt
And water on hir72 gan ðechenche –
þis was on of wommannes wrenche.
þo þe þai dawen gan,
2115 Away þaal þe þonge man.
Men vnleke dore and windowe,
þe þe hir73 fiȝchad þe pie þes swer.

£.97ra For ðeche 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 þe þaide, ‘Bi God almiȝt
þe copiner was her toniȝt
And hap idon þe moychel ñchame,
2125 Imad an hore of oure dame.
And 3it hit had ben toniȝt
Gret rain þ þonder briȝt.
Seþhen ich was brid in mi neȝt
I ne hadde neuere fo iuel rest.’

2130 þe wif þap þe tale iherd
And þouȝte wel to ben amered,
And þaide, ‘Sire þou haft outraige
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.”
 Toniȝt was þe weder fair and cler
2135 And þe firmament wel fair,
And þe faire hit ðaþ ben þonder.
Sche þaþ ilowe mani a wonder
But ich be awreke of here swiþe,
Ne þchal I neuer ben womman bliþe.’
þ e godeman askede his neþebours
Of þat niȝt and of þe ours
And þai faide þat al þat niȝt
Was þe weder cler and briȝt.
þe burgeis faide þe pie
2145 Ne þholde him nammore lie.
Nammo wordes he þar spak,
But alþo swiþe hir74 nekke tobrak.
And whanne he feȝþ his pie ded
For forewe coude he no red.
2150 He feȝþh hir [ ]75 and hir76 cage
He þouȝte of gile and of outrage.
He wente him out, þe ladder he feȝþ
And þoþ to þe halle rof he feȝþ,
þe pot wiȝ þe water he fond,
2155 þat he brak wiȝ his hond,
ȝ mani þer trecherie
þat was idon to his pie.
He wente him doun wiȝouten oþ
In his hertegrim and wroþ.
2160 And wiȝ a god þtast ful ßket
His wif ate dere he bet,
طو.97rb And bad hir go þat ilche dai
On alder twenti deuel wai.”
“Lo fire,” he faide, “for a folos red,
2165 þe þat faide foþt, was ded.
Hadde he taken god conseil
His pie hadde ben hol and hail.
And alþo fareȝ þin empereice
þourȝ here refoun þicherewed and nice.
2170 Sche goþ aboute, dai and niȝt,
þi fone to deþe for to diȝt.
And he be ded, verraignement.
Ne worþ þer non amendement.
Bi here rede ne do þou nout;
2175 ȝif þou do, þou art bicouȝt.
Al þe wyrld þe [þichal de]þiþe,
ȝif þou do bi here and lete þe wife.”
Anon þemperour faide þan,
“Catoun, bi him þat made man,
2180 Don ich wille after þi fawe,
Todai ne þichal he nowt be flawe.”
þe schild bileft in prifoun,
Vpon þis palefrai lep Catoun,
And hadde mani a bleþling,
2185 For his desciples deliuering.
þ e niȝt is comen, þe dai is gon,
þemperour wente to chaumbre anon.
His quen þanne ȝen him nam,
Wiȝ fe[m]blant afe a wroþ winman.
2190 “Dame,” he faide, “þluk vp þi cher,
Oþer tel me whi þou makeft swich cher?”
“Hit nis no wonder, fiere, bi heuene,
þe þichulle þifende þi maiftres feuene
þat makeȝ þe to loue þi fo,
2195 Forþi wille nou fram þe go.
Ac ȝif þou doft more bi hire leuing,
Falle on þe afe dede on Herowde þe king
þat les his fiȝt in wonder wife;
þerfore þou niȝt fore agrife.”
2200 “Dame,” he faide, “on ech manere,
þat ilche tale ich moſte here.”
“Bleþeliche, fiere, fo mot ich þe,
So þat ȝhe wolde þe better be.
An emperour was in Rome,
2205 þe richeþt man of Criþendome,
طو.97va Herowdes was his riȝte name,
Wide þiprongge his riche fame.
He hadde wiȝ him feuene wife,
Alþe han, of grete prife.
2210 Al þat þemperour dede or þow,
Bi here conseil al he hit wrouȝt.
So her was arered in þis toun,
Bi here rede and bi hire costom,
Dat who þat mette a ðweuen aniȝt,
2215 He scholde come amorewe, apliȝt,
And brenge a befaund to offring,
And of his ðweuen haue vndoin.
So longe þai vfed þis erroor
þai were richcher þan þemperour.
2220 So hit bifel vpon a dai,
Als he went vpon his plai,
þ when he com to Rome ȝate,
þ wolde wenden out þerate,
He bicam blind fo ȝton.
2225 His maiȝtres he offfeñe anon,
And alked whi he miȝt nowt fe,
When he scholde out of Rome te?
þai alked repȝit a fou’ren niȝt,
Bi þan þai trowede þat þai miȝt
2230 In hire bokes ﬁnde refoun
And answeren him wiȝ riȝt enchefoun.
Repȝit þai hadde of þemperour;
He wente him hom to his tour,
And þe maiȝtres hom went,
2235 And hire bokes went and trent,
Ac þai ne couȝhe nowt iﬁnde,
Whi þemperour was blinde.
þai fouȝte confeil fer þ neȝ, i
Afe man þat is queinte.
2240 So on a dai after þan,
þai mette wiȝ an hold man,
And tolde him al hire confeil,
And he answered saunȝ fail,
‘In al þe wryld nis man liuyniand
2245 þat couȝhe ȝou þat foþe ðind,
But ȝif hit ware child on,
þat neuer hadde fader non.
For he can telle ðopes alle,
þat ben don in bourse and halle.
\[f.97vb\]
3if ȝhe þat schild ﬁnde mowe
He schal ȝou telle, ich wille auowe.’
ȝe maiȝtres wolde no leng abide,
To ﬂeche þe schild þai gonne ride.
On a dai þai com þer Merlyn pleid,
2250 And on of his felawes him traid,
And he was wroþ, and maked a res,
And cleped him ﬀchrewes faderles,
And ﬀaide he was of þe ﬀendes kinde,
Hife felawes euer mîfdoine.
2255 ‘Dafeit haue ȝou,’ quȝ child Merlin,
‘Al to loude ȝou ðpak þi Latin.
Seue maiȝtres I fe her come,
þat han me fouȝt al fram Rome,
þai han wiȝ me mochel to done,
2260 Ich wil hem helpe swiȝe fone.’
Wiȝ þat com a man of þat lond,
And brouȝt a befaund in his hond,
To whom þat Merlyn ﬀaide þous:
‘Man, þou art ful merueilous,
2265 þou woldeȝt haue vndoing
Of þi tonȝtes meting.
For þi þou wolde þat o befaund offer;
Bere hit hom into þi cof fer,
And I ﬀchal telle and nowt ne lie,
2270 What þi meting signesﬁe.
þou metteȝt tonȝt in þi donghel
Sryng a water out of a wel,
þat was of swiȝe god fauour,
And feruende þe and þi neyȝeboyn.
2275 I wil þe faie þe sothe word,
Þe welle bitokneȝ ȝold hord.
Go delue anon in þi donghel,
þou ﬀchal t ﬁnde swiȝe snel.’
þanne he dalf þerinne anon,
2280 And fond of gold ful ȝod won.
He ȝaf þe maiȝtres of þe ȝold,
Afe moche afe þai nime wold
And alþo his neȝeboyn,
He made him riche of þat treȝour.
2285 But Merlyn ﬀaide, bi heuene-king,
He wolde þeroft no þing.
Þe maiȝtres out of touynone,
And laden Merlyn toward Rome,
2290 ȝe maiȝtres of touynone, nome
And afked him wiȝ milde mouȝe
2295 3if he þe sothe telle couȝhe
Whi þemperour miȝt nowt fe
Whanne he iſcholde out of Rome te.
‘3a,’ fæde Merlin, ‘fikerli,
Ich kan telle him ful wel whi.’

2300 Pe maiftres were glad of þis
And to Rome þai went wis.
Pe dai was comen þat hem was fet,
Anon wiʒ þemperour þai met
Þ faide, ‘Þe dai is comen of anfwering.’

2305 Quað Herowdes, ‘Þat is fof þing.’
Tel me haftilich and ßket
Þing þat ȝhe me bihet.’
‘Lo! ßire we han a ßchild ibrowt
Þat ßchal þe telle al þi þowt.

2310 Lo her, ßire, a litel page,
Þat ßchal fai þe þi corage.’
Quað þemperour of lime and lond,
‘Wil þe his tale take an hond?’
‘3a, on þat we haue or haue mowe,

2315 Pe childes tale we wil auowe.’
‘Tel me,’ he faide, ‘child Merlin.’
‘Sir,’ 79 lad me arſt to chaumber þin.’
Þemperour him ladde anon
Into his chaumber of lim and fton,

2320 And whanne þai were þerinne iſchet,
Merlin his tonge wiʒ wit whet,
And ßpak to þemperour,
Þou haft,’ he fai̇p, ‘her in þi bour
Fer vnder þi bed adoun,

2325 A gret boiland cauderoun
Wiʒ feuen walmes boiland;
Pe walmes han þe abland
And þer whiles þai boilland be
Sire, þou ne ßchalþt neuer iſe,

2330 And þif þai mai ben queint ariʒt,
Þou miʒt wel 80 haue þi þiʒt.’

77 Here the manuscript reads “anfwering.”
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.

2335 Þemperour had wonder of þis,
And let remue his bed,wis,
And tok ten men oþer twelue,

2340 And het hem in þe grounde delue.
Þai deden aþe here louerd hem het,
And doluen alle þere ful ßket.

2345 What bitokneʒ þis boilouns?’
‘Sire,’ do out þi folk ichon,
‘Þ ich wil þe telle swiþe anon.’
Þemperour anonriʒt
Drof out boȝe clerk and kniʒt.

2350 Þanne beginneʒ þe child Merlin
To telle þemperour swich Latin:
‘Sire,’ he faid, ‘bi God in heuen,
Þife boilouns þat boilen feuen,
Bitoken þine feuen wife,

2355 Þat han iwrowt æsen þe aſſife.
Þai han arrered cuftumes newe,
Þat þe mai wel fore rewe.
Be hit oþer clerk or kniʒt,
And him mete a sweueni anjiʒt,

2360 He comeʒ amorewe, ich vnderfonde,
An[d] brengεʒ a befauund in his honde
And to þe maiftres hire sweuene telle.
Þai hit vndo after her wille.
Þai respounde aſe hem likeʒ,

2365 Þous þai mani man biſwikeʒ.
And þor þat ilche fenne, I finde,
Þat þou art bicome blinde.’
‘Nou tel me child þin entent,
What mai me to amendement?’

2370 ‘Leue ßire, for mi loue,
Bi on of hem mi tale proue.
Leue ßire, takeʒ þempriζe,
And takeʒ þe eldeft of þe wife,
Lat fmita atwo his nekke bon,
2375 Pe grettest walm fchal quenche anon.’
Temperour dede be pe schildes lore,
pe eldest maister was slein herfore.
His heued was into pe caundroun caft,
pe grette walm quynte on haft.
2380 Do temperour wifte his,
He let fe alle feuene, iswis.

There is an extra space here between words where something may have been effaced.

f.98va
2385 And ouerfez al pe lond.
And fire, fo fare maisters pene,
Pai schul pe bringe to mochele pene.
Pai han fo iblent pe,
Pât thou miȝt nowt pât foȝe ife.
2390 Ac ȝif thou doift more bi here rede,
To swiche blendeȝe mote pai pe lede,
As hadde Herowdes pe king,
Pât was neȝ brouȝt [ ] 81 to iuel ending.”
“Nai, dame,” he faide, “þou miȝt me leue,
Hit was a kniȝt, a riche fíchereue,
2395 And he which wel was a kniȝt,
As hadde Herycouȝes [hir] his lif,
And fîche him bi vnderfonding,
Louede him wel in alle þing.
So on a dai him and his wif
2400 Pe to bigile an[ d] bitraie.”
Cokkes crewe and hit was daie.
Temperour aros anon,
And wente to hif halle of fton,
And ale temperour, verraiment,
2405 Hadde giuen his fone jegement,
Pe sexte maister com into þe halle,
þe hendeliche he grette hem alle,
And faide, “Sire, þou art wel nice,
To leue so mochele þin emperice.
2410 Whanne þou leuȝt hire fo,
Pât þou wilt þi fone flo,
Panne mot hit fo fare bi þe,
As bi a fíchereue of þis countre,
Pa[t] hirt his wif wiȝ a kniȝf
2415 In þe wombe; þe les hir lif.”
Quañ temperour, “In alle maner,
Pât ilche tale ich moȝte her.”
“Leue fire, what helpeȝ mi tale,
3if þi fone þolieȝ deþes bale?
2420 3if him todai longes retf,
Ich fchal þe telle a newe geȝt;
Swich a tale I þe telle can,
Ne fchalþou neuer leue winman.”
Temperour hete him let
2425 And his fone ægen fet.

f.98vb
2430 And [had a] jolif wif
Pât he louede [hir] has his lif,
And fîche him bi vnderfonding,
Louede him wel in alle þing.
So on a dai him and his wif
2435 Was iȝouen a newe kniȝf.
Fair hit was and of egge fîcharp,
And þai on gamen gonne carp.
Pê kniȝt his wif in þe wombe carf,
For doel þerof amowrewe starf.
2440 He dede gret foli, cert,
Or to tendre was his 82 hert.
Sone amowrewe erliche
He 83 was biwaked richeliche
Ĵ wil faire brouȝt on erthe
2445 After þat he 84 was werthe.
Pe leuedi faide for no wenne
Sche ne wolde neuer wende þenne
But as hir louerd for hir 85 daide
Sche wolde be ded an[ d] bi him laide.

81 There is an extra space here between words where something may have been effaced.
82 Here the manuscript reads “hir.”
83 Here the manuscript reads “3he.”
84 Here the manuscript reads “iche.”
85 Here the manuscript reads “him.”
Here frendes segen al þat cas
þ comen to hire to make solas
þ faiðen, Dame, gent and þre,
of þi selue haue pite,
for þou art fair and þong, faunȝ fail,

And maif þe weryl mocchel aual.
Some kniȝt þe wedde of noblai
And haue wȝ þim moche to þrai,
Gode children biȝeten and faire.
Gentil dame, debonaire,

Lete awai þi mourning,
þ tak þe to þom conforting.’
þat wil I do for no wele,
Ac die ich wille on his beriele.’
þhe faiðe, ‘Allas and wailawȝ!

Nel ich hennes neure go,
Ne confor[t] take neuer mo.’
Here frendes were fori þo,
A logȝ þai made vpon his graue,
For fiche wolde þer bilaue,

And maked hire 86 a ful fair fer,
And fond hire þat niȝt þrouer,
And left here alone,
And fiche made reuli mone.
þat ich dai þai were inoome,

þe þre þeues, bi commyn dome.
þe þre þeues were kniȝtes
þat were ihonged anonriȝtes,
For þai hadde þe countrc anuwed,
þ wȝ roberie destrewd,

Anhonged were alle þre.
A kniȝt of þe countrc held his þe
For to loke þe þre kniȝttes
Vpon þe galewes þre niȝttes.
He com to þe galewes armed wel

Boþe in iren and in ñel
For to make þe ferf niȝt ward;
þe weder was cold and froward.
He was forcold and lokede aboute,
And was war wȝouten doute

86 Here the manuscript reads “him.”
3e let here sorewe awai gon,
And faide, ‘Help, lewman, 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, faunȝ fallæ,
Hit ne mai nowt ben forhole,
Þai baren him forþ for him was støle.
2540 Þanne faide þe kniȝt to þe leuedi,
‘Who mai þis kniȝt hongi?
I þe feyge, bi heuene-king,
I nole him honge for no þing.
For þiþ ich hadde ihonged a kniȝt,
2545 I schol be coward icleped wiȝ riȝt.’
‘Sire,’ þe faide, ‘ich wil fol ßawe
Heghe him honge and ypdrawe.’
Þe leuedi dede in wode gere,
A rop aboute hire lordes swere,
2550 And drow him vp and heng him faþ;
Þe kniȝt of hire dedes was agaft,
And faide, ‘Dame, be gode mounde,
Þe stolen kniȝt hadde a wonde
In his heued þat was binkawe,
2555 Whar bi him knewe heghe and lowe.
And but þi louerd swich on haute,
I þe fai, fo God me faue,
Sone wiȝinne litel while
Worht iparciueid oure gile.’
2560 ‘Sire,’ þe faide, ‘tak þi swerd
Þ in þe heued ßmit mi louerd;
Þanne schal hit ben non vnderstonding,
But hit was he þat er þar hing.’
‘Nai, dame, for moche ne lite,
2565 Þe dede kniȝt wolde I nowt ßmite.’
‘No, fire,’ þe faide, ‘þi ßwerd me reche
And ich him schal, wiȝ min hond, reche
Hou godes grame com to toune,
Riȝt amideward his crowne.’
2570 Þe leuedi tok and fmostat wiȝ mayn,
Al amideward þe brayn.
Þanne þe kniȝt wel vnderstod,
Þat fals and fikel was hire blod,
And faide, ‘3it vnliche he87 beȝ.
2575 Broken were his fore teȝ.’
‘Sire,’ ße faide, ‘ßmit hem out.’
‘Nai, dame,’ he faide, ‘wiȝouten dout.’
‘Þan wil ich’ þe faide, and tok a fton
And fmostat hem out euerichon.
2580 Whan þis dede was ido,
Þe leuedi faide þe kniȝt to
‘Sire, now ich haue iwonne þi loue.’
‘Nai, dame,’ he faide, ‘bi God abowe,
For gold no stluer, lond ne house,
2585 Þi falle bodi ne wolde I ßpoue.
For alþe woldestou fere me,
Hafe þou haft don þi louerd fo fre.
Þou haft itawt me a newe ran,
Þat I schal neuer leue wiȝman.88
2590 For þere þai make ßemblant faireft,
Þai wil bigile þe alþerformeȜt.’
Sire and on þe falle swich a striȝf
Als dede þe ßchereue of his wif,
3if þou for þin emperice wild
2595 Wolle fe þin owen child.
Ac, fire, abid til anoȝer morewe,
On hire schal falle alle þe forewe.
And whanne þou hereft þi fone ßpeke,
Riȝtfulliche þou him awreke.”
2600 ßemperour faide, “So ich schal.”
And þannte departed þe curt al,
Some to castel, and some to tour,
ßepemperour wente to his bour.
ßepemperice made ßemblant ille,
2605 For ßche ne hadde nowt hire wille.
His owen men naȝelas,
Made wel god folas.
ßepemperour was browt abedde,
Wiȝ riche baudekines iþpréddy,
2610 ßepemperice him com to,
Als ßche was ar iwont to do,

87 Here the manuscript reads “þhe.”
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 feste?”
“Nai, dame,” he faide, “gent and fre,
2615  þe praie þanne telle hit me.”

“Sire,” ȝhe faide, “wiȝouten dout
Whilom was Rome bilayn about
Wiȝ feuene foudans bifet,
Wal and gate and caȝtelet,
2620  þe honur of Rome for to abate
And for to frwe feinte Petres fate,
þat is to feie, Criȝtendom to felle,
And Criȝten men to aquelle.
þe folk hem ful wel held,
2625  Wife of speche, of dede beld
‘To vij wiȝe men toke we þif toun,
To kep hit fram destrucþoun.’
Bi his rede hit was itake,
To ·vij· wiȝe men to biwake.
2630  A moneȝ þai kept hit,
Afþe we findeȝ in þe writ.
Whan hit com to þe moneȝ ende,
þai ne miȝt hit no lenger defende,
But afþ þai dide a fair queintifþe,
2635  Herkneȝ now in what wiȝe.
A man þer was, fo feiȝ þe rime,
þat hit Gemes in þat time.
He was on of þe feuene wiȝe,
þer he dede a fair queintifþe.
2640  He let him make a garnement,
Afþe blak aþe ani arnement,
And heng þerþon þquirel tail,
A þoufand and mo, wiȝouten fail.
A vifer þit he made more,
2645  Two faces bihinde þ two bifoþre// [end of f.99vb]
  þt vay nafet89

89 Scribe I’s catchword. The rest of the text is now lacking.
6. Floris and Blancheflour

f.100ra

I ne kan telle 3ou nowt
Hou richeliche þe fadel was wrout.
Þe arfouns were gold pur and fin, ·
Stories of vertu set þerin, ·

5
Bigon abouten wîȝ orfreis.
Þe quen was hende ȝ curteis;
Þe caft her hond to hire fingre
ȝ drouȝ þerof a riche ringe.

“Haue nou, fone, here þis ring;

10
While þou hit haft, doute þe no þing,
Ne þir þe brenne, ne drenchen in þe,
Ne iren ne þiel ßchal derie þe;
ȝ be hit erli and be hit late,
To þi wille þou ßchalte haue whate.”

15
Weeping þai departed nouȝe,
ȝ kîfte hem wîȝ softe moȝe.
Þai made for him non oþer chere
Þan þai feȝe him ligghe on bere.

10
Himself and his chamberlain.
So longe þai han vndernome,
To þe hauene þai beȝ icome
þer Blançheflour lai anȝȝt.
Richeliche þai were idȝȝt;

25
Þe louerd of þe hous was wel hende,
Þe child he fette next his hende
In þe alþref ßaireft ßete;
Gladsliche þai dronke ȝ ete.
Al þat þerinne were,

30
Al þai made glade chere,
And ete and dronke echon wîȝ oþer,
Ac Florice þouȝte al anoþer;
Ete ne drinke miȝte he nouȝt,
On Blançheflour was al his þouȝt.

35
Þe leuedi of þe hous vnderȝȝt
Hou þis child mour[n]ing Þat,
ȝ feide here louerd wîȝ ßille dreme,
“Sire,” ȝe ßaide, “nimȝtou no ȝeȝe
Hou þis child mourning Þat?

40
Mete and drink he forȝȝt.

Litel he eteȝ and laȝe he drinkeȝ;
He nis no marchaunt af me þinkeȝ.”

f.100rb

Þous ðat herinne þis enderdai
Blançheflour þat faire mai.
Herinne was þat maiden bowȝt,
And ouer þe þe ȝhe was ibrowȝt;
Herinne þai bouȝte þat maden swete,

50
ȝ wille here eft ßelle to bïȝete.
To Babiloyne þai wille hire bring
ȝ ßelle hire to kaiȝer oþer to king.
Þou art ilich here of alle þinge,
Of semblant ȝ of mourning,

55
But þou art a man ȝhe is a maide.”
Þous þe wif to Florice ßaide.

Þo Florice herde his leßman neuene,
So bliȝe he was of þat freyneu
Þat his herte bigan al liȝt.

60
A coupȝ of gold he let fullȝ riȝt.
“Dame,” he ßaide, “þis hail is þin,
Boȝe þe gold and þe win,
Boȝe þe gold and þe win eke,
For þou of mi leßman þpeke;

65
On hir I þout, for here I liȝt,
And wïf þich wher hire fiȝde miȝt,
Ne þcholde no weder me afloine
Þat I ne ßchal here feche at Babiloiȝe.”

Þ Florice reft him þere al niȝt.

70
Amorewe whanne hit was dai-liȝt
He dide him in þe falte ßlod;
Wind and weder he hadde ful god.
To þe mariners he saȝ larigeliche
Þat brouȝten him ouer bleȝeliche

75
To þe londe þar he wold lende,
For þai founden him fo hende.
Sone fo Florice com to londe –
Wel þerne he þauȝde Godes ðonde –
To þe lond þer his leßman is,

80
Him þouȝte he was in Paradis.
Wel fone men Florice tidigges told,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) De ameral wolde fefte hold,
And kinges an[d] dukes to him come fcholde,
Al \( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) of him holde wolde,
85 For to honure his heȝhe fefte
And alfo for to heren his heste.
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Do Florice herde his tiding,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pan gan him glade in alle þing,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) And in his herte þouȝte he
90 \( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pat he wolde at þat feste be,
For wel he hopede in þe halle
His leman fen among hem alle.
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) So longe Florice haf vndernome,
To a faire cite he is icome;
95 Wel faire men haf his in inome,
Afe men fcholde to a kinges fone,
At a palais, was non him iliche.
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pe louerd of þe hous was wel riche,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) God inow him com to honde
100 Boȝe bi water and be londe.
Florice ne sparede for no fe
Inow þat þere ne fcholde be
Of filíc, of fleſfic, of tendon brede,
Boȝe of whit win and of red,
105 Pe louerd hadde ben wel wide;
Pe child he fette bi his fide
In þe alþerferiſte fethe.
Gladliche þai dronke þe ete,
Ac Florice et an[d] drank riȝt nowt\(^1\)
110 On Blauncheflour was al hi[s] ðouȝt.
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pan biȝpak þe bourgeis
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pat hende was, fre and curteys,
"Child, me þinkkeȝ swithe wel
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) þouȝt is mochel on þi catel."
115 "Nai, on mi catel is hit nowt,
On oþe[r] þink is al my þouȝt.
Mi þouȝt is on alle wife
Mochel on mi marchaudife,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) ȝit þat is mi mefte wo
120 ȝif ich hit finde and fchal forgo."
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Panne þpak þe louerd of þat inne,
"Pous þat þis ofer dai herinne
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pat faire maide Blaunccheflour.
Boȝe in halle and ek in bour
125 Euere ȝhe made mourning chere,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Þ biment Florice here leue fere;
Joie ne biffle 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.
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) "Child, to Babiloyne ȝhe his ibrouȝt,
135 And ȝe ameral hire had ibrouȝt.
He ȝaf for hire afe ȝhe frod vpriȝt
Seuen fiȝthes of gold here\(^3\) wiȝt;
For hire faired\(^4\) and for hire ßchere
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pe ameral hire bousȝte fo dere,
140 For he þenkeȝ, wiȝouten wene,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pat faire mai to hauen to quene.
Amang ofer maidenes in his tour
He haf hire ido wiȝ mochel honur."
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Nou Florice reſt him þere al niȝt.
145 On morewe whan hit was dai-liȝt
He aros vp in þe moreweninge,
And ȝaf his hoſte an honred schillinge,
To his hoſte and to hes hoſteſſe,
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Nam h[il]s leue and gan hem keſſe.
150 And ȝerne he haf his ofteſſe biſouȝt
\( \text{\textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright \textcopyright} \) Pat ȝhe him helpe ȝif ȝhe mousȝt,
Hou he miȝte wiȝ ſum giſſe
\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{1 Here the manuscript reads “riȝ trowt.”}
\footnote{2 Here the manuscript reads “ȝhe.”}
\footnote{3 Here the manuscript reads “here gol of.”}
\footnote{4 In the manuscript “hire faired” has been written twice.}
\end{footnotes}
Ye faire maiden to him awinne.

¶ “Child, to one brigge þou þe[ll]t come,
A burgis þou þindeft ate frome;
His paleis is ate brigges ende.
Curteis man he his and hendre.
We þe wed-byþren and trewþe-iþîȝt.
He þe can wiþen þ reden ariȝt.

165 Þou f[h]alt beren him a ring
Fram miþelue to tokning,
Þat he þe helpe in eche helue
So hit were bifalle miþelue.”
Florence tok þe ring and nam his leue,

170 For þere no leng wolde he bileue.
Bi þat hit was vndren heghþ3
þe brigge he was þwþe negþ3.
When he was to þe brigge icome,
þe burges he fond ate frome,

175 Stonde[n]d on a marbel fton;
¶ Fair man and hendre he was on.

f.101ra þe burgesis was ihote Da[þ]ye,
Florence him grette swiþe faire,
And haþ him þe ring irawt

180 And wel faire him bitawt,
þourgh tokning of þat ilke ring
Florence hadde þer god gefþning
Of fischþ, of fleþcht, of tendre bred,
Boþe of whit win and of red.

185 Ac euere Florence þȝste ful cold,
And Darys gan him biþo[þ]d.
“Leue child, what mai þe be,
þous carfoul aþe I þe fe?
¶ I wene þou nart nowt al þer,

190 þat þo makeþ þous doelful cher,
Oþer þe likeþ nowt þin in.”
Nou Florence anþwered him,
“þis, þre, bi Godes hore,
So god I ne hadde þore,

195 God late me bide þilke dai
þat ich þe þeleþ mai,

Ac I þenke, in alle wife,
Vpon min owen marchaundifte
Wherfore ich am hider come,

200 Left I ne finde hit nowt ate frome;
And þit is þat mi mefte wo,
3if ich hit finde and þéal forgo.”
¶ “Child, woldef 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 þone,
And for hir loue þider icome
For to fonde þiþ som ginne

210 þat faire maide to biwinne.
Daris now þat child bhialt,
And for a fol he him halt.
“Child,” he feþ þe hou goþ3,
Iwis þou zerneþ þin owen deþ.

215 ¶ þamerlal haþ to his iustening
Oþer half hundred of riche king;
þat æþérərhcheft kynge
Ne dorste biginne swich a þing,
For miþte þamerel hit vnderȝete,

220 Sone þou were of liue quite.

f.101rb Abouten Babiloine, wiȝouten wene
[Dureþ] Sexti longe milen and tene;
And are wolle þar þeþ ate
Seuen þeþe twenti þate.

225 Twenti tourþ þer þeþe inne
þat euerich daþ cheeping is inne;
Nis no daþ þourgh þe þeþe
þat cheeping niþ þeþe[þ]inne plener.
An hundred toures alþo þerto

230 þeþe in þe borewe and fomdel mo;
þat æþéræ[t] feþleft tour
Wolde keþe an emperour
To comen al þer wþinne,
Noþeþe wiþ strengþe ne wiþe ginne.

235 ¶ And þei alle þe men þat þeþ ibore

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5 Here the manuscript reads “renden.”
6 Here the manuscript reads “his.”
7 Here the manuscript reads “æþéræ[t]cheft.”
8 Here the manuscript reads “þamerlal.”
Adden hit vp here deth iswhore, 
Pai scholde winne þe mai sofone
As fram þe heuene heȝ þe fonne þy mone.
And in þe bourh, amide þe riȝt

Per start a riche tour, \[I\] þe aplit3.
A soufâng taiȝen he his heȝe,  
Wo-ȝo ìt bi[h]alt wît fir þȝ neȝzene;
And an hondres taiȝe he is wid,
And imaked wiȝ mochel prid

Of lim and of marbel fçon;
In Crîstienete nís fwich non.
þȝ þe morter is maked so wel,
Ne mai no man hit breke wiȝ no fteł;
And þe pomel aboue þe led

Is iwroit wiȝ so moche red
Þat men ne þorfen 11 anȝȝt berne
Neiȝer torche ne lanterne.
Swich a pomel was neuer bigonne,
Hit fchineȝ anȝȝt ðo adai dop þȝ fonne.

255 Nou beȝ þer inne þat riche toure
Four and twenty maidenes boure;
So wel were þat ilke man
Þat miȝȝte wonen in þat an,
Now þourt him neuere, ful iwis,

Willen after more blîffe.
Nou beȝ þe feriants in þe fitage
To feruen þe maidenes of þarage,
Ne mai no feriȝant be þerinne
Þat in his brech bereȝ þet ginne,

f.101va Neiȝer bi dai ne bi niȝt,
But he be afe capoun diȝt.

And at þe gate is a gateward;
He nis no fol ne no coward.
3if þe[r] comeȝ anì man

270 Wiȝinne þat ilche barbican,
But hit be bi his leue,
He wille him boȝe bete and reue.
Þe porter is proud wiȝalle;

Euerich dai he goȝ in palle
275 And þe ameral is so wonder a gome
Þat euerich þer hit is his won
To chesên him a newe wiȝ2

And when he a newe wîf vnderfo,
He knawȝeȝ hou hit fchal be do.

280 Þanne scholle men fechche douȝ of þe ftaȝe
Alle þe maidenes of þarage,
An[d] brengȝ hem into on orchard,
Þe faiȝȝt of all middelhard;
Þer is foulen fong;

285 Men miȝȝte lىbhen þer amonȝ.
Aboute þe orchard goȝ a wal,
Þe wersfte fçon is criȝtal.
Þer man mai fën on þe fçon
Mochel of þis werldes wiȝdom.

290 Þ a welle þer ìpringeȝ inne
Þat is wroȝt wiȝ mochel ginne.
Þe welle is of mochel pris;
Þe frem com fram Paradis,
Þe grauel in þe gronude of þreciouȝe fcone,

295 Þ of vertu, iwif, echone;
Of fàphires and of fardoynes,
Of oneches and of càlidoynes,
Nou is þe waie of so mochel eye,
3if þe[r] comeȝ ani maiden þat is forleie,

300 Þ hi bowe to þe gronude
For to wafchen here honde,
Þe water wille ȝelle als hit ware wod
And bicom on hire so red so blod.

Þ Wich maiden þe water ñareȝ on ão,

305 Hi fchal fone be fordo,
And þiȝke þat beȝ maidenes clene,
Þai mai hem wafche of þe rene;
Þe water wille erne stîlle and cler,

f.101vb Nelle hit hem make no daunger.

310 At þe welle-heued þer ftaȝt a tre,
Þe faiȝȝt þat mai in erthe be.

9 Here the manuscript reads “fene.”
10 Here the manuscript reads “a tour.”
11 Here the manuscript reads “tforren.”
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 “þ.”
Hit is ileped þe tre of loue,
For floures and blofmes þeþ euer aboue;
And þilke þat clene maidenes be,
315
Men schal hem bringe vnder þat tre,
And wichþo falle þon þat [þerste] flour,
Hi schal ben chofen quen wiz honour;
Γ zif þer ani maiden is
þat þameral hale of mest pris,
320 þe flour schal on here be went
þourh art and þourgh enchantement.
þous he chaſch þourþ þe flour
γ euere we herkenþ3 when hit be
Blanecheflour.
þre þites Florice swouned nouþe
325 Er he miȝte ſpeke wiz mouþe.
Sone he awok and ſpeke miȝt,  
Sore he wep and fore he ﬁȝt.
“Darrie,” 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 beþe red þat I can –
Oþer red I ne can –
Wende tomowre to þe tour
335 Afe þou were a god ginour,
And nim in þin hond ﬁquir and scantiloun
Als þai þou were a mafoun;
Bihold þe tour vp and doun.
þe porter is coluard and feloun;
340 Wel fone he wil come to þe
And akle what mifter man þou be
γ ber vpon þe felonie,
γ faie þou art komen þe tour aþpie.
¶ þou schalt anweren him sweþelich
345 γ ſpeke to him wel mi[l]delich,
γ fai þou art a ginour
To beheld þat iche tour
γ for to lerne and for to fonde
To make anþer in þi londe.
350 Wel fone he wil com þe ner
And bidde þe plaen at þe ßcoker;
To plaen he wil be wel fous
f.102ra And to winnen of þin wel coueitous.
When þou art to þe ßcoker brouȝt,
355 Wiȝouten pans ne pla þou nowt;
¶ þou schalt haue redi mitte
þritt mark vnder þi ﬂitte.
And zif he winne ouȝt al þin,
Al leue þou hit wiz him,
360 γ zif þou winne ouȝt of his,
þou lete þerof ful litel pris,
Wel þerne he wille þe bidde γ praiue
þat þou come amorewe and plaie;
þou schalt ﬁgge þou wilt so,
365 γ nim wiz þe amorewe swich two;
γ euer þou schalt in þin owen wolde
Þi gode cop wiz þe aþhilde,
þat ilke felf coppe of golde
þat was for Blanecheflour iȝolde.
370 ¶ þe þridde dai bere wiz þe an honord14 pond
And þi coppe al holi and fonde.
Þif him markes and pans fale,
Of þi mone tel þou no tal.
Wel þerne he þe wille bidde and praiue
375 þat þou legge þi coupe to plaie.
þou schalt anweren him ate ﬁrft,
No lenger plaie þou ne lift.
Wel moche he wil for þi coupe bede,
Þif he miȝte þe better ﬂede.
380 þou schalt bleþelich ȝiuen hit him,
Þai hit be gold pur and ﬁn,
γ fai, ‘Me þinkeȝ3 hit wel biﬁȝmeȝ3 te,
Þai hit were worȝ swiche þre;’
¶ Sai alþo þe ne faille non
385 Gold ne feluer ne riche won.
And he wil þanne ȝo mochel loue þe
þat þou hit schalt boþe ihere and þee
þat he wil falle to þi þot
γ become þi man, þif he mot.
390 His manred þou schalt aſonge
And þe trewþe of his honde.
Þif þou miȝt þous his loue winne,

14 Here “hondred” has been altered from “dondred.”
He mai þe help wiþ fom ginne."

"Nou,\quad" Quæ Florice "þou art mi man,
γ al mi tref is þe ypan.

400\quad"Nou þou miþt wel eþe
Arede me fram þe deþe."

γ euerich word he haþ him told
Hou Blancheflour was fram him fold,
γ hou he was of Spaine a kynges fone,

405\quad"γ for hire loue hider icome
To fonde wiþ fom ginne
þe maiden ægen to him winne.

410\quad"þe porter þat herde þy före ÿȝste,
"Iþ am bitraied þourȝ riȝte;

415\quad"þourȝ þi catel ic am bitraid,
And of mi lif ic am defmaid;
Nou ic wol, child, hou hit geþ,
For þe ic drede to þolie deþ,
þ naþeþe ic ne schal þe neuere faile mo,

420\quad"þer whiles I mai ride or go;
Þi foreward ich wil helden alle,
What-þo wille bitide or falle.
Wende þou hom into þin in
Whiles ÿþink of fom ginne.

425\quad"Bitwene þis and þe þridde dai
Don ich wille þat I mai."

430\quad"Florice ÿpak and weþ among;
þat ÿlche terme him þouȝte wel long.
þe porter þouȝte what to rede,

He let floure gaderen in þe mede;
He wifte hit was þe maidenes wille.
Two coupen he let of flours fille.
þat was þe rede þat he þouȝt\quad15 þo,
Florice in þat o couppe do.

Tweie geddes þe couppe bere –
So heui charged þat wroþ þai were;

\quadþai bad God ȝif him euel þin
\quadþat so mani floures dede þerin –

\quadþider þat þai weren ibede.

435 Ne were þai nowt ariȝt biredre,
Acc þai turned in hire left hond
Blaunchefloure bour an hond,
To Clarice bour þe couppe þai bere
Wiz þe floures þat perinne were.

\quadþere þe couppe þai fette adown,

440\quad"3af him here malifout
\quadþat so fele floures [h]em brouȝte on honde;
\quadþai wenten forht þat leten þe coppe ftonde.
Clarice to þe coppe com and wolde

445 þe floures handleden ÿ biholde.
Florisse wende hit hadde ben his ÿfet wiȝt;
In þe couppe he ÿtode wraft,
þ þe maide al for drede
Bigan to fchrichen an[d] to grede.

450 Þo he \quad16 leghȝ hit nas nowth ÿhe
\quadInto þe couppe he stiȝte æȝe,
\quadþ held him bitraied al clene;
\quadOf his deȝ he ne 3af nowt a bene.
\quadþer come to Clarice maðenes lepe,

455 Bi ten, be twenti in one hepe,
\quadþ aked what here were,
\quadþat hi makede so loude bere.
Clarice hire vnderfod anowȝȝt
\quadþat hit was Blauncheflour þat swete wiȝt;\quad18

460 For here boures neȝ were,
\quadþelden þat þai neren ifere,
\quad\quadaiȝer of oþer counfel þai wiȝte,
\quad\quadþ michel aiȝer to oþer trigate.
Hii 3af hire maidenes anfwere anon

465 Þat into boure þai ÿcholden gon,
\quad"To þis couppe ich cam and wolde

\quad15 In the manuscript a redundant “he þout” follows he “he þouȝt.”

\quad16 Here the manuscript reads “3he.”

\quad17 Here the manuscript reads “he.”

\quad18 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 the corresponding line (line 490) in that column.

\quad19 In the manuscript a redundant “and” follows “þ.”
Le floures handli and biholde,  
Ac er ich hit euer wiife  
A boterfle‡e tosaime mi fluste.  

Ich was for adrad of þan,  
þat Þe chrichen and greden I bigan.”  
þe maidenes hadde þerof gle,  
þat turnede æzen and let Clarifﬂe be.  

So fone fo þe maidenes weren agen,  
To Blauncheflours bour Clarice wente anon,  
þat faide leyende to Blauncheflour:  
“Wiltou fen a ful fair flour,  
Swiche a flour þat þe þchal like  
Haue þou fen hit a lite?”  

“Auoy!”20 dameisfer,” quaþ Blauncheflour,  
“Þat fáme me is litel honur.  
Lich ihere, Clarice, wiȝoute gabbe,  
þe amerail wil me to wiue habbe;  
Ac þilke dai þchal neuer be  

To þe coupe þai þeden þo.  
Wel blisful was Florisfe þo,  
For he had iherd al þis;  
Out of þe coupe he fretre, iwis.  

Blauncheflour chaungeðe hewe;  
Wel fone aiþer aiþer knewe.  
Wiȝouten iþeche togidere þai lepe,  
þat clepte þe kefte þe eke wepe.  
Hire cussing lafte a mile  

þat hem þouȝte litel while.  
Clarice bihalth al þis,  

Here contenauce þere blif,  
þe læȝende faide to Blauncheflour,  
“Felawe, knouefou ouȝt þis flour?  
Litel er noldeþ þou hit fe,  
þou þou ne miȝt hit lete fro þe.  
He moste conne wel mochel of art  
þat þou woldeþ sȝȝ þerof ani part.”  
Boþ þisfe swete þinges for blis  

Falleþ doun here fet to kis,  
þrieþ hire mercei al weeping  
þat þe hem biwraie21 nowt to þe king,  
To þe king þat þe hem nowt biwreie  
Wherþough þai were ﬁker to deye.  

þo þpak Clarice to Blauncheflour  
Wordes ful of ﬁn amor:  
“Ne doute ȝou nammore wiȝalle  
þan to miþelf hit hadde bifaﬄe.  
White ȝhe wel witerli  

þat hele ich wille ȝoure boþer druri.”  
To on bedde ȝhe hþp hem ibrowt  
þat was of ﬁlþ and fendal wrouȝt.  
þai fette hem þere wel ȝoþte adoun,  

And Clarice drouþ þe courtyn roun.  
þo bigan þai to clippe and kisse,  
þe made joie and mochele blisse.  

þÞ Florisfer ferþ speke bigan  
þat faide, “Louerd þat madeþ man,  
þe I þanke, Godeþ fone;  

Noþ al mi care ich haue ouercome,  
þou þo þe haue mi lef ifounde  
Of al mi care ich am vnbounde.”  
Noþ hþþer aiþer itold  
Of mani a car foul cold,  

þ of mani pyn stronge,  
þat þai han ben atwo fo longe.  
Clarice hem feruede al to wille  
Boþe dernelich and ﬁlle.  
But fo ne miȝte ȝhe hem longe iwyte  

þat hit ne ﬁcholde ben vnderȝeþe.  
þou hadde þe amerail swiche a wone22

20 Here the manuscript reads “Auoy.”
21 Here the manuscript reads “biwraie.”
pat euer[1] dai þer fscholde come
þre maidenes vt of hire boure
To feruen him vp in þe toure,
550
Wiʒ water and cloþ and bacyn
For to waʃʃen his hondes in.
þe þridde fscholde bringe combé and mirour
To feruen him wiʒ gret honur;
And þai þai feruede him neuer fo faire,
555
Amorewen fscholde anoʃer paire.
And meft was woned into þe tour
þerto Clarice and Blancheflouer.
So long him ferueðe þe maidenes route
þat hire servise was comen aboute.
560
On þe morewen þat þider com Florice
Hit fel to Blancheflouer and to Clarice.
¶ Clarice, so wel hire motir bitirde,
Aros vp in þe morewentide
And clepede after Blancheflouer
565
To wende wiʒ here into þe tour.
Blancheflouer faide, “Iam comende;”
Ac here anʃwere was al flepende.
Clarice in þe wai is nome
þe wende þat Blancheflouer had come.
570
Sone fo Clarice com in þe tour
þe ameral asked after Blancheflouer.
“Sire,” þe faide anonriʃt,
575
þe had iwaked al þis niʃt
þ[23] kneled on iloke
irad vpon hire boke,
þad to God here oreifoɔn
þat he þe ʒiue his beniʃoun
þe helde longe alie;
Nou þe þe flepeʃ alʃo swiʃe,
580
Blancheflouer, þat maiden swete,
þat híi ne mai nowt comen ʒhete.”
“Certe,” said þe kyng,
“Nou is hi a ðwete þing;
Wel auʃte ich here yerne to wiuwe,
585
Whenne þe ha bit fo for mi liue.”

Anoʃer dai Clarice arift
þaŋ Blancheflouer atwiʃt
Whi hi made fo longe demoere:
"Ariʃ vp and go we ifere."
590
Blancheflouer faide, “I come anan
þe Florice he klippe bigan,
þe felle allepe on þise wife;
þe after hem gan fore agriʃe.
Clarice to þe piler cam;
595
þe bacyn of gold ʒhe nam,
þe had icleped after Blancheflouer
To wende wiʒ here into þe tour;
ʒhe ne anʃwerede nei ʒe ʒo.
þo wende Clarice ʒhe ware ago.
600
Sone fo Clarice com into þe tour,
þe ameral asked after Blancheflouer,
Whi and wharfore ʒhe ne come
As hi was woned to done.
“ʒhe was arifʃen ar ich were;
605
Ich wende here hauen iʃfonden here.
What, ne is ʒhe nowt icomen ʒit?”
“Nou ʒhe me douteʒ al to liʃt.”
Forht he clepeʃ his chaumberleyn,
ʒ bit him wende wiʒ alle main
610
ʒ wite wi þat ʒhe ne come
As hi was woned before to done.
¶ þe chaumberleyn had vndernome;
Into hire bour he his icome,
And ʃtant before hire bed
615
And ﬁnd þar twai neb to neʃb,
Neb to neʃb[24] an[ŋ] mouʃ to mouʃ;
Wel ﬁone was þar forewe couʃ.
Into þe tour vp he heʃiʒ
ŋ faide his louerd þat he heʃiʒ.
620
þe ameral het his swerdi him bring;
Iwiten he wolde of þat þinge.
Forht he nimʒ wiʒ alle manʃ,
Himʃelf and his chaumberleyn,
Til þaie come þar þai two laie;
625
ʒit was þe ʃlep faʃt in hire eye.

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22 Here “wone” has been altered from “wane.”
23 In the manuscript a redundant “and” follows “þ.”
24 In the manuscript “to neb” has been written twice.
Here the manuscript reads “dhad.”

25 Here the manuscript reads “þat.”

26 Here the manuscript reads “dhad.”
Here the manuscript reads "anr."

710 Blancaeflour fayde þo,
    "So ne fchal hit neuer go,
     þat þis ring fchal ares me,
     Ne mai iwc no deþ on þe fe.
     Florice þe ring here aaruðt,
    On hire he had þe ring þrafþt
     þi hit haue awai ikaft.
     A duk hit feþ and beþgh to grounde,
     An[d] was glad þat ring he founde.

720 On þis maner þe children come
    Weþping to þe fur and to hire dome.
    Bifore al þat fo[l]k þai ware ibrowt;
    Drieri was hire boþer þouþt.
    Þer nas non fo ierne man
    Þat þife children loked vpan,
    Þat þai ne wolde alle ful faþe
    Here jugement haue wiþdrowe,
    þi wiþ grete garisoun hem begge,
    3if þai dorþe þpeke oþer fiþge,
For Florice was fo far a zongling
    Þ Blancaeflour fo þewete a þing.
    Of men and wimmen þat þeþ nouþe,
    Þat gon and28 riden and þpeke wiþ mouþe,
    Beþ non fo far in hire gladneþe
    Als þai ware in hire foreweneþe.
    No man ne knewe hem þat hem was wo
    Bi ðeþmaunt þat þai made þo,
    But þi þerþ þat þai þchadde,
    And fillen adoun bi here neþe.

740 Þ Pe ameral was fo wroþ and wod
    Þat he ne miþt wiþdrow his mod.
    He bad binde þe children feste;
    Into þe fir he þat hem cæþe.
    Þilke duk þat þe gold ryng hadde
  745 Nou to þpeke29 rewþe he hadde.
      Fain he wolde hem helþe to liue,
      þ toþle hou þai for þe ring ftriue.
      Þ Pe ameral het hem æþen cleþe,
  750 He aþkede Florice what he hete,
      þ he him told wþiþe þketþe.
      "Sure,” he þaþe, “þif hit were þþ wille,
      þou ne aþþeþt nowþ þþf maiden þplle,
      Ac, fire, lat auþelle me
      And lat þat maiden aliue be.”
Blancaeflour saide þo,
    "Pe gilt is min of oure boþer wo.”
    Þ þe ameral þaþe þo,
    "Iwis, þe ðc[h]ulle die bo.
760 Wiþ wþreþe ich wille me awreþe;
    Þe ne þcholle neuer go no þpeke.”
      His swerd he braid out of his ðïþeþe.
      Þe children for to do to deþe,
      Þ Blancaeflour pult foþþ hire swire
    Þ Florice gan hire æþin tire,
    “Iþ am a man, ich þchal go bifoþre.30
      þou ne aþþeþt nowþ mi deþ acore.”
    Florice forþ his swþre pulte
      Þ Blancaeflour æþin hit brutte.
770 Al þat ifþen þis
    Þerþre fori wære, iwis,
      þ saþe, “Drieri mai we be
      Bi þwche children swich rewþe fe.”
    Þeþerþal, wroþ þai he were,
    Boþe him chaunged31 mod and chere,
    For aþþer for oþer wolde die,
    And he þegh so mani a weþping eþe,
    And for he hadde fo mocþel louþe þe mai,
    Wþping he turned his heued awai,
780 þ his swerd hit fil to grounde;
    He ne miþte hit [h]eþelde in þat sþounde.
      Þilke duk þat þe ring found

28 Here the manuscript reads “anr.”
29 Here the manuscript reads “þpleþe.”
30 Here the manuscript reads “þþfoþre.”
31 Here the manuscript reads “chaungedþe.”
Wiȝ ðameral spak and round,
þ ful wel ðerwiz he spede;
785 ðe children ðerwiz fram deþe he redde.
“Sire,” he saide, “hit is litel pris
ðife children to ðlen, ðwis.
Hit is ðe wel more worðiche
Florice conñele ðat ðou wite,
790 Who him tawȝte þilke gin
For to come þi tour wizin,
who ðat him brouȝte þar;
þe bet of ðeper 32 þoȝ miȝt be war.”
795 ðan saide ðameralde to Florice þo,
“Tel me who þe tauȝte herto.”
“Þat,” quaȝ Florice, “ne þchal Þe neuere do,
But sîf hit ben forþiȝen alþo
Þat þe gin me tauȝte þerto;
Arift ne þchal[þ] hit neuer þi do.”
800 Alle þai praiyd þerfore, ðwis;
þe ameral graunted þiȝ.
No[u] eueri word Florice haþ him told
Hou þe made was fram him sold,
And hou he was of Speyne a kynȝges fone,
805 For hire loue ðider icome
To fonden wiȝ ðom gin
Þat faire maiden for to win;
Þ hou þourȝh his gold and his garis[foun]
Þe porter was his man bicom,
810 Þ hou he was in þe coupe ibore;
þe þis ðeper lowen þerfore.
Nou þe ameral, wel him mote bitide,
Florice he fette next his fide,
Þ made him fonde þer vþriȝt,
815 Þ haþ idubbed him to kniȝt,
Þ bad he scholde wiȝ him be
Wiȝ þe formaȝt of his mene.
Florice fallot to his fett
And bit him zif him his lef so swet.
820 Þe ameral 3af him his lemnman;
Alle þe ðeperhe him þanked þan.

To one chirche h[e] let hem bringge,
þ wedde here wiȝ here owene ringge.
Nou boþe þis children alle for bliff
825 Fil þe amerales fet to kis;
þourȝh counȝel of Blauncheflour
Clarice was fet doun of þe tour,
þe ameralde here wedded to quene.
Þere was fette swiȝe breme;
830 I ne can nowt tellen þe fonde,
Ac þe richeȝt feste in londe.
835 Nas hit nowt longe after þan
þat Florice tidyingge ne cam
þat his fader þe kynȝ was ded;
840 Þanne bispak þe ameral,
“If þou wilt do, Florice, bi mi conȝel,
Dwelle here and wedd nowt hom;
Ich wille þe þiȝuen a kynȝdom
Alþo longe and alþo brod
845 Alþ euere zit þi fader bod.”
“I nel bilee for no winne;
To bidde me hit were ðinne.”
Þai bitauȝt þe ameral oure driȝt,
þai com hom whan þai miȝt,
850 þet croune him to king
þ hire to quene, þat swete þing,
þ vnderfeng Cristendom of prestes homde,
þonkedde God of alle his fonde.
Nou ben þai boþe ded.
855 Crist of heuene houre foules led.
Nou is þis tale brouȝt to þende
Of Florice and of his lemmæ[n] hende,
Hou after bale hem com bote;
860 Amen ðiggeȝz alþo,
And ich ðchal helpe ȝou þerto.
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