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Chaucer's reading list: Sir Thopas, Auchinleck, and Middle English romances in translation

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CHAUCER'S READING LIST: SIR THOPAS, AUCHINLECK,
AND MIDDLE ENGLISH ROMANCES IN TRANSLATION

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ABSTRACT

**Chaucer's Reading List: Sir Thopas, Auchinleck, and
Middle English Romances in Translation**

by

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Middle English romance has never attained critical respectability, dismissed as “vayn carpynge” in its own age and treated as a junk-food form of medieval literature or kidnapped for political or psychoanalytical readings. Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas* has been explained as an acidly sarcastic satire of the romances' supposedly clichéd formulas and poetically unskilled authors. Yet such assumptions require investigation of how Chaucer and his ostensible audience might have viewed romance as a genre. Chaucer's likely use of the Auchinleck manuscript forms a convenient basis for examination of the romances listed in *Thopas*. With the aid of a modern translation, the poems turn out to form a rich interplay of symbolical, theological, and historical meanings. Viewed in a more sensitive light, the Middle English romances in turn give *Thopas* new meaning as a poem written affectionately to parody romance but chiefly to effect a humorous contrast. Rather than condemning romances, Chaucer uses their best examples to heighten *Thopas*' comic impotence as a knight and to provide self-deprecating carnival laughter at Chaucer the narrator's failed story.

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I fondly acknowledge my grandmother, Caroline Eckert (1903-1998), who was able to recite to me in the 90s the Chaucer she learned as a schoolgirl during the First World War.

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INTRODUCTION

The Medieval Romance and *Sir Thopas*

A wit-besotting trash of books. —Montaigne, on medieval romances.¹

One frustration of engaging in any branch of European medieval studies as an academic pursuit is that few claim expertise about the ancient or Roman worlds, but seemingly everyone on an internet discussion forum believes him or herself knowledgeable about the medieval period, usually based on patently false beliefs. Outside academia, the popular understanding of the period usually presumes one of two stereotypes. The first is the ‘merry-old-England’ cliché of the renaissance fair, where undergraduates dress as Vikings with *Hagar the Horrible* horns and discuss trivial minutiae of medieval weaponry, while flirting with underdressed wenches who serve mead. Hollywood films similarly depict any English century before the nineteenth as one where knights exclaim “forsooth, varlet” in stilted Victorian accents. While puerile and anachronistic, the trope is at least benign in comparison to the second common image of the era, which persistently retains the pejorative mislabel *dark ages*. This Monty Pythonesque world reeks of ignorance, plague, war, an oppressive and misogynist church, violence, inquisitions, and witch hunts, hence the slang *get medieval* on someone. The medieval Europeans enjoyed regular baths, but to state that they bathed at all invites incredulity among non-specialists.

Doubly frustrating is the practice among scholars to belittle and misrepresent the medieval period in order to place other eras in brighter relief. Just as classicists depict

¹ John Florio, trans., *The Essayes of Michael Lord of Montaigne*, 2 vols. (London, 1603), vol. 2, ch. 25, quoted in Nicola McDonald, *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England* (Manchester: University Press, 2004), 3.

Greco-Roman culture as fantastically idyllic and sophisticated, Renaissance humanists imagine a sudden birth of civilization in post-plague Europe and present, “for purposes of contrast, a grossly simplified image of the preceding age.”² The early modern appraisal of the medieval period and its literature was consistently disdainful. Just as gunpowder helped make chivalry obsolete, its poetic values were regarded as primitive. Nashe was typical in writing about *Bevis of Hampton* in 1589 and asking who “can forbear laughing” at the “worne out absurdities” of its “plodding meeter.”³ Milton disparages poetic rhyme itself as “the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter.”⁴ Caxton ostensibly still held a sentimental view of a passing age when he wrote in 1483, “O ye knyghtes of Englonde, where is the custome and usage of noble chivalry that was used in thο days?”⁵ Yet in general, medieval literature and romance in particular had few friends in high places in the early modern era.

Much of the condemnation was moral. Even in its own time, the romance genre was dismissed as “vayn carpynge” by medieval churchmen, a sentiment going back as far as Alcuin’s complaint in 797 to the monks at Lindisfarne, “Quid enim Hiniieldus cum Christo?” (“What has Ingeld to do with Christ?”) A homily complains that men who are unmoved by an account of Christ’s passion are “stirred to tears when the tale of *Guy of*

² John A. Burrow, “Alterity and Middle English Literature,” *Review of English Studies* 50:200 (1999): 491.

³ Thomas Nashe, *The Anatomy of Absurdity* (1589), in *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, Vol. III, ed. Ronald B. McKerrow (London, 1905), 26.

⁴ John Milton, Introduction (“The Verse”), *Paradise Lost*, Second Edition (1674), in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Sixteenth Century and Early Seventeenth Century Vol. B eighth ed.*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

⁵ William Caxton, “Exhortation to the Knights of England” (1483), quoted in Larry D. Benson and John Leyerle, ed., *Chivalric Literature* (Kalamazoo: The Board of the Medieval Institute, 1980), xiii.

Warwick is read.”⁶ Such reproaches evidently did not go beyond sporadic grumbling, for romances required expensive parchment and clerics to write them, but the condemnations intensified in Elizabethan England even as printing eased their transmission. Churchman Francis Meres cautioned that such wanton stories were “hurtful to youth.”⁷ The early humanists had equally firm if secular objections against the corrupting moral example of the sensational plots and heroes of romances. Juan Luis Vives, Spanish humanist and friend to Thomas More, warned that romances make their audiences “wyllye and craftye, they kindle and styr up couetousnes, inflame angre, and all beastly and filthy desyre.”⁸ Roger Ascham thundered in 1545 that their reading leads to “none other ends, but only manslaughter and baudrye.”⁹

Nicola McDonald notes that modern critics have treated such remarks with “humorous detachment,”¹⁰ wondering how the genre could ever be seen as threatening enough to exercise its critics so. Like early fulminations against rock music in the 1950s, the comments seem amusingly quaint. Yet Restoration and Romantic era academics were no less hostile to medieval English literature. Partly the criticism originated in post-medieval and anti-Catholic prejudice.¹¹ Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*

⁶ In G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933), 14, quoted in Albert C. Baugh, “The Middle English Romance: Some Questions of Creation, Presentation, and Preservation,” *Speculum* 42:1 (1967): 2.

⁷ Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia, Wits Treasury* (1598), ed. Gregory Smith, *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1904) 308-309, quoted in Ronald S. Crane, “The Vogue of *Guy of Warwick* from the Close of the Middle Ages to the Romantic Revival,” *PMLA* 30:2 (1915): 139.

⁸ McDonald, 3.

⁹ Roger Ascham, *Toxophilus*, ed. W.A. Wright, *English Works* (Cambridge, 1904) xiv, quoted in McDonald, 3.

¹⁰ McDonald, 3-4.

¹¹ McDonald, 4.

(1782) is still lauded as a magisterial work in historical analysis. Among other feats, he helped to establish the modern footnote system.¹² Nevertheless, his work extols Rome by negatively juxtaposing it against “the triumph of barbarism and religion”¹³ following the empire’s decline. For Gibbon’s contemporaries who esteemed the Latin of Cicero as the apex of language and rhetoric, modern English was an inferior replacement and early grammars often forced English into procrustean Latin models.¹⁴ Medieval English romance, mostly treating of non-classical narratives and, even worse, set in a Christian world, would have been beneath contempt.

Yet on the whole modern critics have shifted the basis of their condemnation of medieval romance from moral to aesthetic grounds. McDonald again notes that romance’s putative friends have been no kinder than its enemies, as scholarship has repeatedly been colored by a “veiled repugnance” to the genre.¹⁵ The first major modern anthology of romance, Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), was considered a sort of youthful indulgence by its author, who declined to sign his name to later editions upon taking up more serious interests. Similarly, in George Ellis’ *Specimens*

¹² Robert J. Connors, “The Rhetoric of Citation Systems, Part I: The Development of Annotation Structures from the Renaissance to 1900,” *Rhetoric Review* 17:1 (1998): 35.

¹³ Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1782), Vol. 6, Ch. 71, Part 1. Gibbon argues that “the introduction, or at least the abuse of Christianity, had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity; the active virtues of society were discouraged; and the last remains of military spirit were buried in the cloister” (Vol. 3, Ch. 38, Part 6). While respecting his acumen, some modern historians object that the eastern empire was no less devout and lasted another eleven centuries after Constantine.

¹⁴ Celia M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 210.

¹⁵ McDonald, 5.

of *Early English Metrical Romances* (1805), there is a sort of proper embarrassment at a gentleman dignifying such vulgarisms:

[Ellis] mocks their long-winded plots, ludicrous emotions and general absurdity, retelling romances like *Guy of Warwick* and *Amis and Amiloun*, with the kind of smug irony that is designed only to assert his, and his reader's superiority over the imagined and denigrated medieval.¹⁶

Even among medieval specialists of the twentieth century, a critical binary prevails with Chaucer, Gower, *Gawain / Pearl*, and devotional texts comprising high culture. English romances, conversely, are the junk food of the period, seen as degenerated pastiches of continental originals cobbled together by "literary hacks,"¹⁷ with formulaic plots and stereotyped characters. Baugh takes it as a commonplace that "every one knows that the Middle English romances are honeycombed with stock phrases and verbal clichés, often trite and at times seemingly forced."¹⁸ At best their stylized repetition provides childish diversion, such as "children feel in *The Three Bears*."¹⁹ Pearsall notes his difficulty in comprehending "why poems that are so bad according to almost every criteria of literary value should have held such a central position in the literature culture of their own period."²⁰

¹⁶ McDonald, 7.

¹⁷ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, "The Auchinleck Manuscript and a Possible London Bookshop of 1330-1340," *PMLA* 57:3 (1942): 608.

¹⁸ Albert C. Baugh, "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103:3 (1959): 420.

¹⁹ J.S.P. Tatlock, "Epic Formulas, Especially in *Layamon*," *PMLA* 38:3 (1923): 528-529, quoted in Baugh, "Improvisation," 421.

²⁰ Derek Pearsall, "Understanding Middle English Romance," *Review* 2 (1980): 105, quoted in McDonald, 9.

The underlying tone in much criticism is the belief that romance chiefly sins by *being* popular, failing to be more rarified or serious in tone for the aesthete or to be more socially subversive for the revisionist. Unlike epic, which Bakhtin categorizes as a completed genre,²¹ medieval romance grew into modern iterations from Una to Elizabeth Bennett to Bridget Jones. The manuscripts stubbornly survive in numbers larger and more geographically varied than any other medieval English genre, and the recorded libraries of everyone from well-off fishmongers to grocers to aristocrats included them.²² By the thirteenth century the earliest recorded French bookseller appears with the nickname “Herneis le Romanceur.”²³ Although probably not borne in fact, a claimed mark of breeding for a knight was reading romances,²⁴ and Chaucer depicts Creseyde with ladies listening to a reading of the Siege of Thebes (*TC* II.82-4). Edward II had fifty-nine books of romance in his library.²⁵ Well into Elizabethan England the tastes of the literate public remained medieval and romances were among the first popular printed books,²⁶ providing further materials for dramas and ballads. While by the Restoration the

²¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel,” ed. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, trans. Michael Holquist *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 3.

²² An inventory of two bankrupt London grocers in the 1390s contained four books of romance. Ralph Hanna, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12. See also John Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), who lists romances in the libraries of Sir Simon Burley and the Duke of Gloucester.

²³ J.S.P. Tatlock, “The Canterbury Tales in 1400,” *PMLA* 50:1 (1935): 108.

²⁴ Harriet E. Hudson, “Construction of Class, Family, and Gender in Some Middle English Popular Romances,” in *Class and Gender in Early English Literature*, ed. Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 78. For arguments that the ideal was not reflected in reality see Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 140.

²⁵ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 54.

²⁶ Roland Crane asserts that early English humanists were less concerned with literature than with philosophical or theological matters. Roland S. Crane, 132-33.

Middle English language had become increasingly difficult, some verse and prose modernizations remained popular into the next century.²⁷

McDonald sees a sort of secular Calvinist guilt in academia, which disparages medieval romances because they are enjoyable, with probably more than a little snobbery due to the cliché of present-day romances being the province of teenagers and housewives. Yet the themes and content of English medieval romances are not the same as modern exemplars, with their flavor of improbable *chick-flicks* and Harlequin novels at supermarket checkouts. Medieval romance suffers the additional problem of a lack of scholarly definition, and there was and is no consensus on just what comprises a romance. The earliest usage referred more to a story's Old French or Latinate origins, and for many the twelfth-century narratives of Chrétien de Troyes form "the 'paradigm' of romance."²⁸ Chaucer and his contemporaries also seem to have generalized romances as secular and not specifically historical works in French,²⁹ though later usage has the broader idea of any "fictitious narratives"³⁰ involving chivalrous or aristocratic deeds. English romance is thus a blurry designation which bleeds into genres as divergent as Arthurian legend, history, hagiography, and folktale.

Medieval romances often featured some quest or journey, which could be literal or emotional but often spiritual. Such pursuits include courtship and marital love, but not

²⁷ See Roland Crane for editions and reworkings of *Guy of Warwick*, which continued to enjoy a readership, albeit increasingly as juvenilia, until the 1700s. Roland S. Crane, 193.

²⁸ Robert M. Jordan, "Chaucerian Romance?" *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974): 225.

²⁹ Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: University Press, 1994), 9.

³⁰ John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance I," *Chaucer Review* 15:1 (1980): 46.

essentially—there are almost no women in *Gamelyn*, although its genre status as a romance is also questioned. Finlayson suggests that romances depict courtly adventure with “little or no connection with medieval actuality... not unlike the basic cowboy film.”³¹ Ker states that the old epic warriors always have “good reasons of their own for fighting”³² which connect to external and real needs, whereas in romance the emphasis falls on the hero’s individual achievements, with the causes a background and often perfunctory device. Hanna asserts the opposite, that although romance heroes lack psychological interiority, the narratives symbolically convey such emotions and meanings.³³ I can make no better synthesis than to argue that romances tend to have an escapist ethos which idealizes rather than realistically portrays. Thus while it serves the purpose here to speak of the style as a subgenre, it may be more accurate to call medieval English romance, like satire, a register or mode.³⁴

Identifying the class audience of romance has been an equally contentious pursuit. Detractors assert that English romances, with their sentimental themes and oral-based structures, appealed almost exclusively to lower-class and non-literate audiences. Ostensibly, French stories were for court audiences and English ones for the *hoi polloi*,³⁵ with Latin, French, and English forming a clear hierarchy of taste and value regardless of content. English romances frequently feature scenes of civic celebration, and if they were

³¹ Finlayson, 55.

³² W.P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (London: MacMillan, 1922), 6.

³³ Hanna, 108-9.

³⁴ Pamela Graden does just this in “The Romance Mode,” in *Form and Style in Early English Literature* (London: Methuen, 1971), 212-272.

³⁵ Robert Levine, “Who Composed *Havelock* For Whom?” *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 97.

recited at such events—Havelock’s coronation features games, music, and “romanz reding on the bok” (2327)³⁶—they would have had a broad lay audience. Even if the *Havelock* poet lets the mask slip at the end by mentioning how he stayed up long nights writing the story (2998-9), he presents himself as a minstrel, at ease in a public space with an audience and “a cuppe of ful god ale” (14).

Yet recent scholarship points to a widely heterogeneous audience for English romances which included the lower aristocracy. *Sir Thopas*, albeit in parody, is addressed to “knyght and lady free” (CT VII.892). English works were not automatically seen as ignoble, as attested by rapidly declining levels of French fluency in the English gentry. Late in the thirteenth century, the *Arthur and Merlin* narrator notes that “mani noble ich haue yseize / þat no Freynsche coupe seye” (25-6).³⁷ Scholars have judged English romances as vulgar corruptions of French originals, often misapplying the standards of Chrétien to a fundamentally different genre. Seaman argues that the English preference for less courtly rigor and more dragons in romance reflects a distinct and equally valid poetic culture.³⁸ Where continental romances endorse a value system of chivalry, the English ones are often homiletic.³⁹ We also forget that many of Chaucer’s narratives (and nearly all of Shakespeare’s) equally derive from continental originals and were praised for their respect and fidelity to *auctoritee*.

³⁶ For *Havelock* and all other non-Chaucerian romances here I use TEAMS as sources unless noted.

³⁷ In Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 10.

³⁸ Myra Seaman, “Engendering Genre in Middle English Romance: Performing the Feminine in Beves of Hamtoun,” *Studies in Philology* 98:1 (2001): 51.

³⁹ Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 5.

Moreover, the metafictional sense that exists within many romances suggests a skillful author able to appeal to multiple levels. The numerous references to the storytelling narrator, to other romances the audience is expected to know, and the “citation of bookish sources”⁴⁰ requires a certain sophistication to apprehend information above the narrative plane. Chaucer also occasionally drops metafictional touches, telling his “litel book” to go (*TC* V.1786). The requisite invocation to listen at the beginning of most romances may suggest a traditional oral situation but does not necessarily mean the author is literally a wandering minstrel,⁴¹ any more than the fictional audience of “ye lovers” (*TC* I.22) that Chaucer addresses is a real one. Nevertheless, if romances were indeed sung out loud, as the invocation in *King Horn* suggests—“alle beon he blithe / that to my song lythe / a sang ich schal you singe / of Murry the Kinge” (1-4)— their performance may continue the same aristocratic tradition as the *Beowulf* scop who sings heroic lays before Hrothgar and his retainers.⁴²

Chaucer and His Audience

There are few established facts about Chaucer’s original audience for his works. Evidently he had one if his texts survived and were copied into the fifteenth century. Eighty-two manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales* are extant, a considerable number only surpassed by the *Prick of Conscience*. Much of his verse was disseminated in

⁴⁰ McDonald, 14.

⁴¹ Baugh, “Questions,” 3.

⁴² Baugh, “Questions,” 18. Hrothgar’s bard is lavishly praised as the “cyninges þegn / guma gilphlæden” (“the king’s thane, a man of skilled eloquence”). *Beowulf*, ed. and trans. Howell D. Chickering, Jr. (Toronto: Anchor Books, 1977), lines 867-8.

“compilations for gentlemen, lawyers, and merchants,”⁴³ and he appears early in print in editions of Caxton and others. Some of his contemporary intimates refer to him in their own fiction. The poem *The Boke of Cupide* (or *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*), attributed to friend John Clanvowe, begins with a quote from the *Knight's Tale* (CT I.1785-6) and evinces a style deeply responsive to Chaucer's. Henry Scogan also alludes to *The Wife of Bath* in his works.⁴⁴ Paul Strohm's *Social Chaucer* asserts that Chaucer and his contemporaries would have considered writing without having an audience absurd. In the *Tale of Melibee*, signally, a wise man shamefully sits down upon losing the attention of his auditors, “for Salomen seith: ‘Ther as thou ne mayst have noon audience, enforce thee nat to speke” (CT VII.1047-49). Chaucer's recurrent use of abbreviating phrases such as the tag “what nedeth wordes mo?” perhaps suggests a rhetorical anxiety about boring an audience of high-ranking listeners.⁴⁵ But who was Chaucer's audience in his own lifetime?

Chaucer is depicted reciting to a gentle audience in an early copy of *Troilus and Criseyde* (Cambridge MS 61) of about 1400-10. The picture is enticing but little is known. Richard II encouraged and rewarded cultural pursuits in his court, becoming close to several young literary courtiers.⁴⁶ Chaucer's poems textually “bespeak a courtly

⁴³ Michael J. Bennett, “The Court of Richard II and the Promotion of Literature,” in *Chaucer's England: Literature in Historical Context*, ed. Barbara A. Hanawalt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 5.

⁴⁴ Strohm, 77.

⁴⁵ W. Nelson Francis, “Chaucer Shortens a Tale,” *PMLA* 68:5 (1953): 1137.

⁴⁶ Bennett, 10.

ambience.”⁴⁷ Strohm depicts Chaucer as sometimes writing for a specific patron or intimate (*Book of the Duchess*, *L’Envoy to Bukton*), but more often writing for fellow civil servants, non-landed esquires, and knights who formed a sort of nascent and emergent class on the lower fringes of gentle rank.⁴⁸ *Troilus* was possibly read at court, but Chaucer’s dedicatees are Gower and Strode and not royalty. This group of aspirants, continually in flux throughout his life, formed Chaucer’s associates and friends, and Strohm even names men such as John Gower, William Beauchamp, Lewis Clifford, Philip la Vache, John Clanvowe, William Neville, Richard Stury, Thomas Hoccleve, and intermittent or later personalities including Ralph Strode, Henry Scogan, and Peter Bukton.⁴⁹ All seem to be men who took advantage of the social ruptures and temporary openings of post-plague England to better themselves.

What ties these individuals together otherwise is not only court connections to Richard but their interests as learned and literary men, many of them authors in their own right. Chaucer seemingly encodes Boethian arguments into *Troilus* that only a Merton College fellow such as Strode can fully appreciate,⁵⁰ and Chaucer himself apparently was considered somewhat of a difficult poet. Windeatt notes that some of Chaucer’s scribes added marginal or superscript glosses in the manuscripts where they saw “unusual and difficult” terms,⁵¹ writing explanations to Chaucer’s innovative or archaic usages: Anglo-

⁴⁷ Bennett, 7. The royal court was not necessarily a physical place or formal institution. Bennett notes that it referred to a broad “cultural construct” of family, friends, knights, clerics, and visitors (8).

⁴⁸ Strohm, 11.

⁴⁹ Strohm, 42.

⁵⁰ Strohm, 58.

⁵¹ B.A. Windeatt, “The Scribes as Chaucer’s Early Critics,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1979): 125.

Saxon “wyerdes” is glossed as “destine” (*TC* III.617). Scogan also famously praises Chaucer in his *Moral Balade* as “my mayster Chaucer, god his soulē have / that in his langage was so curious.”⁵² Chaucer’s attention to intricate astronomical symbolism, such as in the *Parson’s Tale* 1-11, and to technical details in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* suggests a varied readership of polymaths.

Strohm asserts that Chaucer avoided openly antagonizing the Appellants by surrendering lucrative offices and removing to Kent during parliamentary hostilities.⁵³ Some of his less politic friends, such as Thomas Usk who was appointed undersheriff of London by Richard, protested and clung to their positions out of pride or avarice and did not survive the Merciless Parliament. Chaucer’s partial exile from the dangerous court politics of the 1380s perhaps gives the *Canterbury Tales* a more isolated feel than his other works. Chaucer especially avoids explicit personal or political references and seems to address no familiar community of listeners but rather unspecified, silent readers in posterity. The ostensibly oral character of his earlier poetry becomes more textual: “whoso list it nat yheere / turn over the leef and chese another tale” (*CT* I.3176-77). Nevertheless, he likely continued to circulate portions of his stories among his literary circle at least after his return to London,⁵⁴ and presumably he assumed his intimates to be familiar enough with the tales to humorously invoke the Wife of Bath in his later poem to

⁵² Henry Scogan, “A Moral Balade,” quoted in W.W. Skeat, ed., *Chaucerian and Other Pieces* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897), 239. See also Kathleen Forni, ed., *The Chaucerian Apocrypha: A Selection* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005).

⁵³ Hanna disagrees, arguing that Chaucer already wished to vacate Aldgate and his controllership of customs (205). Nevertheless, Chaucer surrendered a large portion of his income at a moment when the Appellants were agitating for such acts of royal favoritism to be abrogated.

⁵⁴ Strohm, 66, 67. Clanvowe died in October 1391 and so he must have read the *Knight’s Tale* before that time in order to include it in his poem.

Bukton. Again, Chaucer's invitation to his friend to "rede" the *Wife of Bath* (29) signifies a private reading act and not public recitation.⁵⁵

Chaucer suggests a familiarity with the physical details of acting and staging of drama in the *Miller's Tale*, where Absolon "pleyeth Herodes upon a scaffold hye" (I.3384),⁵⁶ and he may have witnessed occasions of public festivity where he heard the same sort of "romanz reding on the bok" as is featured in *Havelock*. Some scholars have attempted to draw upon French burlesques instead as the source of his *Tale of Sir Thopas* parody, with Burrow positing the thirteenth-century *Prise de Nueville*.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, his usage of *Bevis of Hampton* and *Guy of Warwick* suggest that he had such texts at hand. Strong identifies several narrative similarities. Both Guy and Thopas have bright yellow hair and are educated to hunt and hawk,⁵⁸ although such might simply be commonplaces trotted out by Chaucer from the romances he read or glanced at, which Loomis posits to be about fifteen to twenty.⁵⁹

Yet there are also more compelling matches of phrases between the texts, which both Strong and Loomis catalogue in side-by-side comparisons of Guy, identifying some fifty places where the *Thopas* line echoes one in *Guy*.⁶⁰ Loomis argues strongly that

⁵⁵ Admittedly, ME *rede* can be broader in meaning than PDE *read* and might also denote "advise, tell" from Anglo-Saxon *rædan*. But for Chaucer to tell Bukton to advise or obey Alison does not make sense.

⁵⁶ P.M. Kean, *Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry* (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972): 5.

⁵⁷ John A. Burrow, "Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* and *La Prise de Nueville*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 14 (1984): 44-55.

⁵⁸ Caroline Strong, "Sir Thopas and Sir Guy I," *Modern Language Notes* 23:3 (1908): 76.

⁵⁹ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, "Sir Thopas," in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York: Humanities Press, 1958), 488.

⁶⁰ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, "Chaucer and the Auchinleck MS: *Thopas* and *Guy of Warwick*," in *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown*, ed. Percy W. Long (Freeport: New York University Press, 1940), 111-128.

Chaucer had use of the Auchinleck manuscript while composing *Thopas*, noting that other known manuscripts of such romances all have their own textual variations and none match Chaucer's borrowings so closely. In particular, the stanzaic version of *Guy* is only in Auchinleck.⁶¹ More compellingly, Chaucer names *Horn*, *Guy*, and *Bevis* together in *Thopas* (898-9), three works which only occur jointly in Auchinleck. Moreover, *Thopas* contains the only known reference to *Horn*.⁶² Loomis concedes that Auchinleck was not necessarily Chaucer's sole source and that the other works cited in *Thopas* are not in the manuscript, but notes that they could have been in Chaucer's time, as the codex contained at least seventeen more texts. Another clue links MS Hale 150, copied just after 1400, and containing the Auchinleck romances *Arthour and Merlin*, *Kyng Alisaunder*, and the *Lybeaus Desconus* cited in *Thopas*.⁶³

The Auchinleck manuscript, now National Library of Scotland Adv. MS 19.2.1, is believed the product of London scribes writing between 1330-40. Hanna posits that the manuscript's frequent geographical references to London and its literary influences from Yorkshire suggest its assembly in the old west end, a "particularly vibrant place for cultural interchanges."⁶⁴ A volume of some sixty Middle English texts with forty-three now at least partly extant, Loomis asserts it was likely the product of a lay bookseller, as it was unlikely for a scriptorium to dedicate the labor of six clerks to copying English

⁶¹ Loomis, "Auchinleck," 118.

⁶² Loomis, "Sir Thopas," 489. *Horn Childe* is slightly different from *King Horn*, which appears here and does have older manuscript versions (including Laud Misc. 108).

⁶³ Hanna, 16. *Lybeaus* was less likely to be in Auchinleck as it was supposedly written by Thomas Chestre in the mid-fourteenth century (British Museum MS Cotton Caligula A.ii). See George Shuffelton, "Lybeaus Desconus: Introduction," TEAMS, <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/sgas20int.htm>

⁶⁴ Hanna, 129.

romances. This was particularly so in an England where monastic copying was in decline: “In Chaucer’s day the time was long past when almost all book-making was in the hands of ‘the old monks,’”⁶⁵ and long before printing there were dealers in London selling books to order or pre-made for a growing literate readership, with the first *venditor librorum* recorded as early as 1223.⁶⁶ A booksellers guild seems to have formed by 1357 with a London street for their trade, Paternoster Row. While lending hand-copied anthologies between friends in the 1380s would still have been the equivalent of passing around sports cars now (a similar-sized book prepared for the Countess of Core in 1324 cost over £10, about US\$5300 now⁶⁷), the manuscript itself is fairly simple in execution and illumination and may have been affordable to the sort of burgeoning gentry in which Chaucer moved.

Sir Thopas and the Project

Chaucer was evidently familiar with the romances he parodies in *Sir Thopas*, as he explicitly names six in the text in addition to the Sir Percival reference and imitates their phrasings and materials. With limited examples available in the language, his decision to write poetry in English may have been influenced by such romances.⁶⁸ That he expects his audience to recognize them in order to understand the parodic intent of *Thopas* also seems clear. In other texts Chaucer demonstrates an ongoing concern with

⁶⁵ Tatlock, 108.

⁶⁶ Hanna, 2.

⁶⁷ J. W. Thompson, *The Medieval Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), 646, quoted in Timothy A. Shonk, “A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century,” *Speculum* 60:1 (1985): 89. Modern price from the National Archives Currency Converter, accessed 2 October 2010 at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency>.

⁶⁸ Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 74.

adjusting his voice to his audience's needs and aptitudes, explaining that he needs to simplify his tutorial of the astrolabe for little Lewis, as "curious endityng and hard sentence is ful hevvy at onys for such a child to lerne" (45-6). Additionally, in *Troilus* he glosses obscure deities—"Thesiphone... thow goddesse of torment" (I.6-8)—as an aid but assumes prior familiarity with Hector.⁶⁹ Here Chaucer also seemingly presupposes that his audience already knows who characters such as Bevis and Guy are, as extended explanation would deflate the joke.

Whether Chaucer intended *Sir Thopas* to be a festive, carnivalesque parody of the romance genre or a biting Swiftian satire will be addressed later. For now it suffices to say that, whether his circle of literary friends and associates greeted romances with fondness or eye-rolling, they likely recognized and knew them firsthand as members of the first English-speaking court since Harold Godwineson.⁷⁰ Hanna notes that "Chaucerian parody, like all parody, depends upon the accepted status of its target."⁷¹ But to explore how Chaucer and his audience understood and viewed the works that underlie *Thopas* for the purposes of appreciating its humor requires digging beyond the poem's references and examining the romances themselves. In this way it will perhaps be possible to see how these romances organically function as source material for *Thopas*, and then finally to speculate with more intelligence on Chaucer's, and his contemporary audience's, relationship to them. The question has additional relevance in that usually the

⁶⁹ Strohm, 61.

⁷⁰ Pearsall, 65.

⁷¹ Hanna, 108.

opposite has happened—romances have been critically defined and evaluated in terms of how *Thopas* allegedly views them.⁷²

The secondary goal of this project is to provide a scholarly translation into Modern English of these romances in order to facilitate both comprehension and appreciation of the texts. Middle English romances are now sparsely anthologized and dedicated volumes such as French and Hale (1930) are increasingly out of print. Many of these stories are only accessible online as very dated works in public domain, such as Ellis' compilation from 1805, with the provident exception of the excellent TEAMS editions. Yet most importantly, few are available in unabridged translation.⁷³ The situation completes a vicious circle: the romances are unpublished because they are obscure, and they are obscure because they are inaccessible in Modern English. A clear academic need stands for close Present Day English (PDE)⁷⁴ renderings of these texts for the non-specialist. Because Auchinleck is so indispensable a source and one which Chaucer likely read, it forms the basic structure of the project, though I also include works from the four other minor manuscripts of English romance which predate

⁷² Cory James Rushton, "Modern and Academic Reception of the Popular Romance," in Raluca L. Radulescu, and Cory James Rushton, ed., *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 172.

⁷³ Roger Sherman and Laura Hibbard Loomis' *Medieval Romances* (New York: Modern Library, 1957) has shortened but well-translated texts. Romances in translation tend to be presented as juvenalia. For examples see F.J. Harvey Darton, *A Wonder Book of Old Romances* (London: Wells Gardner Darton, 1907) and Andrew Lang, ed., *The Red Romance Book* (New York: Longmans and Green, 1921).

⁷⁴ Within this project I also use OE, Old English, ME, Middle English, EME, Early Modern English, and OF, Old French. These are understood as loose and flexible divisions. For more discussion of these periods and terms, see Millward.

Auchinleck.⁷⁵ *Plendamour* is believed lost, and I confess to making some choices based on modern and personal tastes. *Ypotis* is more didactic poem than romance, and *Lybaeus Desconus* and *Sir Perceval* belong more to the Arthurian tradition, already a well-trod subgenre. Moreover, from their absence of textual correspondences in *Thopas*, they may have been little more than name-dropping for effect by Chaucer.⁷⁶

Translation is not usually a glamorous academic pursuit, and few works attain the status of Chapman's Homer. Chaucer is available in translation, but as with Shakespeare, PDE versions are generally considered nonscholarly, consigned to lay readers or non-native English learners. I attended sessions at the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo in 2009 and sat in on a discussion of *Beowulf* translations. Opinions varied from grudging acceptance that translations such as Chickering's (1989) were necessary concessions to snide remarks about "Heaneywulf." While Seamus Heaney's version is not textually perfect, it serves as an invaluable access point for the non-specialist. The alternative is still more execrable movie adaptations and a tiny pool of readers with the specialized training to interpret Anglo-Saxon English, and fewer still able to move beyond language issues into appreciating the story as an aesthetic product, which was Tolkien's special cause in "*Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*" (1936). The same reality is nearing for Shakespeare and long ago arrived for works in Early Middle English. Amazon.com currently lists a "translation" into Modern English of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* from 1678!

⁷⁵ Loomis lists the four before Auchinleck as: Cambridge University Library G g.4 27.2 (*King Horn, Floris & Blancheflor*); Cotton Vitellius D. III (*Floris and Blancheflor*); Harley 2253 (*King Horn*); Laud Miscellany 108 (*King Horn, Havelock*). "London Bookshop," 626.

⁷⁶ Loomis, "Sir Thopas," 487.

Yet first such a project must be seen as worthwhile. The assumption that educated fourteenth-century audiences viewed English romances with disdain for their “worn devices of minstrel style” and “stereotyped diction”⁷⁷ may betray only modern sensibilities with our different expectations of structure and distaste for formulaic language. Chaucer uses such oral patterns as “the sothe to say” or “tell” twenty-three times in *Troilus*,⁷⁸ and the *scop* of *Beowulf*, no less prone to lengthy digressions, constantly reiterates titles or family lineages with metrical appositives such as “Hroðgar maþelode, helm Scyldinga” (“Hrothgar made a speech, protector of the Scyldings,” 370). These stock epithets link to those used by the improvisational *guslars* documented by Milman Parry in the Balkans, and occur in works as high-culture as Homer’s *Odyssey* with its repetition of “the blue-eyed goddess Athene.”⁷⁹ Rhyme and alliterative schemes themselves function as oral and memory devices that are not only pleasurable but add form and meaning to poetry.

McDonald also adds the interesting argument that the relative formulism of medieval romance, with its standard exile/return storylines, evinces not a poverty of imagination but functions as a useful frame within which the author can experiment freely. The predictable happy ending is obligatory but can be very brief and perfunctory, as the story’s energy is elsewhere.⁸⁰ The more that romance makes itself internally

⁷⁷ Loomis, “Sir Thopas,” 491.

⁷⁸ Nancy Mason Bradbury, “Chaucerian Minstrelsy: *Sir Thopas*, *Troilus and Criseyde* and English Metrical Romance,” in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 120.

⁷⁹ Baugh, “Improvisation,” 419. Athena is actually called *glaukopis* (γλαυκωπις), “owl-eyed,” variously translated as *blue* and *grey*.

⁸⁰ McDonald, 14.

obvious as a self-aware fictional structure by repeatedly telling us “so hit is fonde in frensche tale” (*Bevis* 888), the freer the teller is to invent heroines who are all simultaneously the fairest in the world, to have heroes starve in dungeons for years and not die, for men in heavy armor to battle for days without fatigue, for lone warriors to defeat entire Saracen armies, and for murdered children to spring back to life without shattering the audience’s suspension of disbelief. The heroes inhabit a world where the normal laws of nature are “slightly suspended.”⁸¹ This poetic freedom was especially possible in England, where chivalry had never been as pervasive as in France and was increasingly seen through an antique mist.⁸²

Much recent political commentary faults medieval romance for its affirmation of hegemonic feudal values. As Jameson might say, romances perpetuate the “legitimation of concrete structures of power and domination.”⁸³ Susan Crane notes that romances maintain class divisions through “the conception that social differences order the world hierarchically.”⁸⁴ Yet romances retain a sense of political subversion not only in their lack of official sanction but also in what they conspicuously omit. Events in an overtly fanciful world where the fair and just prosper in the end call sharp contrast to the failings of the actual world where they do *not* normally prosper. The Auchinleck texts often

⁸¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: University Press, 1957), 33, quoted in Diana T. Childress, “Between Romance and Legend: ‘Secular Hagiography’ in Middle English Literature,” *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 313.

⁸² Mehl, 4.

⁸³ In T. A. Shippey, “The *Tale of Gamelyn*: Class Warfare and the Embarrassments of Genre,” in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert Jane (Harlow: Longman, 2000). Shippey cites from Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981).

⁸⁴ Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance*, 98.

achieve this statement by placing their stories in a superior previous age. Holford notes that “*Horn Child* uses the past to compensate for the inadequacies of the contemporary world,”⁸⁵ and Wilcox similarly argues that *Guy of Warwick* is set in an alternative time of the crusades where the heroes fight honorably.⁸⁶

Just as modern readers and movie audiences know that in real life the rich boy does not usually marry the poor girl and all prostitutes do not have hearts of gold, a medieval audience was unlikely to be so naïve as to confuse the escapist world of romance with the real one of their own. Popular romances indicate a great deal about actual historical circumstances through their audience’s idealized desires. Yet again, this is not where the energy of the romances lay. Chiefly, a medieval English romance was meant by its compositor to be a fun diversion of love, adventure, and exotic locales. The audience desired “a tale of myrthe” (*CT* VII.706) as Harry Bailly requests, and its *doctryne* was a commendable but secondary addition to its *solas*.

⁸⁵ Matthew L. Holford, “History and Politics in *Horn Child* and *Maiden Rimmild*,” *Review of English Studies* 57:229 (2006): 168.

⁸⁶ Rebecca Wilcox, “Romancing the East: Greeks and Saracens in *Guy of Warwick*,” in McDonald, 221.

Textual Notes

In translating these works I have attempted a line-by-line rendering, although at times in order to obtain a natural English syntax the line orders may vary slightly. To make the story as understandable as possible I have modernized character and geographical names where practicable and have attempted to simplify the more arcane details of armament and feudal rank.

Stylistically, Middle English's main fault as a growing and developing language lies in its occasional lexical poverty and grammatical ambiguity. At times pronouns are unclear and the repetition of verbs such as *said* can be tiresome, and I have made assumptions based on the narrative to give correct or subtler shades of meaning. For this reason the translation is often slightly longer than the original. Despite the metapoetical references of many romances, I have endeavored to avoid breaking the fourth wall of the translation by exposing it as a translation, and so I have not used obviously anachronistic expressions or colloquialisms to render medieval ones. Sir Orfeo does not tune anyone out or step on the gas. Josian is attractive but never hot, except for possibly when she is about to be burned at the stake.

I have gratefully used the TEAMS editions of each poem for the translations and for manuscript details and have referenced the editions as such in footnotes. All Chaucer references are globally from Larry Benson's *The Riverside Chaucer*, third edition, 1987. Other references are translation-specific and noted.

CHAPTER 1

Amis and Amiloun

Amis and Amiloun survives in four manuscripts: Auchinleck (c. 1330), Egerton 2862 (c. 1400), Harley 2386 (c. 1500), and Bodleian 21900 (Douce 326) (c. 1500). I take as my text source Edward E. Foster, ed. *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997. 2nd ed., 2007. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/amisfr.htm>. Foster uses mainly Auchinleck with some lines from Egerton. Other modern editions include MacEdward Leach, ed., *Amis and Amiloun* (1937), and the facsimile version of Derek Pearsall & I.C. Cunningham, eds., *The Auchinleck Manuscript* (1977).

1	For Goddes love in Trinyté Al that ben hend herkenith to me, I pray yow, par amoure, What sumtyme fel beyond the see Of two Barons of grete bounté And men of grete honoure; Her faders were barons hende, Lordinges com of grete kynde And pris men in toun and toure;	For the love of God in Trinity, I ask all who are courteous To listen to me, in kindness, To what once happened beyond the sea To two barons, men of great generosity And high honor. Their fathers were noble barons, Lords born of distinguished families And men esteemed in town and tower.
10	To here of these children two How they were in wele and woo, Ywys, it is grete doloure. In weele and woo how they gan wynd And how unkouth they were of kynd, The children bold of chere, And how they were good and hend And how yong thei becom frend In cort there they were, And how they were made knyght	To hear about these two children And how they experienced good and ill Is a great sorrow, indeed: How they fared, in good and ill, How innocent they were of arrogance— ¹ The children, natural in manner— And how they were good and well-raised And how young when they became friends, In the court where they stayed, And how they were knighted
20	And how they were trouth plyght,	And how they pledged their loyalty, ²

¹ *Uncouth they were of kynd*: There is disagreement on what exactly this means. Kölbing (1884) rendered this as “what unknown ancestry they were,” but contextually the poet is praising their good nature (TEAMS). Eugen Kölbing, ed., *Amis and Amiloun, Zugleich mit der Altfranzösischen Quelle*, Altenglische Bibliothek 2, Heilbronn: Henninger, 1884.

<p>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>50</p> <p>60</p>	<p>The children both in fere, And in what lond thei were born And what the childres name worn, Herkeneth and ye mow here. In Lumbardy, y understand, Whilom bifel in that lond, In romance as we reede, Two barouns hend wonyd in lond And had two ladyes free to fond, That worthy were in wede; Of her hend ladyes two Two knave childre gat they thoo That douhty were of dede, And trew weren in al thing, And therefore Jhesu, hevynking, Ful wel quyted her mede. The childrenis names, as y yow hyght, In ryme y wol rekene ryght And tel in my talkyng; Both they were getyn in oo nyght And on oo day born aplyght, For soth, without lesyng; That oon baroun son, ywys Was ycleped childe Amys At his cristenyng; That other was clepyd Amylyoun, That was a childe of grete renoun And com of hyghe ofspryng. The children gon then thryve, Fairer were never noon on lyve, Curtaise, hende, and good; When they were of yeres fyve, Alle her kyn was of hem blyth, So mylde they were of mood; When they were sebyn yere olde, Grete joy every man of hem tolde To beholde that frely foode; When they were twel winter olde, In al the londe was ther non hold So faire of boon and blood. In that tyme, y understand, A duk wonyd in that lond, Prys in toun and toure; Frelly he let sende his sonde, After Erles, Barouns, fre and bond, And ladies bryght in boure;</p>	<p>Both of the children together; And in what land they were born And what the boys' names were, Listen and you will learn. In Lombardy, as I understand, It happened once in that land In the romance as we read it, That two noble barons lived there, And had two ladies, proven in their nobility, Who were regal in their dress. From those two courteous ladies They had two boys, Who were valiant in deeds, And were true in all things. And thus Jesus, Heaven's king, Fully gave them their reward. I will properly relate in rhyme The children's names, as I promised, And tell you in my speech; Both of them were conceived on one night And born the same day, in fact, Truthfully, without a lie; One of the baron's sons, in honesty, Was named Amys At his christening; The other was called Amiloun, Who was a child of great renown And had come from a high lineage. The children began to thrive. There were none fairer alive, More courteous, handsome, and good. When they were five years old, All their family was pleased with them, They were so gentle in their manners. When they were seven years old, Every man spoke of them with great pleasure To behold those admirable children. When they were twelve years old, There were none in the land Regarded so highly in flesh and bone. In that time, as I understand, A duke resided in that land, Esteemed in town and castle. He graciously sent his message To earls and barons, free and bound, And ladies shining in their bowers.³</p>
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² *Trouth plyght*: To swear one's *troth* in friendship, duty, or marriage is to make a serious and unbreakable vow of fidelity. See *Athelston*, line 23 for another friendship pledge.

³ *Ladies bryght in boure*: A recurring poetic phrase. A *bower* is a lady's bedroom, whereas a *chamber* usually refers to any room in a castle. Like *toun and tour* (9) and *worthy in wede* (30), this sort of

70	<p>A ryche fest he wolde make Al for Jhesu Cristes sake That is oure savyoure; Muche folk, as y yow saye, He lete after sende that daye With myrth and grete honoure. Thoo Barouns twoo, that y of tolde, And her sones feire and bolde To court they com ful yare. When they were samned, yong and olde, Mony men gan hem byholde Of lordynges that there were,</p>	<p>He was to host a rich feast All for Jesus Christ's sake, Who is our savior. He sent his invitation that day To many people, as I tell you, With celebration and great ceremony. These two barons that I spoke of, And their sons, fair and brave, Came promptly to the court. When they were gathered, young and old, Of the lordings who were there,</p>
80	<p>Of body how wel they were pyght, And how feire they were of syght, Of hyde and hew and here; And al they seide without lesse Fairer children than they wesse Ne sey they never yere. In al the court was ther no wyght, Erl, baroun, squyer, ne knyght, Neither lef ne loothe,</p>	<p>Many men looked upon them: How well-shaped they were in body, And how fair they were in sight In skin and complexion and hair. And they all said, without deceit, That they had never before seen Finer young men than they were. In all the court there was nobody, Earl, baron, squire, or knight, Neither fair nor foul,</p>
90	<p>So lyche they were both of syght And of waxing, y yow plyght, I tel yow for soothe, In al thing they were so lyche Ther was neither pore ne ryche, Who so beheld hem both, Fader ne moder that couth say Ne knew the hend children tway But by the coloure of her cloth. That riche douke his fest gan hold With erles and with barouns bold, As ye may listen and lithe,</p>	<p>Like them in their appearance. And in stature, I swear to you That I tell you the truth, In every way they were so alike That there was no one, rich or poor, Father or mother, Who beheld them both and could say Or tell the two handsome youths apart Except by the color of their clothes. That rich duke held his festivities,⁴ With earls and with brave barons, As you may listen and learn,</p>
100	<p>Fourtenight, as me was told, With meet and drynke, meryst on mold To glad the bernes blithe; Ther was mirthe and melodye And al maner of menstracie Her craftes for to kithe; Opon the fiftenday ful yare Thai token her leve forto fare And thonked him mani a sithe. Than the lordinges schuld forth wende,</p>	<p>For fourteen nights, as I have been told, With food and drink, the merriest on earth, To cheer the joyful men. There was entertainment and melody And all types of musicians There to show their skills. Upon the fifteenth day, with earnestness, They made their goodbyes to leave And thanked him many times. When the gentlemen had gone forth,</p>
110	<p>That riche douke comly of kende</p>	<p>That splendid duke, noble in lineage,</p>

alliterative doublet is omnipresent in ME romances, perhaps a holdover from Anglo-Saxon poetic modes. Chaucer only uses the expression once in his writings, fittingly in *Sir Thopas* (CT VII.742).

⁴ *That riche douke*: In early Middle English the Old English articles / demonstratives *se*, *seo*, and *þæt* were gradually replaced by the definite article *the* (*þe*), and at times *the* and *that* seem poorly distinguished. Recurring formulas such as *that rich duke* might have been phrased for poetic reasons and not grammatical ones. A similar process was happening in Old French where Latin *ille*, *illa* (that) had become *li*, *la* (the). *Rich* in ME has a variety of nuances, from “powerful” or “high-ranking” to “wealthy.”

120	<p>Cleped to him that tide Tho tuay barouns, that were so hende, And prayd hem also his frende In court thai schuld abide, And lete her tuay sones fre In his servise with him to be, Semly to fare bi his side; And he wald dubbe hem knightes to And susten hem for ever mo, As lordinges proude in pride. The riche barouns answerd ogain, And her levedis gan to sain To that douke ful yare That thai were bothe glad and fain That her levely children tuain In servise with him ware. Thai gave her childer her blisceing And bisought Jhesu, heven king, He schuld scheld hem fro care,</p>	<p>Called to him on that occasion The two barons, who were so courteous, And invited them as his friend That they should allow Their two fine sons to stay in the court And be with him in his service, To live fittingly by his side. And he would dub them both knights And support them forevermore, As lords proud in honor. The elegant barons replied in answer, And their ladies began to speak To the duke with eagerness, That they were both glad and pleased That their two beloved children Would be in service with him. They gave their children their blessing And entreated Jesus, Heaven's king, That He would shield them from harm,</p>
130	<p>And oft thai thonked the douke that day And token her leve and went oway To her owen contres thai gun fare. Thus war tho hende childer, ywis, Child Amiloun and child Amis, In court frely to fede, To ride an hunting under riis; Over al the lond than were thai priis And worthliest in wede. So wele tho children loved hem tho,</p>	<p>And they thanked the duke continually that day, And they took their leave and went away. They set off to journey to their own lands. Thus those lovely youths, Child Amiloun and Amis, were in truth Free to dine in the court, And to ride and hunt under the branches. In all the land, they were respected And held as worthiest in appearance. So well did each love the other that Never were young men so close to each other,⁵</p>
140	<p>Nas never children loved hem so, Noither in word no in dede; Bituix hem tuai, of blod and bon, Trewer love nas never non, In gest as so we rede. On a day the childer, war and wight, Trewethes togider thai gun plight, While thai might live and stond That bothe bi day and bi night, In wele and wo, in wrong and right,</p>	<p>Neither in word nor in deed. Between the two, in blood and bone, There was never truer friendship, In the stories that we read. On one day the youths, keen and brave, Pledged their loyalty together, That while they might live and stand, By both day and night, In good and ill, in right and wrong,</p>
150	<p>That thai schuld frely fond To hold togider at everi nede, In word, in werk, in wille, in dede, Where that thai were in lond, Fro that day forward never mo Failen other for wele no wo: Therto thai held up her hond.</p>	<p>They would freely try To hold together in every need, In word, in works, in will, in deeds, Wherever they were in the land. From that day forward they would never Fail the other, neither in prosperity or woe. To this they held up their hands.</p>

⁵ ME is fairly poor in words for friendship, usually resorting to *love*. Throughout the text I am reading in various synonyms, as the repeated allusions to marital fidelity would not have suggested anything to a romance audience beyond deep *amicus*. Not everyone agrees: see Sheila Delaney, "A, A, and B: Coding Same-Sex Union in *Amis and Amiloun*," in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 63–81.

160	<p>Thus in gest as ye may here, Tho hende childer in cuntré were With that douke for to abide; The douke was blithe and glad of chere, Thai were him bothe leve and dere, Semly to fare bi his side. Tho thai were fifyten winter old, He dubbed bothe tho bernes bold To knightes in that tide, And fond hem al that hem was nede, Hors and wepen and worthly wede, As princes prout in pride.</p>	<p>So in the story as you may hear, These gentle young men of that country Were living with that duke. The duke was pleased and glad at heart, And they were beloved and dear to him, And fared honorably by his side. When they were fifteen years old, He dubbed both of the youths As knights at that time, And gave them all that they needed, Horse and weapon and fine clothes, As princes who were proud in bearing.</p>
170	<p>That riche douke, he loved hem so, Al that thai wald he fond hem tho, Bothe stedes white and broun, That in what stede thai gun go, Alle the lond spac of hem tho, Bothe in tour and toun; In to what stede that thai went, To justes other to turnament, Sir Amis and Sir Amiloun, For douhtiest in everi dede, With scheld and spere to ride on stede,</p>	<p>That rich duke loved them so. All that they wished for he provided, Steeds for both, white and brown, So that in whatever place they went, All the land spoke of them later, Both in tower and in town. At whatever place that they went, To jousts or to tournaments, Sir Amis and Sir Amiloun, Being the bravest in every deed, With shield and spear as they rode on steeds, Won great renown for themselves.</p>
180	<p>Thai gat hem gret renoun. That riche douke hadde of hem pris, For that thai were so war and wiis And holden of gret bounté. Sir Amiloun and Sir Amis, He sett hem bothe in gret office, In his court for to be; Sir Amis, as ye may here, He made his chef botelere, For he was hend and fre,</p>	<p>That regal duke had great regard for them, For they were so keen and wise And esteemed for their great generosity. He set Sir Amiloun and Sir Amis, Both of them, in key offices, In order to be in his court. Sir Amis, as you may hear, Was made his chief butler, For he was courteous and gracious.</p>
190	<p>And Sir Amiloun of hem alle He made chef steward in halle, To dight al his meine. In to her servise when thai were brought, To geten hem los tham spared nought, Wel hendeliche thai bigan; With riche and pover so wele thai wrought, Al that hem seighe, with word and thought, Hem loved mani a man; For thai were so blithe of chere,</p>	<p>And Sir Amiloun was made Chief steward of the hall over everyone To keep his household in order. When they were brought into their services, They spared nothing to bring themselves praise, And they acted very gentlemanly. They served rich and poor so admirably That all who saw them, many a man, Cherished them in word and thought. For they were so graceful in manner</p>
200	<p>Over al the lond fer and nere The los of love thai wan, And the riche douke, withouten les, Of all the men that olive wes Mest he loved hem than. Than hadde the douke, ich understand, A chef steward of alle his lond, A douhti knight at crie, That ever he proved with nithe and ond For to have brought hem bothe to schond</p>	<p>That over all the land, near and far, They won praise for being loved, And the mighty duke, without a lie, Of all the men that were alive, Loved them most of all then. At the time the duke, as I understand, Had a chief steward of all his land, A formidable knight at his call, Who incessantly schemed, with spite and malice, To have them both brought to shame</p>
210	<p>With gile and trecherie.</p>	<p>With guile and treachery.</p>

	<p>For thai were so gode and hende, And for the douke was so wele her frende, He hadde therof gret envie; To the douke with wordes grame Ever he proved to don hem schame With wel gret felonie. So within tho yeres to A messenger ther com tho To Sir Amiloun, hende on hond,</p>	<p>For they were so good and so courteous, And because the duke was so close a friend, He had great envy because of it. With cruel words to the duke, He continually tried to do them harm With some outrageous crime. So then, within two years A messenger arrived there, Skillful in hand, to Sir Amiloun</p>
220	<p>And seyde hou deth hadde fet him fro His fader and his moder also Thurch the grace of Godes sond. Than was that knight a careful man, To that douke he went him than And dede him to understand His fader and his moder hende War ded, and he most hom wende, For to resaive his lond.</p>	<p>And said how death had taken from him His father and his mother as well Through the grace of God's command. Then that knight was a sorrowful man. He took himself to the duke And had him understand That his father and his gracious mother Were dead, and he had to travel home In order to receive his land.</p>
230	<p>That riche douke, comly of kende, Answerd ogain with wordes hende And seyde, "So God me spede, Sir Amiloun, now thou schalt wende Me nas never so wo for frende That of mi court out yede. Ac yif ever it befalle so That thou art in wer and wo And of min help hast nede, Saveliche com or send thi sond, And with al mi powere of mi lond</p>	<p>That stately duke, of a noble family, Answered in reply with kindly words And said, "So God help me, Sir Amiloun, now that you must go I was never so sad to see a friend Go out of my court. But if it ever happens so That you are at war or in woe And have need of my help, Just come or send your word, And with all my powers in my land</p>
240	<p>Y schal wreke the of that dede." Than was Sir Amiloun ferli wo For to wende Sir Amis fro, On him was al his thought. To a goldsmith he gan go And lete make gold coupes to, For thre hundred ponde he hem bought, That bothe were of o wight, And bothe of o michel, yplight; Ful richeliche thai were wrought,</p>	<p>I will avenge you of that injury." Then Sir Amiloun was bitterly sad To part from Sir Amis. On him were all his thoughts. He made his way to a goldsmith And had two gold cups made. He paid three hundred pounds for them,⁶ So that both were the same weight, And both were the same size, truly. They were fabricated lavishly, And both were as alike, I know, As Sir Amiloun and Sir Amis were;</p>
250	<p>Ther no failed right nought. When that Sir Amiloun was al yare, He tok his leve for to fare, To wende in his jorne. Sir Amis was so ful of care, For sorwe and wo and sikeing sare,</p>	<p>There was no defect at all in them. When Sir Amiloun was all ready, He made his goodbyes to set forth, To travel on his journey. Sir Amis was so full of sadness, That for sorrow and woe and sighing bitterly,</p>

⁶ According to the UK National Archives website, £300 in 1340 is roughly US\$250,000 in modern money, a preposterous amount only credible in a medieval romance. Even the extravagantly lavish ring Havelock gives Ubbe is mentioned as worth £100. Accessed May 17, 2010 at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>.

260	<p>Almost swoned that fre. To the douke he went with dreri mode And praid him fair, ther he stode, And seyde, "Sir, par charité, Yif me leve to wend the fro, Bot yif y may with mi brother go, Mine hert, it breketh of thre!" That riche douke, comly of kende, Answerd ogain with wordes hende And seyde withouten delay, "Sir Amis, mi gode frende, Wold ye bothe now fro me wende?"</p>	<p>That sensitive man almost fell faint. He went to the duke in dreary spirits And addressed him reverently where he stood And said, "Sir, for charity's sake, Give me permission to travel from you. Unless I may go with my brother, My heart, it will break in three!" The regal duke, of a noble family, Answered in reply with gracious words And said with no delay, "Sir Amis, my good friend, Would you both now leave me? Surely not!" he said.</p>
270	<p>"Certes," he seyde, "nay! Were ye bothe went me fro, Than schuld me waken al mi wo, Mi joie were went oway. Thi brother schal in to his cuntré; Wende with him in his jurné And com ogain this day!" When thai were redi forto ride, Tho bold bernes for to abide Busked hem redy boun.</p>	<p>"If you were both gone from me, Then all my sorrows would be awakened And my joy would be gone away! Your brother will go to his country. Accompany him on his journey And return again today." When they were ready to ride, Those brave men readied Themselves for the journey.</p>
280	<p>Hende, herkneth! Is nought to hide, So douhti knightes, in that tide That ferd out of that toun, Al that day as thai rade Gret morning bothe thai made, Sir Amis and Amiloun, And when thai schuld wende otuain, Wel fair togider opon a plain Of hors thai light adoun.</p>	<p>Gentle people, listen! There's nothing to hide. Such sturdy knights, at that time, Traveled out of the town. All that day, as they rode on, They both made great mourning, Sir Amis and Amiloun. And when they had to part in two, They nobly dismounted from their horses Together upon a plain.</p>
290	<p>When thai were bothe afot light, Sir Amiloun, that hendi knight, Was rightwise man of rede And seyde to Sir Amis ful right, "Brother, as we er trewthe plight Bothe with word and dede, Fro this day forward never mo To faile other for wele no wo, To help him at his nede, Brother, be now trewe to me, And y schal ben as trewe to the,</p>	<p>When they were both set on foot, Sir Amiloun, that faithful knight, Was a just man of counsel, And said straightaway to Sir Amis, "Brother, as we earlier vowed loyalty, Both in words and deeds, From this day on we promise To never fail the other, for better or worse, To help him in his need. Friend, be true to me now, And I will be as true to you, As God may help me!</p>
300	<p>Also God me spede! Ac brother, ich warn the biforn, For His love that bar the croun of thorn To save al mankende, Be nought ogain thi lord forsworn, And yif thou dost, thou art forlorn Ever more withouten ende. Bot ever do trewthe and no tresoun And thenk on me, Sir Amiloun, Now we asondri schal wende.</p>	<p>But brother, I warn you beforehand, For His love, who wore a crown of thorns To save all mankind, Do not swear falsely against your lord In any way. And if you do, you are lost Forevermore without end. But always be true and never treasonous; And think of me, Sir Amiloun, Now that we must travel apart.</p>
310	<p>And, brother, yete y the forbede The fals steward felawerede;</p>	<p>And friend, again I warn you against Fellowship with the false steward.</p>

<p>320</p>	<p>Certes, he wil the schende!" As thai stode so, tho bretheren bold, Sir Amiloun drougt forth tuay coupes of gold, Ware liche in al thing, And bad sir Amis that he schold Chese whether he have wold, Withouten more duelling, And seyde to him, "Mi leve brother, Kepe thou that on and y that other, For Godes love, heven king; Lete never this coupe fro the, Bot loke heron and thenk on me, It tokneth our parting." Gret sorwe thai made at her parting And kisten hem with eighen wepeing, Tho knightes hende and fre. Aither bitaught other heven king, And on her stedes thai gun spring</p>	<p>Surely, he will destroy you!" As they stood so, the brave brothers, Sir Amiloun drew out the two gold cups, Which were alike in every way, And asked Sir Amis if he would Choose which one he wished for, Without more delay. And he said to him, "My dear comrade, Keep that one and I will the other, For God's love, Heaven's king; Let this cup never go from you, But look on it and think of me. It is a token of our parting." They made great sorrow at their leaving And kissed each other with weeping eyes, Those knights, noble and free. Each commended the other to Heaven's king, And they jumped on their steeds And went on their journeys.</p>
<p>330</p>	<p>And went in her jurné. Sir Amiloun went hom to his lond And sesed it al in to his hond, That his elders hadde be, And spoused a levedy bright in bour And brought hir hom with gret honour And miche solempneté. Lete we Sir Amiloun stille be With his wiif in his cuntré - God leve hem wele to fare -</p>	<p>Sir Amiloun went home to his land Which his ancestors had held, And claimed it all into his hand, And wedded a lady, beautiful in her bower, And brought her home with great ceremony And much stately formality. We will leave Sir Amiloun alone With his wife in his country. God grant that he fare well! And we will talk of Sir Amis. When he came back home to the court, They were very pleased to see him. For he was so gracious and good That men blessed the two, both flesh and blood, Who had conceived and given birth to him, Except for the steward of that land. He forever tried with spite and hostility To bring him into grief.</p>
<p>340</p>	<p>And of Sir Amis telle we; When he com hom to court oye, Ful blithe of him thai ware; For that he was so hende and gode, Men blisced him, bothe bon and blod, That ever him gat and bare, Save the steward of that lond; Ever he proved with nithe and ond To bring him into care. Than on a day bifel it so</p>	<p>When he came back home to the court, They were very pleased to see him. For he was so gracious and good That men blessed the two, both flesh and blood, Who had conceived and given birth to him, Except for the steward of that land. He forever tried with spite and hostility To bring him into grief. Then one day it so happened That he met with the steward, Who greeted that noble man courteously. "Sir Amis," he said, "It is very sad for you Because your friend has gone from you, And certainly it is the same for me. But do not be troubled by his going, If you will trust in my instruction, And let your mourning go. You will be kin to me, And I will be a better friend to you Than he ever was.</p>
<p>350</p>	<p>With the steward he met tho, Ful fair he gret that fre. "Sir Amis," he seyde, "the is ful wo For that thi brother is went the fro, And, certes, so is me. Ac of his wendeing have thou no care, Yif thou wilt leve opon mi lare, And lete thi morning be, And thou wil be to me kende, Y schal the be a better frende</p>	<p>Than he ever was. "Sir Amis," he said, "Do as I advise, And swear our brotherhood together And pledge our fidelity as well. Be true to me in word and deed, And I will to you, so help me God,</p>
<p>360</p>	<p>Than ever yete was he. "Sir Amis," he seyde, "do bi mi red, And swere ous bothe brotherhed And plight we our trewthes to; Be trewe to me in word and dede, And y schal to the, so God me spede,</p>	<p>And I will to you, so help me God, And I will to you, so help me God,</p>

	Be trewe to the also.” Sir Amis answerd, “Mi treuthe y plight To Sir Amiloun, the gentil knight, Thei he be went me fro.	Be true as well.” Sir Amis answered, “I gave my word To Sir Amiloun, the noble knight, Though he has departed from me.
370	Whiles that y may gon and speke, Y no schal never mi treuthe breke, Noither for wele no wo. For bi the treuthe that God me sende, Ichave him founde so gode and kende, Seththen that y first him knewe, For ones y plight him treuthe, that hende, Where so he in warld wende, Y schal be to him trewe; And yif y were now forsworn	While I can walk and speak, I will never break my vow, Neither for riches nor poverty. For by the truth that God sends me, I have found him so good and kind Since the time I first knew him; For since I pledged him loyalty, that friend, Wherever he goes in the world, I will be true to him.
380	And breke mi treuthe, y were forlorn, Wel sore it schuld me rewe. Gete me frendes whare y may, Y no schal never bi night no day Chaunge him for no newe.” The steward than was egre of mode, Almost for wrethe he wex ner wode And seyde, withouten delay, And swore bi Him that dyed on Rode: “Thou traitour, unkinde blod,	And if I now swore against him And broke my oath, I would be lost. I would rue it bitterly. Though I get friends where I may, I will never by night or day Exchange him for someone new.” Then the steward was in a furious mood; He almost grew mad with rage And said, without any pause, And swore by Him who died on the Cross, “You traitor, low blood!
390	Thou schalt abigge this nay. Y warn the wele,” he seyde than, “That y schal be thi strong foman Ever after this day!” Sir Amis answerd tho, “Sir, therof give y nought a slo; Do al that thou may!” Al thus the wrake gan biginne, And with wrethe thai went atuinne, Tho bold bernes to.	“You will pay for this snub! I warn you well,” he said then, “That I will be your sworn enemy Ever after this day!” Sir Amis then answered, “Sir, I don’t care a blueberry about it! ⁷ Do as you like!” And so the emnity began to rise, And in wrath they separated, Those two bold young men.
400	The steward nold never blinne To schende that douhti knight of kinne, Ever he proved tho. Thus in court togider thai were With wrethe and with loureand chere Wele half a yere and mo, And afterward opon a while The steward with tresoun and gile Wrought him ful michel wo.	The steward would never stop, Always attempting to ruin That indomitable knight of honor. Thus in court they coexisted With antipathy and surly glares Well more than half a year. And afterward, upon one occasion, The steward caused great woe for him With treason and guile.
410	So in a time, as we tel in gest, The riche douke lete make a fest Semly in somers tide; Ther was mani a gentil gest With mete and drink ful onest To servi by ich a side.	So one time, as we say in stories, The rich duke held a feast, Fittingly in summertime. There were many noble guests With the finest food and drink Served all around.

⁷ *Sloe*: a tart plum-like fruit resembling a blueberry. As the berries were of little value, the idiom is close in meaning to PDE “I don’t give a crap.”

420	<p>Miche semly folk was samned thare, Erls, barouns, lasse and mare, And levedis proude in pride. More joie no might be non Than ther was in that worthy won, With blisse in borwe to bide. That riche douke, that y of told, He hadde a douhter fair and bold, Curteise, hende and fre. When sche was fiften winter old, In al that lond nas ther non yhold So semly on to se, For sche was gentil and avenaunt, Hir name was cleped Belisaunt, As ye may lithe at me.</p>	<p>Many worthy people were gathered there, Earls, barons, high and low, And ladies magnificent in appearance. There could be no greater joy Than there was in that stately place, With the pleasures to enjoy in the castle. This grand duke, which I spoke of, Had a daughter who was fair and bold, Courteous, attractive, and generous. When she was fifteen years old, There was no one known in all the land So lovely to look on, For she was graceful and beautiful. As you may listen to me, Her name was called Belisaunt.</p>
430	<p>With levedis and maidens bright in bour Kept sche was with honour And gret solempnit�. That fest lasted fourteen night Of barouns and of birddes bright And lordinges mani and fale. Ther was mani a gentil knight And mani a serjaunt, wise and wight, To serve tho hende in halle. Than was the boteler, Sir Amis, Over al yholden flour and priis, Trewely to telle in tale, And douhtiest in everi dede And worthliest in ich a wede And semliest in sale.</p>	<p>She stayed with the ladies and maidens, Shining in their bowers, living in honor And great dignity. The feast lasted fourteen nights, With barons and beautiful lasses And lords, numerous and abundant. There was many a gentle knight And many a servant, strong and wise, To serve those nobles in the hall. But the butler, Sir Amis, Held the flower and the prize over all, To speak truly in the tale, And most valiant in every deed And worthiest in all his attire, And most dignified in the hall.</p>
440	<p>Than the lordinges schulden al gon And wende out of that worthli won, In boke as so we rede, That mirie maide gan aske anon Of her maidens everichon And seyde, "So God you spede, Who was hold the doughtiest knight And semlyest in ich a sight And worthliest in wede, And who was the fairest man That was yholden in lond than, And doughtiest of dede?"</p>	<p>When the lordings all had to leave And departed from that stately dwelling, In the book as we read it, The merry maid soon asked Each one of her maidens, And said, "So God help you, Who was considered the bravest knight And finest in every aspect, And worthiest in attire, And who was seen as the fairest man In the land at the time, The most valiant of deeds?"</p>
450	<p>Her maidens gan answeere ogain And seyde, "Madame, we schul the sain That sothe bi Seyn Saviour: Of erls, barouns, knight and swain The fairest man and mest of main And man of mest honour, It is Sir Amis, the kinges boteler; In al this world nis his per, Noither in toun no tour; He is douhtiest in dede And worthliest in everi wede And chosen for priis and flour."</p>	<p>Her maidens answered in return And said, "My lady, we will tell you The truth, by our Holy Savior. Out of earls, barons, knights, and youths, The fairest man and greatest of might, And the man of highest honor, Is Sir Amis, the king's butler. In all this world he has no equal, Neither in town nor castle. He is bravest in deed And worthiest in every clothing And takes the prize and flower."</p>
460	<p>Of erls, barouns, knight and swain The fairest man and mest of main And man of mest honour, It is Sir Amis, the kinges boteler; In al this world nis his per, Noither in toun no tour; He is douhtiest in dede And worthliest in everi wede And chosen for priis and flour."</p>	<p>Out of earls, barons, knights, and youths, The fairest man and greatest of might, And the man of highest honor, Is Sir Amis, the king's butler. In all this world he has no equal, Neither in town nor castle. He is bravest in deed And worthiest in every clothing And takes the prize and flower."</p>

470	<p>Belisaunt, that birdde bright, When thai hadde thus seyde, yplight, As ye may listen and lithe, On Sir Amis, that gentil knight, Ywis, hir love was al alight, That no man might it kithe. Wher that sche seighe him ride or go, Hir thought hir hert brac atuo, That hye no spac nought with that blithe;</p>	<p>Belisaunt, that beautiful lass, When they had spoken so, truly, As you may listen and learn— Her heart was all set on fire For Sir Amis, the noble knight, With a love no man could know. Wherever she saw him ride or walk, She thought her heart would break in two.</p>
480	<p>For hye no might night no day Speke with him, that fair may, Sche wepe wel mani a sithe. Thus that miri maiden ying Lay in care and lovemorning Bothe bi night and day; As y you tel in mi talking, For sorwe sche spac with him no thing, Sike in bed sche lay.</p>	<p>Because she never spoke with that elegant man, As she had no opportunity by night or day To speak with him, that fair maiden, She wept a good number of times. Thus the merry young maiden Lay in sadness and lovesickness Both by day and night. As I tell you in my speaking, For sorrow she said nothing to him, But lay ill in bed.</p>
490	<p>Hir moder com to hir tho And gan to frain hir of hir wo, Help hir yif hye may; And sche answerd withouten wrong, Hir pines were so hard and strong, Sche wald be loken in clay. That riche douke in o morning And with him mani a gret lording, As prince prout in pride, Thai dight him withouten dueling, For to wende on dere hunting, And busked hem for to ride.</p>	<p>Her mother then came to her And asked her about her malaise, To help her if she could. And she answered without deceit That her pains were so hard and strong She wanted to be buried in the clay. That majestic duke, on one morning, Along with many a great lording, As princes proud in their bearing, Prepared themselves without delay To go out deer hunting, And so they dressed themselves to ride.</p>
500	<p>When the lordinges everichon Were went out of that worthli won - In herd is nought to hide - Sir Amis, withouten les, For a malady that on him wes, At hom he gan to abide. When tho lordinges were out ywent With her men hende and bowes bent, To hunte on holtes hare, Than Sir Amis, verrament, He bileft at hom in present,</p>	<p>When every one of the lordings Was gone out of that regal residence, Sir Amis, without a lie, Because of a minor illness he had— And because one cannot hide in a crowd— Stayed behind at home. When the lordings were all gone out, With their men, skillful and bows bent, To hunt in the deep woods, Then Sir Amis, in truth, Was left at home for the day</p>
510	<p>To kepe al that ther ware. That hendi knight bithought him tho, Into the gardin he wold go, For to solas him thare. Under a bough as he gan bide, To here the foules song that tide, Him thought a blisseful fare. Now, hende, herkneth, and ye may here Hou that the doukes douhter dere Sike in hir bed lay.</p>	<p>To attend to all who were there. Then the gracious knight thought to himself That he would go into the garden To relax himself there. Under a bough as he rested. To hear the birds sing for the moment Seemed a peaceful state to him. Now, gentle people, listen and you will hear How the duke's dear daughter Lay in distress in her bed.</p>
520	<p>Hir moder com with diolful chere And al the levedis that ther were, For to solas that may:</p>	<p>Her mother came in doleful spirits With all the ladies that were there To give comfort to that maiden.</p>

<p>530</p> <p>540</p> <p>550</p> <p>560</p> <p>570</p>	<p>“Arise up,” sche seyde, “douhter min, And go play the in to the gardin This semly somers day; Ther may thou here the foules song With joie and miche blis among, Thi care schal wende oway.” Up hir ros that swete wight. Into the gardine sche went ful right With maidens hende and fre. The somers day was fair and bright, The sonne him schon thurch lem of light, That semly was on to se. Sche herd the foules gret and smale, The swete note of the nightingale Ful mirily sing on tre; Ac hir hert was so hard ibrought, On love-longing was al hir thought, No might hir gamen no gle. And so that mirie may with pride Went into the orchard that tide, To slake hir of hir care. Than seyge sche Sir Amis biside, Under a bough he gan abide, To here tho mirthes mare. Than was sche bothe glad and blithe, Hir joie couthe sche noman kithe, When that sche seighe him thare; And thought sche wold for noman wond That sche no wold to him fond And tel him of hir fare. Than was that may so blithe o mode, When sche seighe were he stode, To him sche went, that swete, And thought, for alle this warldes gode, Bot yif hye spac that frely fode, That time no wold sche lete. And as tite as that gentil knight Seighe that bird in bour so bright Com with him for to mete, Ogaines hir he gan wende, With worde bothe fre and hende Ful fair he gan hir grete. That mirie maiden sone anon Bad hir maidens fram hir gon And withdrawe hem oway; And when thai were togider alon, To Sir Amis sche made hir mon And seyde opon hir play, “Sir knight, on the mine hert is brought, The to love is al mi thought Bothe bi night and day;</p>	<p>“Rise up,” she said, “daughter of mine, And go play in the garden This lovely summer’s day. There you can hear the birds sing With joy and great bliss among them, And your troubles will pass away.” The sweet creature rose up. She went straightaway into the garden With maidens, gracious and noble. The summer’s day was fair and bright. The sun shone down in a gleaming light, Which was pleasant to see. She heard the birds, great and small. The sweet note of the nightingale Sang merrily in the tree. But her heart was so heavy That all her thoughts were on love-longing, And she could not play or enjoy herself. And so that lovely maid Went gracefully into the orchard that day To relieve herself of her cares. When she saw Sir Amis nearby Under a bough where he had settled To better hear the singing. Then she was both glad and elated. She could not express her joy to any man When she saw him there. She would not stop for anyone To make her way toward him And tell him about her feelings. Then the maiden’s spirits were so light When she saw where he stood. She went to him, that sweet one, And thought that, for all this world’s goods, She would not let that time pass Without speaking to the valiant young man. And as soon as the gentle knight Saw that lass, so beautiful in her bower, Coming nearer to meet with him, He made his way toward her. With words both noble and gracious He greeted her courteously. The merry maiden quickly Told her ladies to go from her And take themselves away. And when they were alone together, She made her plea to Sir Amis And said coquettishly, “Sir Knight, my heart is set on you. To love you is all my desire, Both by night and day.</p>
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580	<p>That bot thou wolt mi leman be, Ywis, min hert breketh a thre, No lenger libben y no may. “Thou art,” sche seyde, “a gentil knight, And icham a bird in bour bright, Of wel heighe kin ycorn, And bothe bi day and bi night Mine hert so hard is on the light, Mi joie is al forlorn; Plight me thi trewthe thou schalt be trewe And chaunge me for no newe That in this world is born, And y plight the mi treuthe also, Til God and deth dele ous ato, Y schal never be forsworn.”</p>	<p>Unless you will be my beloved, I know my heart will break in three!⁸ I will not live any longer. You are,” she said, “a stately knight, And I am a woman, shining in my bower, And born into a noble family. And both by day and by night, My heart has fallen on you so hard That my joys are all lost. Pledge me your vow that you will be true And will not exchange me for someone new Who is born into this world, And I will pledge you my fidelity also. Until God and death part us in two, I will never break my vow.”</p>
590	<p>That hende knight stille he stode And al for thought chaunged his mode And seyde with hert fre, “Madame, for Him that dyed on Rode, Astow art comen of gentil blode And air of this lond schal be, Bithenke the of thi michel honour; Kinges sones and emperour Nar non to gode to the; Certes, than were it michel unright, Thi love to lain opon a knight</p>	<p>That gentle knight stood still And, deep in thought, changed his mood And said with a dutiful heart, “My lady, for Him who died on the Cross, If you have come from noble blood And will be heir of this land, Think of your high honor! The sons of kings and emperors Are none too good for you. Surely, it would be a great wrong For your love to be given to a knight Who has neither land nor income.</p>
600	<p>That nath noither lond no fe. “And yif we schuld that game biginne, And ani wight of al thi kinne Might it undergo, Al our joie and worldes winne We schuld lese, and for that sinne Wrethi God therto. And y dede mi lord this deshonor, Than were ich an ivel traitour; Ywis, it may nought be so.</p>	<p>And if we should begin a courtship, And anyone from all your family Would discover it, we would lose All our joys and world’s pleasures, And for that sin Anger God as a result. If I did my lord this dishonor, Then I would be an evil traitor. Surely it cannot be so!</p>
610	<p>Leve madame, do bi mi red And thenk what wil com of this dede: Certes, no thing bot wo.” That mirie maiden of gret renoun Answerd, “Sir knight, thou nast no croun; For God that bought the dere,</p>	<p>Dear lady, do as I advise And think what will come of this deed. For certain, nothing but woe.”⁹ The lovely lady of great renown Answerd, “Sir Knight, you have no tonsure!¹⁰ By God who redeemed you dearly,</p>

⁸ Medieval hearts seem to break into two, three, or five with no particular significance, although there may be a reference either to the Trinity or to other significant numbers in scripture. See also the essay on *Guy of Warwick* for more on medieval numerology.

⁹ Amis believes that his rank and status are too low to become romantically involved with the king’s daughter, and that doing so would be a punishable act of disloyalty. He is also continuing to keep his vow to Amiloun, “Be nought ogain thi lord forsworn” (304).

¹⁰ *Tonsure*: the partly-shaved hairstyle common to medieval clergy. Belisaunt makes fun of Sir Amis by suggesting that he is acting like a celibate monk.

<p>620</p> <p>630</p> <p>640</p> <p>650</p> <p>660</p>	<p>Whether artow prest other persoun, Other thou art monk other canoun, That prechest me thus here? Thou no schust have ben no knight, To gon among maidens bright, Thou schust have ben a frere! He that lerd the thus to preche, The devel of helle ichim biteche, Mi brother thei he were! “Ac,” sche seyde, “bi Him that ous wrought, Al thi precheing helpeth nought, No stond thou never so long. Bot yif thou wilt graunt me mi thought, Mi love schal be ful dere aboutht With pines hard and strong; Mi kerchef and mi clothes anon Y schal torende doun ichon And say with michel wrong, With strengthe thou hast me todrawe; Ytake thou schalt be londes lawe And dempt heighe to hong!” Than stode that hendy knight ful stille, And in his hert him liked ille, No word no spac he tho; He thought, “Bot y graunt hir wille, With hir speche sche wil me spille, Er than y passe hir fro; And yif y do mi lord this wrong, With wilde hors and with strong Y schal be drawe also.” Loth him was that dede to don, And wele lother his liif forgon; Was him never so wo. And than he thought, withouten lesing, Better were to graunt hir asking Than his liif for to spille. Than seyde he to that maiden ying, “For Godes love, heven king, Understond to mi skille. Astow art maiden gode and trewe Bithenk hou oft rape wil rewe And turn to grame wel grille, And abide we al this sevennight, As icham trewe gentil knight, Y schal graunt the thi wille.” Than answerd that bird bright And swore, “Bi Jhesu, ful of might, Thou scapest nought so oway.</p>	<p>Are you a priest or parson, Or are you a monk or clergyman That preaches to me so here? You shouldn’t have been a knight, Mingling among fair maidens; You should have been a friar! Whoever taught you to sermonize so, The devil can take him to Hell, Even if he were my brother! But,” she continued, “by Him who created us, All your homilies accomplish nothing, No matter how long you resist! Unless you will grant me my desires, My love will be dearly paid for With pains, hard and strong. My headscarf and my clothes, I will tear all of them down at once And say with great deception That you violated me with force! You will be taken by the law of the land And condemned to hang high!” Then the noble knight stood still And he was troubled at heart; He spoke no words then. He thought, “Unless I grant her will, She will destroy me with her speech Before I pass away from her. And if I do my lord this wrong, I will be drawn as well Behind wild and strong horses.”¹¹ He was loath to do that deed, And more unwilling to lose his life. He was never so woeful. And then he thought, without lying, It would be better to grant her plea Than to lose his life. Then he said to that young maiden, “For God’s sake, Heaven’s king, Listen to my reasons. If you are a maiden, good and true, Think how often haste is regretted And turns to fearful disaster. And let us wait these seven nights, As I am a true noble knight, And I will grant you your will.” Then that beautiful lass answered, And swore, “By Jesus, full of might, You do not escape so easily!</p>
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¹¹ Sir Amis is referring to the capital punishment for high treason of being hanged and *drawn*—dragged by horses—for Belisaunt’s false charge of rape. Sir Amis’ squire mentions being ripped apart in 2046, perhaps the final punishment of *quartering*, having the body cut into four pieces.

	<p>Thi treuthe anon thou schalt me plight, Astow art trewe gentil knight, Thou schalt hold that day.” He graunted hir hir wil tho, And plight hem trewthes bothe to, And seththen kist tho tuai.</p>	<p>You will pledge your vow to me at once. If you are a true and noble knight, You will hold to that day.” He granted her will to her then, And pledged fidelity between them both, And then the two kissed.</p>
670	<p>Into hir chaumber sche went ogain, Than was sche so glad and fain, Hir joie sche couthe no man sai. Sir Amis than withouten duelling, For to kepe his lordes coming, Into halle he went anon.</p>	<p>She returned to her chamber. Then she was glad and pleased; She could not express her joy to anyone.¹² Sir Amis, without more delay, In order to prepare for his lord’s coming, Went into the hall at once.</p>
680	<p>When thai were comen fram dere hunting And with him mani an heighe lording Into that worthly won, After his douhter he asked swithe; Men seyde that sche was glad and blithe, Hir care was al agon.</p>	<p>When the duke came from deer hunting Into that stately dwelling, And with him many a high lord, He quickly asked about his daughter. Men said that she was cheerful and at ease; Her troubles were all gone.</p>
690	<p>To eten in halle thai brought that may, Ful blithe and glad thai were that day And thonked God ichon. When the lordinges, withouten les, Hendelich were brought on des With levedis bright and swete, As princes that were proude in pres, Ful richeliche served he wes</p>	<p>They brought the maiden to dine in the hall. They were very relieved and glad that day, And everyone thanked God. When the lordings, without a lie, Were escorted courteously to the table As princes that were proud in battle, With ladies beautiful and sweet, They were served splendidly With grace and delight at dinner.</p>
700	<p>With menske and mirthe to mete. When that maiden that y of told, Among the birdes that were bold, Ther sche sat in her sete, On Sir Amis, that gentil knight, An hundred time sche cast hir sight, For no thing wald sche lete. On Sir Amis, that knight hendy, Ever more sche cast hir eyghe, For no thing wold sche spare.</p>	<p>When the maiden that I spoke of Sat there in her seat, Among the ladies who were merry, She cast her glance a hundred times On Sir Amis, that noble knight. She would not stop for anything. On Sir Amis, that handsome knight, She continually cast her eye; She would not cease for anything.</p>
710	<p>The steward ful of felonie, Wel fast he gan hem asprie, Til he wist of her fare, And bi her sight he perceived tho That gret love was bituix hem to, And was agreved ful sare, And thought he schuld in a while Bothe with tresoun and with gile Bring hem into care. Thus, ywis, that miri may Ete in halle with gamen and play</p>	<p>The steward, full of wickedness, Began to watch them attentively Until he observed her situation, And by her look he then perceived That there was great love between the two. He was sorely aggrieved And thought he might in a while, With both treason and with guile, Bring them into trouble. Thus, indeed, that sweet maiden Ate in the hall with playfulness and fun</p>

¹² *Hir joie sche couthe no man sai*: This, along with 474, 548, and 1238, is a problematic line. The meaning may be that Belisaunt is too coy or timid to reveal her joy, but it seems unlike her when she aggressively threatens Sir Amis with an accusal of rape and flirts with him at the supper table. The poetic idea may be that her joy is so overwhelming that it is beyond expression for her.

720	<p>Wele four days other five, That ever when sche Sir Amis say, Al hir care was went oway, Wele was hir o live. Wher that he sat or stode, Sche biheld opon that frely fode, No stint sche for no strive; And the steward for wrethe sake Brought hem bothe in ten and wrake.</p>	<p>Well over four days or five, So that always, when she saw Sir Amis, All her cares were gone away; It was good to her to be alive. Whether he sat or stood, She openly watched that noble youth, Nor did she hold back for any danger. And the steward, for wrath's sake, Brought them both to pain and harm. May he have foul fortune!¹³</p>
730	<p>Wel ivel mot he thrive. That riche douke opon a day On dere hunting went him to play, And with him wel mani a man; And Belisaunt, that miri may, To chaumber ther Sir Amis lay, Sche went, as sche wele kan; And the steward, withouten les, In a chaumber bisiden he wes And seighe the maiden than</p>	<p>The rich duke, on one afternoon, Took himself out deer hunting, And many men went with him. And Belisaunt, the merry maiden, Went to the chamber where Sir Amis lay, As she knew the way well. And the steward, without a lie, Was in a chamber nearby And saw the maiden then And how she breezed into the room.</p>
740	<p>Into chaumber hou sche gan glide; For to asprie hem bothe that tide, After swithe he ran. When that may com into that won, Sche fond Sir Amis ther alon, “Hail,” sche seyde, that levedi bright, “Sir Amis,” sche sayd anon, “Thi day a sevensight it is gon, That trewthe we ous plight. Therefore icham comen to the,</p>	<p>In order to spy on them both that moment, He ran quickly toward them. When the maiden came into that place, She found Sir Amis there alone. “Hello,” she said, that beautiful lady. “Sir Amis,” she then continued, “As of today seven nights have passed, Since the vow that we pledged. Therefore I have come to you to know, If you are courteous and generous, And trusted as a noble knight, Whether you will reject me Or you will take me faithfully And keep me as you promised?”</p>
750	<p>To wite, astow art hende and fre And holden a gentil knight, Whether wiltow me forsake Or thou wilt trewely to me take And hold as thou bihight?” “Madame,” seyde the knight ogain, “Y wold the spouse now ful fain And hold the to mi wive; Ac yif thi fader herd it sain That ich hadde his douhter forlain,</p>	<p>“My lady,” said the knight in response, “I would marry you now gladly And keep you as my wife. But if your father heard it said That I had slept with his daughter, He would drive me out of the land. But if I were king of this realm And had more possessions in my hand Than five other kings, I would happily marry you then. But I am, sincerely, a poor man! It is woe for me to live!”</p>
750	<p>Of lond he wald me drive. Ac yif ich were king of this lond And hadde more gode in min hond Than other kinges five, Wel fain y wald spouse the than; Ac, certes, icham a pover man, Wel wo is me o live!” “Sir knight,” seyde that maiden kinde, “For love of Seyn Tomas of Ynde,</p>	<p>“Sir Knight,” said that elegant maiden, “For the love of Saint Thomas of India,¹⁴</p>

¹³ *Wel ivel mot he thrive*: “May he thrive evilly.” A moderately strong curse often found in ME, along with “Datheit hwo recke” (“Curse anyone who cares.”)

760	<p>Whi seystow ever nay? No be thou never so pover of kinde, Riches enough y may the finde Bothe bi night and day.” That hende knight bithought him than And in his armes he hir nam And kist that miri may; And so thai plaid in word and dede, That he wan hir maidenhede, Er that sche went oway.</p>	<p>Why do you keep saying no? No matter how poor your family was, I can find riches enough for you, By both night and day!” The noble knight thought to himself And then took her in his arms And kissed the sweet maiden. And so they played in word and deed, So that he won her virginity Before she went away.</p>
770	<p>And ever that steward gan abide Alon under that chaumber side, Their consail hem for to here. In at an hole, was nought to wide, He seighe hem bothe in that tide Hou thai seten yfere. And when he seyge hem bothe with sight, Sir Amis and that bird bright, The doukes douhter dere, Ful wroth he was and egre of mode, And went oway, as he were wode,</p>	<p>And that steward continually waited Alone alongside the chamber In order to overhear their secrets. Through a hole, which was not very wide, He saw them both at that moment And how they sat together. And when he saw them both with his eyes— Sir Amis and that lovely lass, The duke’s dear daughter— He was vengeful and fierce at heart, And stole away, as if he were mad, In order to expose their secrets.</p>
780	<p>Her conseil to unskere. When the douke come in to that won The steward ogain him gan gon, Her conseyl forto unwrain, “Mi lord, the douke,” he seyde anon, “Of thine harm, bi Seyn Jon, Ichil the warn ful fain; In thi court thou hast a thef, That hath don min hert gref, Schame it is to sain,</p>	<p>When the duke came into the residence, The steward went up to him To betray their privacy. “My lord, Sir Duke,” he said at once, “By Saint John, I sincerely wish¹⁵ To warn you about your harm! In your court you have a thief, Who has done my heart grief, It is a shame to say.</p>
790	<p>For, certes, he is a traitour strong, When he with tresoun and with wrong Thi douhter hath forlain!” The riche douke gan sore agrame: “Who hath,” he seyde, “don me that schame? Tel me, y the pray!” “Sir,” seyde the steward, “bi Seyn Jame, Ful wele y can the tel his name, Thou do him hong this day; It is thi boteler, Sir Amis,</p>	<p>For, certainly he is a foul traitor When he has, with treason and injustice, Bedded your daughter!” The great duke became greatly enraged. “Who has,” he said, “done me this shame? Tell me, I ask you!” “Sir,” said the steward, “By Saint James, I can full well tell you his name. Have him hanged this day! It is your butler, Sir Amis.</p>
800	<p>Ever he hath ben traitour, ywis He hath forlain that may. Y seighe it me self, for sothe,</p>	<p>He has always been a traitor, truly; He has deflowered that maiden. I saw it myself, to tell the truth,</p>

¹⁴ *Seyn Tomas of Ynde*: Christ’s disciple, the “doubting Thomas” who was also obstinate in questioning Jesus. There were medieval traditions that Thomas later evangelized in India (TEAMS).

¹⁵ *Seyn Jon*: Swearing by saints was common in romances, just as modern French cursing favors religious epithets over sex or bathroom functions. Often the choice of saint is meaningful, but not always. Ford argues that particular saints are sometimes invoked simply to fit the poetic line. John C. Ford, “A New Conception of Poetic Formulae Based on Prototype Theory and the Mental Template,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 103 (2002): 218–24.

<p>810</p> <p>820</p> <p>830</p> <p>840</p> <p>850</p>	<p>And wil approve biforn hem bothe, That thai can nought say nay!” Than was the douke egre of mode, He ran to halle, as he were wode, For no thing he nold abide. With a fauchoun scharp and gode He smot to Sir Amis ther he stode, And failed of him biside. Into a chaumber Sir Amis ran tho And schet the dore bituen hem to For drede his heved to hide. The douke strok after swiche a dent That thurch the dore that fauchon went, So egre he was that tide. Al that ever about him stode, Bisought the douke to slake his mode, Bothe erl, baroun, and swain; And he swore bi Him that dyed on Rode He nold for al this worldes gode Bot that traitour were slain. “Ich have him don gret honour, And he hath as a vile traitour Mi douhter forlain; Y nold for al this worldes won Bot y might the traitour slon With min hondes tuain.” “Sir,” seyde Sir Amis anon, “Lete thi wrethe first overgon, Y pray the, par charité! And yif thou may prove, bi Sein Jon, That ichave swiche a dede don, Do me to hong on tre! Ac yif ani with gret wrong Hath lowe on ous that lesing strong, What bern that he be, He leighth on ous, withouten fail, Ichil approve it in bataile, To make ous quite and fre.” “Ya,” seyde the douke, “wiltow so, Darstow into bataile go, Al quite and skere you make?” “Ya, certes, sir!” he seyde tho, “And here mi glove y give ther to, He leighe on ous with wrake.” The steward stirt to him than And seyde, “Traitor, fals man, Ataint thou schalt be take; Y seighe it me self this ich day, Where that sche in thi chaumber lay, Your noither it may forsake!” Thus the steward ever gan say, And ever Sir Amis seyde, “Nay, Ywis, it nas nought so!” Than dede the douke com forth that may,</p>	<p>And will swear it before both of them, So that they cannot deny it!” Then the duke was in a livid passion. He ran to the hall as if he were mad; He would not stop for anything. With a long curved sword, sharp and good, He slashed at Sir Amis where he stood, But failed to hit him. Sir Amis ran into a chamber And shut the door between the two of them To hide his head for fear. The duke struck such a blow at him That the blade pierced through the door. So furious was he that moment That all who stood around him Begged the duke to control his emotions, Both earl, baron, and servant. But he swore by Him who died on the Cross That he would not stop for all the world’s goods Unless that traitor was slain. “I have given him great honor And he has behaved as a vile criminal And slept with my daughter! I wouldn’t turn away for all the world Until I might slay this traitor With my own two hands!” “Sir,” Sir Amis pleaded at once, “Let your rage first die down, I beg of you, for charity’s sake! And if you can prove, by Saint John, That I have done such a thing, Have me hanged on a tree! But if anyone has defamed the two of us With a foul lie, with great injustice— Whatever man that he be Who lies about us—without fail I will prove it by combat To acquit and clear ourselves.” “So!” said the duke, “Will you do so! Do you dare to go into battle To clear and prove yourselves innocent?” “Yes, certainly, sir!” he replied then, “And I give my glove to you here: This man lies about us with hatred.” The steward bolted to him then And yelled, “Traitor! False man! You will be seized and condemned! I saw it myself this very day Where she lay in your chamber. Neither of you can deny it!” The steward continually charged so, And Sir Amis always said, “No, In truth, it was not so.” Then the duke had the maiden come forth</p>
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860	<p>And the steward withstode al way And vouwed the dede tho. The maiden wepe, hir hondes wrong, And ever swore hir moder among, “Certain, it was nought so!” Than seyde the douke, “Withouten fail, It schal be proved in batail And sen bituen hem to.” Than was atuix hem take the fight And sett the day a fourtenight, That mani man schuld it sen. The steward was michel of might; In al the court was ther no wight</p>	<p>And the steward persisted all the time And vowed on the deed. The maiden wept, she wrung her hands, And her mother continually defended her, Saying “For sure, it was not so!” Finally the duke said, “Without a doubt, It will be proved in battle And witnessed between the two of them.”¹⁶ Then the fight was arranged between them, And the time was set for fourteen days after So that many men should see it. The steward was great in might.</p>
870	<p>Sir Amis borwe durst ben. Bot for the steward was so strong, Borwes anowe he fond among, Tuenti al bidene. Than seyde thai all with resoun, Sir Amis schuld ben in prisoun, For he no schuld nowhar flen. Than answerd that maiden bright And swore bi Jhesu, ful of might, That were michel wrong,</p>	<p>In all the court there was no one Who dared to be Sir Amis’ guarantor.¹⁷ But because the steward was so strong, He found seconds enough, Twenty altogether. Then they all said, that with good reason, Sir Amis should be in prison, For he should not flee anywhere. Then the beautiful maiden protested And swore by Jesus, full of might, That it would be a great injustice.</p>
880	<p>“Taketh mi bodi for that knight, Til that his day com of fight, And put me in prisoun strong. Yif that the knight wil flen oway And dar nought holden up his day, Bataile of him to fong, Do me than londes lawe For his love to be todrawe And heighe on galwes hong.” Hir moder seyde with wordes bold</p>	<p>“Take my body for that knight, Until his day comes to fight, And put me in a strong prison. If the knight flees away And does not dare to keep his day, To face the steward in combat, Then do to me as the law requires And have me drawn apart for his love And hanged high on the gallows!” Her mother said, with bold words, That, in good faith, she would Be his second as well, To guarantee his day of battle, So that he would, as a good knight, Fight against his foe.</p>
890	<p>That with gode wil als sche wold Ben his borwe also, His day of bataile up to hold, That he as gode knight schold Fight ogain his fo. Thus tho levedis fair and bright Boden for that gentil knight To lain her bodis to.</p>	<p>Thus those ladies, fair and beautiful, Pledged to offer both of their bodies For that gentle knight.</p>

¹⁶ Trial by combat was an established practice in Germanic law, with the victor assumed to be in the right. The practice faded away by the renaissance in favor of trial by jury and would have been slightly antique even in Auchinleck’s time, but dueling continued up to the twentieth century, even in America.

¹⁷ *Borwe*: Similar to the surety agreement that Gamelyn’s brother enters into, the steward finds supporters who will assume legal responsibility if he absconds, and Sir Amis does not find a guarantor as the royal court believes he will flee from the steward’s formidable strength. Skeat etymologizes *bail* as coming from OF *baillier*, to keep in custody. As with the Anglo-Saxons, the system seems to have been originally based on hostages and not money. The fact that no one helps Sir Amis after the affection shown him earlier (342-5) may partly underscore the fact that he *is* in the wrong, but also highlights Sir Amiloun’s unquestioning loyalty.

900	<p>Than seyde the lordinges everichon, That other borwes wold thai non, Bot graunt it schuld be so. When thai had don, as y you say, And borwes founde withouten delay, And graunted al that ther ware, Sir Amis sorwed night and day, Al his joie was went oway, And comen was al his care, For that the steward was so strong And hadde the right and he the wrong Of that he opon him bare.</p>	<p>Every one of the lordings said That they needed no other guarantors, And granted that it should be so. When this was done, as I say to you, And seconds were arranged without delay, And all who were there were in agreement, Sir Amis was in sorrow night and day. All his joy had gone away, And all his troubles had multiplied. For the steward was so formidable And was in the right, and he was guilty Of the offence that was laid on him.</p>
910	<p>Of his liif yaf he nought, Bot of the maiden so michel he thought, Might noman morn mare. For he thought that he most nede, Ar that he to bataile yede, Swere on oth biforn, That al so God schuld him spede As he was giltles of that dede, That ther was on him born; And than thought he, withouten wrong,</p>	<p>He did not care about his life, But he thought so much about the maiden That no man might mourn more. He felt that it was necessary for him, Prior to going to battle, To swear an oath beforehand, That God might support him As much as he was guiltless of the deed Which he had been accused of. And then he resolved, without wrong, That he would rather be hanged Than to swear falsely.</p>
920	<p>He hadde lever to ben anhong Than to be forsworn. Ac oft he bisought Jhesu tho, He schuld save hem bothe to, That thai ner nought forlorn. So if bifel opon a day He mett the levedi and that may Under an orchard side. “Sir Amis,” the levedy gan say, “Whi mornestow so withouten play?</p>	<p>But he continually called on Jesus That He would save both of them So that they would not be lost. So it happened that one day He met the lady and the maiden Under the shade of an orchard. “Sir Amis,” her mother began to say, “Why do you grieve so without any joy? Tell me the truth this time. Do not be afraid,” she continued, “To fight with your enemy, Whether you will walk or ride. I will equip you so lavishly That you need never have fear of him In enduring your battle.”</p>
930	<p>Tel me that sothe this tide. No drede the nought,” sche seyde than, “For to fight with thi foman, Whether thou wilt go or ride, So richeliche y schal the schrede, Tharf the never have of him drede, Thi bataile to abide.” “Madame,” seyde that gentil knight, “For Jhesus love, ful of might, Be nought wroth for this dede.</p>	<p>“Madam,” said that gracious knight, “For Jesus’ love, full of might, Do not be anxious about that day. I am in the wrong and he is in the right, And so I am afraid to fight, So help me God!¹⁸ For I must swear, without fail, That God should support me in battle As much as his words are falsehoods. And if I swear, I swear falsely, And then in life and soul I am lost.</p>
940	<p>Ich have that wrong and he the right, Therefore icham aferd to fight, Al so God me spede, For y mot swere, withouten faile, Al so God me spede in bataile, His speche is falskede; And yif y swere, icham forsworn, Than liif and soule icham forlorn;</p>	<p>Ich have that wrong and he the right, Therefore icham aferd to fight, Al so God me spede, For y mot swere, withouten faile, Al so God me spede in bataile, His speche is falskede; And yif y swere, icham forsworn, Than liif and soule icham forlorn;</p>

¹⁸ So *God me spede*: ME is full of emphatic oaths and this line is likely meant as such.

950	<p>Certes, y can no rede!" Than seyde that levedi in a while, "No mai ther go non other gile To bring that traitor doun?" "Yis, dame," he seyde, "bi Seyn Gile! Her woneth hennes mani a mile Mi brother, Sir Amiloun, And yif y dorst to gon, Y dorst wele swere bi Seyn Jon, So trewe is that baroun, His owen liif to lese to mede, He wold help me at this nede,</p>	<p>For sure, I know no solution!" Then after a while the lady said, "Is there no trick that will work To bring that traitor doun?" "Yes, my lady," he said, "By Saint Giles!¹⁹ Many a mile from here, there lives My brother in arms, Sir Amiloun. And if I dare to go, I would swear by Saint John, That baron is so loyal that He would help me in my need, Even if he lost his own life as a reward, To fight with that criminal."</p>
960	<p>"Sir Amis," the levedi gan to say, "Take leve to morwe at day And wende in thi jurne. Y schal say thou schalt in thi way Hom in to thine owen cuntray, Thi fader, thi moder to se; And when thou comes to thi brother right, Pray him, as he is hendi knight And of gret bounte,</p>	<p>"Sir Amis," the mother said, "Leave tomorrow at daybreak And travel on your journey. I will say that you are on your way Home to your own country To see your father and your mother. And when you come to your friend, Ask him, if he is a noble knight And of great generosity, That he accept the battle for us Against the steward, who will unjustly Destroy all three of us."</p>
970	<p>That he the batail for ous fong Ogain the steward that with wrong Wil stroie ous alle thre." A morwe Sir Amis made him yare And toke his leve for to fare And went in his jurney. For nothing nold he spare, He priked the stede that him bare Bothe night and day. So long he priked withouten abod</p>	<p>In the morning Sir Amis readied himself And took his leave to travel And went on his journey. He would not stop for anything. He spurred the horse that carried him Both day and night. So long did he spur the steed That he rode on without rest, That in a faraway country It was exhausted and collapsed dead. Then he knew no other course. His refrain was "Alas the day!" And when it had happened so That he had to go on foot, That knight was sorely aggrieved. He tucked up the hems of his coat²⁰ And began to go on his way To keep what he had promised. And so all the day long he ran Until he came into a wild forest</p>
980	<p>The stede that he on rode In a fer cuntray Was overcomen and fel doun ded; Tho couthe he no better red, His song was, "Waileway!" And when it was bifallen so, Nedes afot he most go, Ful careful was that knight. He stiked up his lappes tho, In his way he gan to go,</p>	
990	<p>To hold that he bihight; And al that day so long he ran, In to a wilde forest he cam</p>	

¹⁹ *Dame*: From Latin *domina*, *dame* is difficult to translate here as the sense is highly contextual in ME. It can be a formal title, serving as the female counterpart to *Sir* (*Lady*), or it can simply mean a matron or mistress of a household (*madam*, *ma'am*). It seldom has the disrespectful nuance of modern slang.

²⁰ *Lappes*: Leach explains that "knights wore long coats that had to be tucked up for walking or riding" (quoted in TEAMS). MacEdward Leach, ed., *Amis and Amiloun*, EETS OS 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937).

	<p>Bituen the day and the night. So strong slepe yede him on, To win al this warldes won, No ferther he no might. The knight, that was so hende and fre, Wel fair he layd him under a tre And fel in slepe that tide. 1000 Al that night stille lay he, Til amorwe men might yse The day bi ich a side. Than was his brother, Sir Amiloun, Holden a lord of gret renoun Over al that cuntré wide, And woned fro thennes that he lay Bot half a jorné of a day, Noither to go no ride. As Sir Amiloun, that hendi knight, 1010 In his slepe he lay that night, In sweven he mett anon That he seighe Sir Amis bi sight, His brother, that was trowethe plight, Bilapped among his fon; Thurch a bere wilde and wode And other bestes, that bi him stode, Bisett he was to slon; And he alon among hem stode As a man that couthe no gode; 1020 Wel wo was him bigon. When Sir Amiloun was awake, Gret sorwe he gan for him make And told his wiif ful yare Hou him thought he seighe bestes blake About his brother with wrake To sle with sorwe and care. “Certes,” he seyde, “with sum wrong He is in peril gret and strong, Of blis he is ful bare.” 1030 And than seyde he, “For sothe ywis, Y no schal never have joie no blis, Til y wite hou he fare.” As swithe he stirt up in that tide, Ther nold he no leng abide, Bot dight him forth anon, And al his meine bi ich a side Busked hem redi to ride, With her lord for to gon; And he bad al that ther wes, 1040 For Godes love held hem stille in pes, He bad hem so ich-chon,</p>	<p>Between the day and the night. Such a strong fatigue came upon him That for all this world’s possessions He could not go any further. The knight, who was so gracious and noble, Laid himself comfortably under a tree And fell asleep at that moment. All the night he lay still Until the morning when men might see The day on all sides. At the time his brother, Sir Amiloun,²¹ Was esteemed as a lord of great renown Over all that wide country And lived only half a day’s journey, Whether on foot or riding, Away from where he lay. As Sir Amiloun, that gracious knight, Lay asleep that night, In his nightmare he dreamed at once That he saw Sir Amis with his eyes, His brother, who was bound in loyalty, Surrounded by his enemies. By means of a bear, wild and crazed, And other beasts that stood nearby him, He was about to be killed. And he stood among them alone As a man who hoped for no help. He was in great despair. When Sir Amiloun was awake, He felt great sorrow in himself And told his wife immediately How he dreamed he saw dark beasts Around his friend with rage Ready to kill with sorrow and grief. “Surely,” he said, “By some wrong He is in peril, great and strong. He is bereft of joy!” And then he said, “For sure, in truth, I will never have happiness or rest Until I know how he is doing.” Just as quickly he started up that moment. He would not wait there longer, But prepared himself at once. And all his company, on each side, Equipped themselves to be ready to ride To set forth with their lord. But he ordered all who were there To keep still, for the love of God, in peace. He spoke to every one of them</p>
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²¹ ME can use *brother* in the same sense as PDE does with expressions such as *blood brother* or *brothers in arms*.

1050	<p>And swore bi Him that schop mankende, Ther schuld no man with him wende, Bot himself alon. Ful richeliche he gan him schrede And lepe astite opon his stede, For nothing he nold abide. Al his folk he gan forbede That non so hardi were of dede, After him noither go no ride. So al that night he rode til day, Til he com ther Sir Amis lay Up in that forest wide. Than seighe he a veri knight forgon Under a tre slepeand alon; To him he went that tide. He cleped to him anon right, “Arise up, felawe, it is light And time for to go!”</p>	<p>And swore by Him who made mankind That no man should go with him But himself alone. He dressed himself splendidly And leaped straightaway upon his steed, Unwilling to wait for anything. He had forbidden all of his people So that none were so daring As to walk or ride after him. So all that night he rode until daylight, Until he came where Sir Amis lay Up in the wild forest. He saw a weary knight, lost, Sleeping under a tree alone. He went to him that instant. He called to him at once: “Rise up, fellow, it is light And time to go!”</p>
1060	<p>Sir Amis biheld up with his sight And knewe anon that gentil knight, And he knewe him also. That hendi knight, Sir Amiloun, Of his stede light adoun, And kist hem bothe to. “Brother,” he seyde, “whi listow here With thus mornand chere? Who hath wrought the this wo?” “Brother,” seyde Sir Amis tho, “Ywis, me nas never so wo Seththen that y was born; For seththen that thou was went me fro, With joie and michel blis also Y served mi lord biforn. Ac the steward ful of envie, With gile and with trecherie, He hath me wrought swiche sorn; Bot thou help me at this nede, Certes, y can no nother rede, Mi liif, it is forlorn!”</p>	<p>Sir Amis looked up with his eyes And knew at once the noble knight And he recognized him as well. The noble knight, Sir Amiloun, Got down off his horse And the two of them kissed. “Brother,” he said, “why are you lying here With such a mournful face? Who has brought you this sadness?” “Friend,” Sir Amis then said, “For sure, I was never so distressed Since the day I was born. For since the time that you went from me, I have served before my lord With joy and great happiness as well. But the steward, full of jealousy, And with guile and treachery, Has brought me such sorrow! Unless you can help me in my need, For sure, I know no other course. My life, it is lost!”</p>
1070	<p>“Brother,” seyde Sir Amiloun, “Whi hath the steward, that feloun, Ydon the al this schame?” “Certes,” he seyde, “with gret tresoun He wald me driven al adoun And hath me brought in blame.” Than told Sir Amis al that cas, Hou he and that maiden was Bothe togider ysame,</p>	<p>“Brother,” said Sir Amiloun, “Why has the steward, that scoundrel, Done you all this shame?” “For sure,” he said, “with great infamy He wants to drive me down And has brought me into blame.” Then Sir Amis explained all his situation, How he and the maiden were Both in each other’s company, And how the steward had accused them, And how the duke would have slain him With fury and hot rage.</p>
1080	<p>And hou the steward gan hem wrain, And hou the douke wald him have slain With wrethe and michel grame. And also he seyde, yplight, Hou he had boden on him fight, Batail of him to fong,</p>	<p>And he also said, truly, How he had offered to fight him, To face him in combat,</p>

1100	<p>And hou in court was ther no wight, To save tho tuay levedis bright, Durst ben his borwe among, And hou he most, withouten faile, Swere, ar he went to bataile, It war a lesing ful strong; “And forsworn man schal never spede; Certes, therefore y can no rede, ‘Allas’ may be mi song!” When that Sir Amis had al told, Hou that the fals steward wold Bring him down with mode, Sir Amiloun with wordes bold Swore, “Bi Him that Judas sold</p>	<p>And how in the court there was no one Except those two beautiful ladies Who dared to be among his seconds, And how he must, without fail, Swear before he went to battle That it all was a foul lie. “And a false man will never succeed. Therefore, for certain, I know no answer. My song will be ‘Alas’!” When Sir Amis had told all, How that false steward wanted to Bring him down with angry passion, Sir Amiloun swore with bold words: “By Him that Judas sold out</p>
1110	<p>And died opon the Rode, Of his hope he schal now faile, And y schal for the take bataile, Thei that he wer wode; Yif y may mete him aright, With mi brond, that is so bright, Y schal sen his hert blode! Ac brother,” he seyde, “have al mi wede, And in thi robe y schal me schrede, Right as the self it ware;</p>	<p>And who died upon the Cross, He will now fail in his hopes! And I will take the battle for you Even if he is a madman. If I can meet him to his face, With my blade, which is so bright, I will see his heart’s blood! But friend,” he said, “take all my clothes, And I will dress myself in your robe, Right as it were yourself.</p>
1120	<p>And y schal swere so God me spede As icham giltles of that dede, That he opon the bare.” Anon tho hendi knightes to Alle her wede chaunged tho, And when thai were al yare, Than seyde Sir Amiloun, “Bi Seyn Gile, Thus man schal the schrewe bigile, That wald the forfare!</p>	<p>And I will swear, so help me God, That I am guiltless of that deed Which he charged upon you!”²² At once those two wily knights Exchanged all their clothes. And when they were all ready, Then Sir Amiloun said, “By Saint Giles,²³ Thus so a man will trick the criminal Who would destroy you!</p>
1130	<p>“Brother,” he seyde, “wende hom now right To mi levedi, that is so bright, And do as y schal the sain; And as thou art a gentil knight, Thou ly bi hir in bed ich night, Til that y com ogain, And sai thou hast sent thi stede ywis To thi brother, Sir Amis; Than wil thai be ful fain, Thai wil wene that ich it be; Ther is non that schal knowe the,</p>	<p>Brother,” he said, “now go right home To my lady, who is so beautiful, And do as I tell you to do. And if you are a virtuous knight, Lie beside her in bed each night Until I come back again. And say you have sent your steed, in truth, To your brother, Sir Amis. Then I will be very glad. They will assume that you are me; The two of us are so alike</p>
1140	<p>So liche we be bothe tuain!” And when he hadde thus sayd, yplight,</p>	<p>That there is no one who will know you!” And when he had spoken so indeed,</p>

²² Sir Amis’ moral conundrum is that they have sworn to be truthful to their lords, and he will be a liar if he swears to the court that he never slept with Belisaunt. The steward is justified in accusing Amis, however spiteful his motives. Sir Amiloun’s trick is to impersonate Sir Amis, as Amiloun will technically be telling the truth if he vows that he has not corrupted the king’s daughter.

²³ *Seyn Gile*: Saint Giles (c. 650-710), a hermit saint from Athens associated with cripples and beggars.

	<p>Sir Amiloun, that gentil knight, Went in his jurnay, And Sir Amis went hom anon right To his brother levedi so bright, Withouten more delay, And seyde hou he hadde sent his stede To his brother to riche mede Bi a knight of that cuntray; 1150 And al thai wende of Sir Amis It had ben her lord, ywis, So liche were tho tuay. When that Sir Amis hadde ful yare Told him al of his care, Ful wele he wend tho, Litel and michel, lasse and mare, Al that ever in court ware, Thai thought it hadde ben so. 1160 And when it was comen to the night, Sir Amis and that levedi bright, To bed thai gun go; And whan thai were togider ylayd, Sir Amis his swerd out braid And layd bituix hem tuo. The levedi loked opon him tho Wrothlich with her eighen tuo, Sche wend hir lord were wode. “Sir,” sche seyde, “whi farstow so? 1170 Thus were thou noght won to do, Who hath changed thi mode?” “Dame,” he seyde, “sikerly, Ich have swiche a malady That mengeth al mi blod, And al min bones be so sare, Y nold nought toche thi bodi bare For al this warldes gode!” Thus, ywis, that hendy knight Was holden in that fourtennight As lord and prince in pride; 1180 Ac he forgat him never a night, Bituix him and that levedi bright His swerd he layd biside. The levedi thought in hir resoun, It hadde ben hir lord, Sir Amiloun, That hadde ben sike that tide; Therefore sche held hir stille tho And wold speke wordes no mo, Bot thought his wille to abide. Now, hende, herkneth, and y schal say 1190 Hou that Sir Amiloun went his way; For nothing wold he spare. He priked his stede night and day, As a gentil knight, stout and gay, To court he com ful yare That selve day, withouten fail,</p>	<p>Sir Amiloun, that noble knight, Went on his journey. And Sir Amis went home at once To his brother’s lady, who was so beautiful, Without any more delay. And he explained how he had sent his steed To his brother as a valuable gift Via a knight of that country. And all of them thought that Sir Amis Was their lord, in fact, So alike were the two of them. When Sir Amis had fully Told them what had happened to him, He surmised full well that Small and great, high and low, All who were ever in the court, Believed that it had been so. And when it came to the night, Sir Amis and that shining lady Made their way to bed. And when they were laying together, Sir Amis drew out his sword And laid it between the two of them. The lady looked at him crossly With her two eyes. She thought that her lord was mad. “Sir,” she said, “why are you behaving so? You have never acted like this. What has changed your mood?” “My lady,” he said, “for certain, I have such an illness That it troubles all my blood. And all of my bones are so sore That I would not touch your bare body For all this world’s goods.” In this way, in truth, that righteous knight Stayed for those fourteen days Honorably as lord and prince. But he never forgot for one night To lay his sword in the middle Between him and that beautiful lady. The lady thought in her mind That it was her lord, Sir Amiloun, Who was sick at that time. Therefore she kept herself content And did not speak any more about it, Only wishing to abide by his will. Now, good people, listen and I will say How Sir Amiloun went his way. He would not stop for anything. He spurred his steed by night and day, As a noble knight, sturdy and cheerful. He came to the court in haste The same day, without fail,</p>
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<p>1200</p> <p>1210</p> <p>1220</p> <p>1230</p> <p>1240</p>	<p>That was ysett of batail, And Sir Amis was nought thare. Than were tho levedis taken bi hond, Her juggement to understand, With sorwe and sikeing sare. The steward hoved upon a stede With scheld and spere, bataile to bede, Gret bost he gan to blawe; Bifor the douke anon he yede And seyde, "Sir, so God the spede, Herken to mi sawe! This traitour is out of lond ywent; Yif he were here in present, He schuld ben hong and drawe; Therefore ich aske jugement, That his borwes be tobrent, As it is londes lawe." That riche douke, with wrethe and wrake, He bad men schuld tho levedis take And lede hem forth biside; A strong fer ther was don make And a tonne for her sake, To bren hem in that tide. Than thai loked in to the feld And seighe a knight with spere and scheld Com prikeand ther with pride. Than seyde thai everichon, ywis, "Yonder cometh prikeand Sir Amis!" And bad thai schuld abide. Sir Amiloun gan stint at no ston, He priked among hem everichon, To that douke he gan wende. "Mi lord the douke," he seyde anon, "For schame lete tho levedis gon, That er bothe gode and hende, For ich am comen hider today For to saven hem, yive y may, And bring hem out of bende, For, certes, it were michel unright To make roste of levedis bright; Ywis, ye eren unkende." Than ware tho levedis glad and blithe, Her joie couthe thai noman kithe, Her care was al oway; And seththen, as ye may list and lithe, Into the chaunber thai went aswithe, Withouten more delay, And richeliche thai schred that knight With helme and plate and brini bright,</p>	<p>That was set for the battle, And Sir Amis was not there. Then the two ladies were seized by the hand To undergo their judgment, With sorrow and bitter sighing. The steward waited upon a horse With shield and spear to offer battle. He began to chatter great boasts. He quickly went before the duke And said, "Sir, as God protects you, Listen to my speech! This traitor has gone out of the land. If he were here in person, He would be hanged and drawn. Therefore I ask for judgment, That his guarantors be burned, As it is the law of the land." The rich duke, with wrath and anger, Ordered men to take hold of the ladies And bring them forth beside everyone. A raging fire was readied there, And a barrel for them to wear, To burn them on that day. Then they looked toward the field And saw a knight, with spear and shield, Come spurring there gallantly. Then everyone said, indeed, "Here comes Sir Amis riding!" And asked that they would wait. Sir Amiloun did not rest at any milestone. He rode past each one of them, Making his way toward the duke. "My lord, the duke," he said at once, "For shame, let those women go, Who are both good and noble! For I have come back here today In order to save them, if I can, And bring them out of bondage. For, certainly, it would be a great wrong To make a roast of beautiful ladies. You are going against nature, indeed."²⁴ Then the ladies were glad and relieved. They could express their joy to no man; Their troubles had all departed. And then, as you may listen and learn, They went into the chamber as quickly Without any more delay, And they dressed that knight splendidly With helmet and armor and shining mail.</p>
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²⁴ *Unkende* can mean either *cruel* or *unnatural* (i.e. to one's own kind), and here Sir Amiloun is likely suggesting both senses.

<p>1250</p> <p>1260</p> <p>1270</p> <p>1280</p> <p>1290</p>	<p>His tire, it was ful gay. And when he was opon his stede, That God hem schuld save and spede Mani man bad that day. As he com prikand out of toun, Com a voice fram heven adoun, That noman herd bot he, And sayd, "Thou knight, Sir Amiloun, God, that suffred passioun, Sent the bode bi me; Yif thou this bataile underfong, Thou schalt have an eventour strong Within this yeres thre; And or this thre yere be al gon, Fouler mesel nas never non In the world, than thou schal be! "Ac for thou art so hende and fre, Jhesu sent the bode bi me, To warn the anon; So foule a wreche thou schalt be, With sorwe and care and poverté Nas never non wers bigon. Over al this world, fer and hende, Tho that be thine best frende Schal be thi most fon, And thi wiif and alle thi kinne Schul fle the stede thatow art inne, And forsake the ichon." That knight gan hove stille so ston And herd tho wordes everichon, That were so gret and grille. He nist what him was best to don, To flen, other to fighting gon; In hert him liked ille. He thought, "Yif y beknowe mi name, Than schal mi brother go to schame, With sorwe thai schul him spille. Certes," he seyde, "for drede of care To hold mi treuthe schal y nought spare, Lete God don alle His wille." Al the folk ther was, ywis, Thai wend it had ben Sir Amis That bataile schuld bede; He and the steward of pris Were brought bifor the justise To swere for that dede. The steward swore the pople among, As wis as he seyde no wrong, God help him at his nede; And Sir Amiloun swore and gan to say As wis as he never kist that may, Our Levedi schuld hem spede. When thai hadde sworn, as y you told, To biker tho bernes were ful bold</p>	<p>His appearance was magnificent. And when he was upon his steed, Many men prayed that day That God would save and support them. As he came galloping out of town, A voice came down from Heaven, Which no one heard but him, And said, "You knight, Sir Amiloun! Christ, who suffered passion, Sends you a warning through me! If you go through with this battle, You will have a great reckoning Within the next three years. And before these three years are all gone, There will never have been a fouler leper In all the world than you will be! But because you are so generous and good, Jesus sent the warning through me To warn you at once. You will be so foul a wretch, With sorrow and trouble and poverty. There was never a worse one before, Over all this world, near and far. Those who are your best friends Will be your greatest foes, And your wife and all your kin Will flee the room that you are in, And desert you, every one." The knight stood as still as a stone And heard every one of the words, Which were so serious and terrifying. He did not know what was best to do, To flee or to go fighting. He was aggrieved at heart. He thought, "If I reveal my name, Then my brother will go to shame. They will kill him in sorrow. For sure," he said, "for fear of worse trouble, I will spare nothing to keep my pledge. Let God do all that He wills!" All the people who were there, indeed, Assumed that it was Sir Amis Who was to offer battle. He and the renowned steward Were brought before the justice To swear on that deed. The steward swore in front of the people That for certain he spoke no wrong; God help him in his need. And Sir Amiloun affirmed and said That for certain he never kissed that maid, And that Our Lady should reward them. When they had pledged, as I told you, The men were very keen to fight</p>
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1300	<p>And busked hem for to ride. Al that ther was, yong and old, Bisought God yif that He wold Help Sir Amis that tide. On stedes that were stithe and strong Thai riden togider with schaftes long, Til thai toschiverd bi ich a side; And than drough thai swerdes gode And hewe togider, as thai were wode, For nothing thai nold abide. Tho gomes, that were egre of sight, 1310 With fauchouns felle thai gun to fight And ferd as thai were wode. So hard thai hewe on helmes bright With strong strokes of michel might, That fer biforn out stode; So hard thai hewe on helme and side, Thurch dent of grimly woundes wide, That thai sprad al of blod. Fram morwe to none, withouten faile, Bituixen hem last the bataile, 1320 So egre thai were of mode. Sir Amiloun, as fer of flint, With wrethe anon to him he wint And smot a stroke with main; Ac he failed of his dint, The stede in the heved he hint And smot out al his brain. The stede fel ded down to grounde; Tho was the steward that stounde Ful ferd he schuld be slain. 1330 Sir Amiloun light adoun of his stede, To the steward afot he yede And halp him up ogain. “Arise up, steward,” he seyde anon, “To fight thou schalt afot gon, For thou hast lorn thi stede; For it were gret vilani, bi Seyn Jon, A liggeand man for to slon, That were yfallen in nede.” That knight was ful fre to fond 1340 And tok the steward bi the hond And seyde, “So God me spede, Now thou schalt afot go, Y schal fight afot also, And elles were gret falshed.” The steward and that douhti man</p>	<p>And readied themselves to ride. All who were there, young and old, Beseeched God that He would Help Sir Amis in that moment. On steeds that were firm and strong, They rode together with long spears, Until they were shattered on each side. And then they drew out good swords And clashed together as if they were mad. They would not stop for anything. Those soldiers, who were a fierce sight, Began to fight with deadly curved swords And fared as if they were crazed. So hard did they strike on shining helmets With powerful blows of great might That fiery sparks flew out from them. So hard did they hack at helmets and body That through the blows of many grisly wounds They were all covered with blood. From morning to noon, without fail, The battle lasted between them, So fierce were they in spirit. Sir Amiloun, like sparks from flint, Went straight at the steward with anger And landed a blow with force. But he failed in his aim. He hit the steed in the head And struck out all its brains, And the steed fell dead to the ground. Then the steward was, at that moment, Greatly afraid he would be slain. Sir Amiloun came down from his steed. He went to the steward on foot And helped him up again. “Rise up, steward,” he said at once, “You will walk on foot to fight, For you have lost your mount. For it would be great villainy, By Saint John, to slay a prostrate man Who had fallen into helplessness.”²⁵ The knight was willing to oblige him And took the steward by the hand And said, “So help me God, Now you will go on foot. I will fight on foot as well. Otherwise it would be great unfairness.” The steward and that sturdy man</p>
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²⁵ Medieval armor could be so heavy that a warrior thrown from his horse might only get up off the ground with difficulty. Sir Amiloun shows a chivalric sense of fair play in lifting the steward and being willing to fight on foot, not wanting to cheapen his victory by killing a nearly helpless man. A horse being killed is an everpresent romance cliché, perhaps enabling the hero to show off his physical prowess on foot.

1350	<p>Anon togider thai fight gan With brondes bright and bare; So hard togider thai fight than, Til al her armour o blod ran, For nothing nold thai spare.</p>	<p>At once began to fight together With blades that were shining and bare. So hard did they battle each other Until all their armor ran with blood; They would not stop for anything.</p>
1360	<p>The steward smot to him that stounde On his schulder a gret wounde With his grimly gare, That thurch that wounde, as ye may here, He was knowen with reweli chere, When he was fallen in care. Than was Sir Amiloun wroth and wode, Whan al his amour ran o blode, That ere was white so swan;</p>	<p>At that moment the steward struck on him A great wound on his shoulder With his fearsome weapon, So that through that wound, as you may hear, He knew, with a remorseful expression, That he had fallen into danger. Then Sir Amiloun became wild and enraged, As all his armor ran with blood Which was before as white as a swan.</p>
1370	<p>With a fauchoun scharp and gode He smot to him with egre mode Al so a douhti man, That even fro the schulder blade Into the brest the brond gan wade, Thurchout his hert it ran. The steward fel adoun ded, Sir Amiloun strok of his hed, And God he thonked it than. Alle the lordinges that ther ware, Litel and michel, lasse and mare, Ful glad thai were that tide.</p>	<p>With a curved sword, sharp and fine, He struck at the steward with a fierce heart As a hardy man, So that even from the shoulder blade Into the breast the blade traveled And ran through his heart. The steward fell down dead. Sir Amiloun cut off his head, And then thanked God for it. All of the lordings who were there, Small and great, low and high, Were greatly pleased that moment.</p>
1380	<p>The heved opon a spere thai bare; To toun thai dight hem ful yare, For nothing thai nold abide; Thai com ogaines him out of toun With a fair processiou Semliche bi ich a side. Anon thai ladde him to the tour With joie and ful michel honour, As prince proude in pride. In to the palais when thai were gon, Al that was in that worthli won Wende Sir Amis it ware. “Sir Amis,” seyde the douke anon, “Bifor this lordinges everichon Y graunt the ful yare, For Belisent, that miri may, Thou hast bought hir ful dere today With grimli woundes sare;</p>	<p>They bore the head upon a spear. They made their way excitedly to town And would not wait for anything. They came back to him outside town In a grand procession, Splendid on every side. Soon they escorted him to the tower With joy and great honor, As a prince proud in nobility. When they had gone into the palace, All who were in that stately dwelling Thought it was Sir Amis. “Sir Amis,” the duke soon began, “Before every one of these lords, I readily grant you Belisaunt, That sweet maiden, For you have bought her dearly today With sore and horrible wounds.</p>
1390	<p>Therefore y graunt the now here Mi lond and mi douhter dere, To hald for ever mare.” Ful blithe was that hendi knight And thonked him with al his might, Glad he was and fain; In alle the court was ther no wight That wist wat his name it hight; To save tho levedis tuain, Leches swithe thai han yfounde,</p>	<p>Therefore I grant you here now My land and my dear daughter, To hold forevermore.” The noble knight was overjoyed And thanked him with all his might. He was glad and pleased. In all the court there was no one Who knew what his real name was, Who had saved the two ladies. They quickly found doctors</p>

1400	<p>That gun to tasty his wounde And made him hole ogain, Than were thai al glad and blithe And thonked God a thousand sithe That the steward was slain. On a day Sir Amiloun dight him yare And seyde that he wold fare Hom into his cuntray To telle his frendes, lasse and mare, And other lordinges that there ware,</p>	<p>Who examined his wounds And made him whole again. Then everyone was glad and relieved And thanked God a thousand times That the steward was slain. The next day Sir Amiloun hastily readied Himself and said that he would travel Home into his country To tell his friends, low and high, And other lords that were there, How he had fared that day.</p>
1410	<p>Hou he had sped that day. The douke graunted him that tide And bede him knightes and miche pride, And he answerd, "Nay." Ther schuld noman with him gon, Bot as swithe him dight anon And went forth in his way. In his way he went alone, Most ther noman with him gon, Noither knight no swain.</p>	<p>The duke gave him permission at that time And offered him knights and great ceremony, But he answered, "No." No man should go with him, But with equal speed he prepared himself And went forth on his way. He went alone on his journey. No other man could go with him, Neither knight nor servant. The knight, sturdy in flesh and blood, Did not rest at any milestone Until he came home again. And Sir Amis, as I tell you, Waited for his coming every day Up in the forest plain.</p>
1420	<p>That douhti knight of blod and bon, No stint he never at no ston Til he com hom ogain; And Sir Amis, as y you say, Waited his coming everi day Up in the forest plain; And so thai mett togider same, And he told him with joie and game Hou he hadde the steward slain, And hou he schuld spousy to mede</p>	<p>And so they met together in reunion, And Sir Amiloun told him with joy and laughter How he had slain the steward, And how as a reward he would marry That same maiden of noble dress Who was of such royal heritage. Sir Amiloun dismounted from his steed, And they exchanged their clothes As they had done before. "Brother," he said, "go back home." And he told him what he should say When he arrived there. Then Sir Amis was happy and glad And gave thanks a thousand times For the time that his friend was born. And when they had to part ways, Sir Amis continually thanked him For his trouble and his good deed. "Friend," he said, "if it happens so That you encounter trouble or woe, And need my help, Just come or send your messenger, And I will delay no longer, So help me God!</p>
1430	<p>That ich maide, worthli in wede, That was so comly corn. Sir Amiloun light of his stede, And gan to chaungy her wede, As thai hadde don biforn. "Brother," he seyde, "wende hom ogain." And taught him hou he schuld sain, When he com ther thai worn. Than was Sir Amis glad and blithe And thanked him a thousand sithe</p>	<p>And they exchanged their clothes As they had done before. "Brother," he said, "go back home." And he told him what he should say When he arrived there. Then Sir Amis was happy and glad And gave thanks a thousand times For the time that his friend was born. And when they had to part ways, Sir Amis continually thanked him For his trouble and his good deed. "Friend," he said, "if it happens so That you encounter trouble or woe, And need my help, Just come or send your messenger, And I will delay no longer, So help me God!</p>
1440	<p>The time that he was born. And when thai schuld wende ato, Sir Amis oft thonked him tho His cost and his gode dede. "Brother," he seyde, "yif it bitide so That the bitide care other wo, And of min help hast nede, Savelich com other send thi sond, And y schal never lenger withstond, Al so God me spede;</p>	<p>And when they had to part ways, Sir Amis continually thanked him For his trouble and his good deed. "Friend," he said, "if it happens so That you encounter trouble or woe, And need my help, Just come or send your messenger, And I will delay no longer, So help me God!</p>
1450	<p>Be it in peril never so strong, Y schal the help in right and wrong, Mi liif to lese to mede." Asonder than thai gun wende;</p>	<p>No matter how much the danger, I will help you, in right or wrong, Even if I lose my life as a reward." They then parted from each other.</p>

1460	<p>Sir Amiloun, that knight so hende, Went hom in that tide To his levedi that was unkende, And was ful welcome to his frende, As prince proude in pride; And when it was comen to the night, Sir Amiloun and that levedi bright In bedde were layd biside; In his armes he gan hir kis And made his joie and michel blis, For nothing he nold abide. The levedi astite asked him tho Whi that he hadde farn so Al that fourtennight, Laid his swerd bituen hem to, That sche no durst nought for wele no wo</p>	<p>Sir Amiloun, that knight so gentle, Went home at that time To his lady who was unknowing, And who was so welcoming to his friend, As a prince proud in bearing. And when it came to the night, Sir Amiloun and that beautiful lady Were lying beside each other in bed. In his arms he began to kiss her And was joyful and greatly content. He would not leave for anything. The lady then immediately asked him Why he had behaved so All those fourteen nights, Laying his sword between the two of them So that she dared not, for good or ill, Touch his body at all.</p>
1470	<p>Touche his bodi aright. Sir Amiloun bithought him than His brother was a trewe man, That hadde so done, aflight. “Dame,” he seyde, “ichil the sain And telle the that sothe ful fain, Ac wray me to no wight.” The levedi astite him frain gan, For His love, that this warld wan, Telle hir whi it ware.</p>	<p>Sir Amiloun then was assured His friend was a faithful man Who had done this, truly. “My lady,” he said, “I will tell you And explain the truth to you gladly. But betray me to no one.” The lady at once began to pester him, For His love, who redeemed the world, To tell her what happened.</p>
1480	<p>Than astite that hendy man, Al the sothe he told hir than, To court hou he gan fare, And hou he slough the steward strong, That with tresoun and with wrong Wold have his brother forfare, And hou his brother that hendy knight Lay with hir in bed ich night While that he was thare.</p>	<p>Then as promptly that gentle man Told her all the truth, How he had traveled to the court, And how he killed the fierce steward, Who would have destroyed his brother With treason and with injustice; And how his friend, that noble knight, Had laid with her in bed each night While he was there.</p>
1490	<p>The levedi was ful wroth, yflight, And oft missayd hir lord that night With speche bituix hem to, And seyde, “With wrong and michel unright Thou slough ther a gentil knight; Ywis, it was ivel ydo!” “Dame,” he seyde, “bi heven king, Y no dede it for non other thing Bot to save mi brother fro wo, And ich hope, yif ich hadde nede, His owen liif to lesse to mede,</p>	<p>The lady was very irate, truly, And incessantly criticized her lord that night In speech between the two of them, And complained, “You killed a noble knight With foul and great injustice. For certain, it was done in evil!” “Lady,” he said, “by Heaven’s king, I did it for no other thing But to save my brother from grief. And I hope, if I had need, that even if He shortened his own life as a result, He would help me also.”</p>
1500	<p>He wald help me also.” Al thus, in gest as we sain, Sir Amis was ful glad and fain, To court he gan to wende; And when he come to court ogain With erl, baroun, knight and swain, Honoured he was, that hende. That riche douke tok him bi hond</p>	<p>Meanwhile, in the story as we read it, Sir Amis was glad and at ease And he traveled to the court. And when he came back to the court He was honored, that good man, By earl, baron, knight, and servant. The rich duke took him by the hand</p>

	<p>And sesed him in alle his lond, To held withouten ende;</p>	<p>And endowed him with all his land To hold without end.</p>
1510	<p>And seththen with joie opon a day He spoused Belisent, that may, That was so trewe and kende.</p>	<p>And afterward with joy, upon one day, He married Belisaunt, that maiden Who was so loyal and kind.</p>
	<p>Miche was that semly folk in sale, That was samned at that bridale When he hadde spoused that flour, Of erls, barouns, mani and fale, And other lordinges gret and smale, And levedis bright in bour.</p>	<p>There were many fine people in the hall Who were gathered at that wedding When he wedded that flower: Earls, barons, numerous and plenty, And other gentlemen, great and small, And ladies, beautiful in their bowers.</p>
	<p>A real fest thai gan to hold Of erls and of barouns bold With joie and michel honour; Over al that lond est and west Than was Sir Amis helden the best And chosen for priis in tour.</p>	<p>They held a royal feast With earls and brave barons With joy and stately honor. Over all the land, east and west, Sir Amis was lauded as the best And regarded with praise in the tower.</p>
1520	<p>So within tho yeres to A wel fair grace fel hem tho, As God almighti wold; The riche douke dyed hem fro And his levedi dede also,</p>	<p>So within those two years, They were blessed with grace, As God Almighty willed: The rich duke was taken from them And his lady passed away as well, And buried in the ground so cold.</p>
	<p>And graven in grete so cold. Than was Sir Amis, hende and fre, Douke and lord of gret pousté Over al that lond yhold.</p>	<p>Then Sir Amis, generous and noble, Was a duke and lord of great authority And was obeyed all over the land. He fathered two children with his wife, The fairest that might bear life, In the story as it is told.</p>
1530	<p>Tuai childer he bigat bi his wive, The fairest that might bere live, In gest as it is told. Than was that knight of gret renoun And lord of mani a tour and toun And douke of gret pousté;</p>	<p>Then that knight was of great renown And lord of many a tower and town And a duke of great power. But his brother, Sir Amiloun, Who was so noble and generous before, Was weighed down with sorrow and cares.</p>
	<p>And his brother, Sir Amiloun, With sorwe and care was driven adoun, That ere was hende and fre; Al so that angel hadde hem told, Fouler messel that nas non hold In world than was he.</p>	<p>Just as the angel had told him, There was no leper regarded so foully By the world than he was. To read the story is great sadness, What misery he had for his faithfulness Within those three years.</p>
1540	<p>In gest to rede it is gret rewthe, What sorwe he hadde for his treuthe Within tho yeres thre. And er tho thre yere com to thende He no wist whider he might wende, So wo was him bigon;</p>	<p>And before those three years came to their end, He was so weighed down by woe He did not know where he might go; For all who were his best friends, And, namely, all his rich family, Became his worst foes.</p>
	<p>For al that were his best frende, And nameliche al his riche kende, Bicom his most fon; And his wiif, for sothe to say, Wrought him wers bothe night and day Than thai dede everichon.</p>	<p>And his wife, to say the truth, Treated him the worst by day and night Than anyone else did. When he had fallen into that hard situation, Men did not know a more friendless man Anywhere than he was.</p>
1550	<p>When him was fallen that hard cas, A frendeleser man than he was Men nist nowhar non. So wicked and schrewed was his wiif,</p>	<p>His wife was so wicked and calculating</p>
1560		

	<p>Sche brac his hert withouten kniif, With wordes harde and kene, And seyde to him, "Thou wreche chaitif, With wrong the steward les his liif, And that is on the sene; Therefore, bi Seyn Denis of Fraunce, The is bitid this hard chaunce, Dathet who the bimene!"</p>	<p>That she pierced his heart without a knife. With words that were hard and sharp, She said to him, "You wretched coward, The steward wrongly lost his life; It is clear to see what you've done! And so, by Saint Denis of France, This hard luck is fated for you! Damn whoever feels sorry for you!"</p>
1570	<p>Wel oft times his honden he wrong, As man that thenketh his liif to long, That liveth in treye and tene. Allas, allas! that gentil knight That whilom was so wise and wight, That than was wrought so wo, Than fram his levedi, fair and bright, Out of his owen chamber anight He was yhote to go, And in his owen halle o day</p>	<p>Continually he wrung his hands As a man who thinks his life too long And lives in trial and pain. Alas, alas! That gentle knight, Who once was so wise and brave, Who was ordained such woe That away from his lady, fair and beautiful, Out of his own chamber at night He was forced to go. And in his own hall, one day</p>
1580	<p>Fram the heighe bord oway He was ycharged also To eten at the tables ende; Wald ther no man sit him hende, Wel careful was he tho. Bi than that half yere was ago That he hadde eten in halle so With gode mete and with drink, His levedi wax ful wroth and wo And thought he lived to long tho -</p>	<p>He was also ordered away From the high table To eat at the table's end. No man there would seat him honorably; Then he was very miserable. By the time half a year was gone That he had eaten this way in the hall With good food and drink, His lady grew spiteful and aggrieved And thought he had lived too long, Without any lie.</p>
1590	<p>Withouten ani lesing - "In this lond springeth this word, Y fede a mesel at mi bord, He is so foule a thing, It is gret spite to al mi kende, He schal no more sitt me so hende, Bi Jhesus, heven king!" On a day sche gan him calle And seyde, "Sir, it is so bifalle, For sothe, y telle it te,</p>	<p>"Talk is flying throughout this land That I feed a leper at my table! He is so foul a thing, It is a great disgrace to all my kin. He will no longer sit near at hand to me By Jesus, Heaven's king!" One day she called for him And said, "Sir, it has come to happen— I tell it to you, in truth—</p>
1600	<p>That thou etest so long in halle, It is gret spite to ous alle, Mi kende is wroth with me." The knight gan wepe and seyde ful stille, "Do me where it is thi wille, Ther noman may me se; Of no more ichil the praye, Bot of a meles mete ich day, For seynt charité."</p>	<p>You have eaten so long in this hall That it is a great disgrace to us all. My family is angry with me." The knight began to weep and said softly, "Have me put where it is your will, Where no man may see me. I will ask no more of you Than a meal's ration each day, For holy charity."</p>
1610	<p>That levedi, for hir lordes sake, Anon sche dede men timber take, For nothing wold sche wond, And half a mile fram the gate A litel loge sche lete make, Biside the way to stond. And when the loge was al wrought,</p>	<p>The lady, for her lord's sake, At once had men take wood. She would not hesitate for anything. And half a mile from the gate, She had a little cabin made, To stand beside the way. And when the lodge was all built,</p>

<p>1620</p> <p>1630</p> <p>1640</p> <p>1650</p> <p>1660</p>	<p>Of his gode no wold he noght, Bot his gold coupe an hond. When he was in his loge alon, To God of heven he made his mon And thonked Him of al His sond. Into that loge when he was dight In al the court was ther no wight That wold serve him thare, To save a gentil child, yplight, Child Owaines his name it hight, For him he wepe ful sare. That child was trewe and of his kende, His soster sone, he was ful hende; He sayd to hem ful yare, Ywis, he no schuld never wond To serven hem fro fot to hond, While he olives ware. That child, that was so fair and bold, Owaines was his name ytold, Wel fair he was of blode. When he was of tuelve yere old, Amoraunt than was he cald, Wel curteys, hend and gode. Bi his lord ich night he lay And feched her livere ever day To her lives fode. When ich man made gle and song, Ever for his lord among He made dreri mode. Thus Amoraunt, as y you say, Com to court ich day, No stint he for no strive. Al that ther was gan him pray To com fro that lazer oway, Than schuld he the and thrive. And he answerd with milde mode And swore bi Him that dyed on Rode And tholed woundes five, For al this worldes gode to take His lord nold he never forsake Whiles he ware olive. Bi than the tuelmoneth was al gon, Amorant went into that won For his lordes liveray; The levedi was ful wroth anon And comaunde hir men everichon To drive that child oway,</p>	<p>He would have nothing of his possessions But his gold cup in his hand. When he was in his lodge alone, He made his lament to God of Heaven And thanked Him for all His blessings. In all the court there was no one Who would serve him there In that cabin where he was placed, Except a noble child, in truth. His name was called Child Owen.²⁶ For him the boy wept bitterly. The youth was loyal to his family; His sister's son, he was very gracious. He said to them willingly, For certain, he would never hesitate To serve him hand and foot While he was alive. That child, who was so fair and bold— Owen was said to be his name— Was from very good blood. When he was twelve years old, He was then named Amoraunt, A courteous, noble and good young man. He lay by his lord each night And fetched his provisions every day For their lives' food. When each man made celebration and song, He always kept a sober manner Among them for his lord. Thus Amoraunt, as I tell you, Came to court each day. He did not stop for any difficulty. All who were there advised him To abandon that leper, For then he would thrive and prosper. And he answered in a gentle manner And swore by Him who died on the Cross, And suffered five wounds, That he would never forsake his lord For all this world's goods in his hand While he was still alive. When twelve months had all gone, Amoraunt went into the residence one day For his lord's supplies. The lady finally lost patience²⁷ And commanded all of her men To drive that boy away,</p>
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²⁶ *Child*: As in *Sir Thopas*, the *Child* title indicates a youth who is a knight-in-training. In Owen's case, he passes from being a page to the rank of squire. See also the note to line 27 in *King Horn*.

²⁷ *The levedi was ful wroth anon*: The lady was immediately very angry. But the sense of the line is that she is infuriated by her husband's persistence and not with the boy.

	<p>And swore bi Him that Judas sold, Thei his lord for hunger and cold Dyed ther he lay, He schuld have noither mete no drink, No socour of non other thing For hir after that day.</p>	<p>And swore by Him that Judas sold, Even if his lord died where he lay For hunger and cold, He would have neither food nor drink, Nor the aid of any other thing, From her after that day.</p>
1670	<p>That child wrong his honden tuain And weping went hom ogain With sorwe and sikeing sare. That godeman gan him frain And bad him that he schuld him sain And telle him whi it ware. And he answerd and seyde tho, “Ywis, no wonder thei me be wo, Mine hert, it breketh for care; Thi wiif hath sworn with gret mode</p>	<p>The young man wrung his two hands And went home again weeping With sorrow and bitter sighing. That good man began to question him And asked him to speak to him And tell him what had happened. Then he answered and said, “Truly, it’s no wonder that I am woeful. My heart, it breaks from worry! Your wife has sworn in a fierce mood</p>
1680	<p>That sche no schal never don ous gode; Allas, hou schal we fare?” “A, God help!” seyde that gentil knight, “Whilom y was man of might, To dele mete and cloth, And now icham so foule a wight That al that seth on me bi sight, Mi liif is hem ful loth. Sone,” he seyde, “lete thi wepeing, For this is now a strong tiding, That may we se for soth;</p>	<p>That she will never do us any more good. Alas, how will we live?” “Ah, God help us!” said that noble knight. “Once I was a man of might, One to deal out food and clothing, And now I am so foul a creature That for anyone who sees me by sight, My life is loathsome to them. Son,” he said, “let go your weeping, For this is serious news; We can see that for sure.</p>
1690	<p>For, certes, y can non other red, Ous bihoveth to bid our brede, Now y wot hou it goth.” Amorwe astite as it was light, The child and that gentil knight Dight hem for to gon, And in her way thai went ful right To begge her brede, as thai hadde tight, For mete no hadde thai none. So long thai went up and doun</p>	<p>For, certainly, I know no other course; We are obliged to beg our bread. Now I know how it must go.” In the morning, as soon as it was light, The youth and that noble knight Prepared themselves to go. And they went straight on their way To beg their bread, as they had determined, For they had no food at all. For a while they went up and down</p>
1700	<p>Til thai com to a chepeing toun, Five mile out of that won, And sore wepeand fro dore to dore, And bad here mete for Godes love, Ful ivel couthe thai theron. So in that time, ich understand, Gret plenté was in that lond, Bothe of mete and drink; That folk was ful fre to fond And brought hem enough to hond</p>	<p>Until they came to a market town, Five miles away from that area, And they wept bitterly from door to door And begged their food for God’s love. They had little experience of that! So in that time, as I understand, There was great plenty in that land, Both of food and drink. The people were generous in giving And brought them enough to their hand Of all kinds of things.</p>
1710	<p>Of al kines thing; For the gode man was so messais tho, And for the child was fair also, Hem loved old and ying, And brought hem enough of al gode; Than was the child blithe of mode And lete be his wepeing.</p>	<p>For the good man was so wretched then, And the young man was so fair as well, That young and old pitied them And brought them enough of all necessities. Then the youngster was at ease in spirits And let go his weeping.</p>

1720	<p>Than wex the gode man fote so sare That he no might no forther fare For al this worldes gode; To the tounes ende that child him bare And a loge he bilt him thare, As folk to chepeing yode; And as that folk of that cuntray Com to chepeing everi day, Thai gat hem lives fode; And Amoraunt oft to toun gan go And begged hem mete and drink also, When hem most nede atstode.</p>	<p>Then the good man's feet grew so sore That he could travel no further For all this world's goods. The youth carried him to the town's edge And built him a cabin there, Where people passed by to the market. And as the locals of that country Came to the market every day, They received their sustenance. And Amoraunt often walked to town And begged them for food and drink as well When they stood in greatest need.</p>
1730	<p>Thus in gest rede we Thai duelled there yeres thre, That child and he also, And lived in care and poverté Bi the folk of that cuntré, As thai com to and fro, So that in the ferth yere Corn bigan to wex dere, That hunger bigan to go, That ther was noither eld no ying That wald yif hem mete no drink,</p>	<p>And so we read in the story That they lived there for three years, The youth and him also, And lived in hardship and poverty Through the people of that land As they came to and fro, Until the fourth year, When grain began to grow scarce. Hunger started to increase, So that there was no one young or old Who would give them food or drink. They were in hard straits then.</p>
1740	<p>Wel careful were thai tho. Amorant oft to toun gan gon, Ac mete no drink no gat he non, Noither at man no wive. When thai were togider alon, Reweliche thai gan maken her mon, Wo was hem o live; And his levedi, for sothe to say, Woned ther in that cuntray Nought thennes miles five,</p>	<p>Amoraunt often walked to town, But he got no food or drink, Neither from man nor woman. When they were together alone, They began to lament ruefully That it was woe to be alive. And the knight's lady, to tell the truth, Lived there in that country Not five miles away,</p>
1750	<p>And lived in joie bothe night and day, Whiles he in sorwe and care lay, Wel ivel mot sche thrive! On a day, as thai sete alon, That hendi knight gan meken his mon And seyde to the child that tide, “Sone,” he seyde, “thou most gon To mi levedi swithe anon, That woneth here biside, Bid hir, for Him that died on Rode,</p>	<p>And lived in ease both day and night While he lay in sorrow and suffering. May she have foul fortune! One day, as they sat alone, That fatherly knight began his plea And said to the child at that moment, “Son,” he said, “You must go To my lady at once, Who lives nearby here. Beseech her, for Him who died on the Cross,</p>
1760	<p>Sende me so michel of al mi gode, An asse, on to ride, And out of lond we wil fare To begge our mete with sorwe and care, No lenger we nil abide.” Amoraunt to court is went Bifor that levedi fair and gent, Wel hendeliche seyde hir anon, “Madame,” he seyde, “verrament, As messanger mi lord me sent,</p>	<p>To send me a portion of all my goods, For a donkey to ride on, And we will journey out of the land To beg our food in sorrow and hardship. We will not stay any longer.” Amoraunt went to the court Before that beautiful and well-born lady. At once he spoke very courteously to her. “Madam,” he said, “in truth, My lord has sent me as a messenger,</p>
1770	<p>For himself may nought gon,</p>	<p>For he himself cannot travel,</p>

1780	<p>And praieste with milde mode Sende him so michel of al his gode As an asse to riden opon, And out of lond we schulen yfere, No schal we never com eft here, Thei hunger ous schuld slon.” The levedi seyde sche wald ful fain Sende him gode asses tuain, With thi he wald oway go So fer that he never eft com ogain. “Nat, certes, dame,” the child gan sain, “Thou sest ous never eft mo.” Than was the levedi glad and blithe And comaund him an asse as swithe And seyde with wrethe tho, “Now ye schul out of lond fare, God leve you never to com here mare, And graunt that it be so.”</p>	<p>And he pleads in a gentle manner For you to send him enough of his goods To buy a donkey to ride on, And we will journey out of the land. Nor will we ever come back here, Even if hunger should finish us.” That lady said she would very gladly Send him with two good donkeys Provided that he would go away So far that he never came back again. “No, certainly, my lady,” the youth answered, “You will never see us again.” Then the lady was pleased and glad And as promptly ordered him a donkey²⁸ And then ordered sourly, “Now you will travel out of the land. God grant that you never come back here, And make sure that it is so.”</p>
1790	<p>That child no lenger nold abide, His asse astite he gan bistride And went him hom ogain, And told his lord in that tide Hou his levedi proude in pride Schameliche gan to sain; Opon the asse he sett that knight so hende, And out of the cité thai gun wende; Ther of thai were ful fain. Thurch mani a cuntré, up an doun, Thai begged her mete fram toun to toun, Bothe in winde and rain.</p>	<p>The young man did not linger any longer. He immediately got on his donkey And took himself home again And told his lord in that moment How his lady, haughty in her dignity, Had spoken so shamefully. He set that honorable knight on the donkey And they began to ride out of the city And were very pleased to do so. Through many a land, up and down, They begged for their food from town to town, Both in the wind and the rain.</p>
1800	<p>Over al that lond thurch Godes wille That hunger wex so gret and grille, As wide as thai gun go; Almost for hunger thai gan to spille, Of brede thai no hadde nought half her fille, Ful careful were thai tho. Than seyde the knight opon a day, “Ous bihoveth selle our asse oway, For we no have gode no mo, Save mi riche coupe of gold, Ac certes, that schal never be sold, Thei hunger schuld me slo.” Than Amoraunt and Sir Amiloun, With sorwe and care and reweful roun Erliche in a morning Thai went hem to a chepeing toun, And when the knight was light adoun, Withouten ani duelling, Amoraunt went to toun tho,</p>	<p>Over all the land, through God’s command, Their hunger grew so sharp and intense As far as they travelled. They were almost dying from hunger; They did not have half their fill of bread. They were then very miserable. Then one day the knight said, “We need to sell our donkey away, For we have no goods anymore, Except my rich cup of gold. But for sure that will never be sold Even if hunger should kill me.” Then early one morning, With sorrow and worry and doleful words, Amoraunt and Sir Amiloun Took themselves to a market town. And when the knight had dismounted, Without any delaying, Amourant went into the town.</p>

²⁸ Sir Amiloun’s wife has just agreed to *asses tuain* (1778), but either there is a scribal error or the poet wishes to emphasize her grudging parsimony in promising two but only delivering one donkey.

1820	<p>His asse he ladde with him also And sold it for five schilling. And while that derth was so strong, Ther with thai bought hem mete among, When thai might gete no thing. And when her asse was ysold For five schilling, as y you told, Thai duelled ther dayes thre; Amoraunt wex strong and bold, Of fiftene winter was he old,</p>	<p>He led the donkey with him as well And sold it for five shillings.²⁹ And while the bad harvest was so biting, They bought food among themselves with it When they could not beg anything. And when their donkey was sold For five shillings, as I told you, They stayed for three days there. Amoraunt had grown strong and hardy. He was fifteen years old, Courteous, handsome, and generous.</p>
1830	<p>Curtays, hende and fre. For his lord he hadde gret care, And at his rigge he dight him yare And bare him out of that cité; And half a yere and sum del mare About his mete he him bare, Yblisced mot he be. Thus Amoraunt, withouten wrong, Bar his lord about so long, As y you tel may.</p>	<p>For his lord he had great concern, And he placed him cheerfully on his back And carried him out of the city. For half a year and somewhat more He bore him about for his food. May he be blessed for it! Thus Amoraunt, without fail, Carried his lord around for so long, As I can tell you.</p>
1840	<p>That winter com so hard and strong, Oft, “Allas!” it was his song, So depe was that cuntray; The way was so depe and slider, Oft times bothe togider Thai fel doun in the clay. Ful trewe he was and kinde of blod And served his lord with mild mode, Wald he nought wende oway. Thus Amoraunt, as y you say,</p>	<p>That winter came so hard and fiercely That “Alas!” was constantly his song, The country was so muddy. The way was so slushy and slippery That they often both together Fell down into the dirt. He was faithful and kind-natured And served his lord with a gentle spirit And would not turn away. Thus Amoraunt, as I tell you,</p>
1850	<p>Served his lord bothe night and day And at his rigge him bare. Oft his song was, “Waileway!” So depe was that cuntray, His bones wex ful sare. Al her catel than was spent, Save tuelf pans, verrament, Therwith thai went ful yare And bought hem a gode croudewain, His lord he gan ther-in to lain,</p>	<p>Served his lord both night and day And carried him on his back. His refrain was continually “Woe is us!” The winter slush was so deep That his bones grew sore. All their money was spent then, Except for twelve pennies, in truth. With that they quickly went And bought themselves a sturdy pushcart. He laid his lord inside it; He could carry him no more.</p>
1860	<p>He no might him bere namare. Than Amoraunt crud Sir Amiloun Thurch mani a cuntré, up and doun, As ye may understand;</p>	<p>Then Amoraunt carted Sir Amiloun Through many a land, up and down, As you may understand.</p>

²⁹ *Five schilling*: About £130 (US\$200) in modern money (UK National Archives). This is two to three days wages for a knight, but enough for simple provisions for a long time. Hodges gives the typical price of a chicken in 1338 at two for 1d (1/12 of a shilling, £2.25 in modern money). Kenneth Hodges, “Medieval Sourcebook: Medieval Prices,” Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies. Accessed 19 May 2010 at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/medievalprices.html#WAGES>. The Lombards would of course have used florins or other coins rather than shillings and pounds, but romance audiences would have cheerfully ignored such inaccuracies just as Shakespeare’s did with his Italian settings.

1870	<p>So he com to a cité toun, Ther Sir Amis, the bold baroun, Was douke and lord in lond. Than seyde the knight in that tide, “To the doukes court here beside To bring me thider thou fond; He is a man of milde mode, We schul gete ous ther sum gode Thurch grace of Godes sond. “Ac, leve sone,” he seyde than, “For His love, that this world wan Astow art hende and fre, Thou be aknowe to no man Whider y schal, no whenes y cam, No what mi name it be.”</p>	<p>And so he came to a city Where Sir Amis, the brave baron, Was duke and lord of the land. Then the knight said at that moment, “Try to bring me forth To the duke’s court near here. He is a man of a gentle nature. There we will get us some help Through the grace of God’s blessing. But, dear son,” he added then, “For His love, who redeemed this world, If you are noble and gracious, Do not let slip to any man Where I am going, or where I am from, Or what my name is.”</p>
1880	<p>He answerd and seyde, “Nay.” To court he went in his way, As ye may listen at me, And bifor al other pover men He crud his wain in to the fen; Gret diol it was to se. So it bifel that selve day, With tong as y you tel may, It was midwinter tide, That riche douke with gamen and play Fram chirche com the right way</p>	<p>He answered and said, “No, I will not.” He went on his way to the court As you may listen from me. And before all the other poor men He pushed his cart through the mud. It was a great sorrow to see. So it happened that same day, As I may tell you with my tongue, That it was the midwinter time.³⁰</p>
1890	<p>As lord and prince with pride. When he com to the castelgate, The pover men that stode therate Withdrough hem ther beside. With knightes and with serjaunce fale He went into that semly sale With joie and blis to abide. In kinges court, as it is lawe, Trumpes in halle to mete gan blawe, To benche went tho bold.</p>	<p>The rich duke, with festive cheer And laughter, came that way from church As lord and prince with honor. When he came to the castle gate, The poor men who stood there Withdrew themselves out of the way. With knights and many men-at-arms He went into that fine hall To dwell in joy and ease. In the king’s court, as was customary, Trumpets in the hall announced dinner. The bold men went to their benches.</p>
1900	<p>When thai were semly set on rowe, Served thai were upon a throwe, As men miriest on mold. That riche douke, withouten les, As a prince served he wes With riche coupes of gold, And he that brought him to that state Stode bischet withouten the gate, Wel sore ofhungred and cold.</p>	<p>When they were fittingly seated in place, They were served in a moment, As the merriest men on earth. That elegant duke, without a lie, Was served as a prince With rich cups of gold. And he who brought him to that state Stood shut outside the gate, Sore with hunger and cold.</p>
1910	<p>Out at the gate com a knight And a serjaunt wise and wight, To plain hem bothe yfere,</p>	<p>Out of the gate came a knight And a servant, strong and able, To amuse themselves together.</p>

³⁰ *Midwinter*: The winter solstice immediately before Christmas, and a festive time of celebration. Just as Odysseus appears as a beggar to his decadent household, the poet here also contrasts Sir Amiloun’s extreme hardship against the drunken revelry of midwinter in the court.

	<p>And thurch the grace of God Almighty On Sir Amiloun he cast a sight, Hou laith he was of chere. And seththen biheld on Amoraunt, Hou gentil he was and of fair semblaunt, In gest as ye may here. Than seyde thai bothe, bi Seyn Jon, In al the court was ther non</p>	<p>And through the grace of God Almighty They cast their eyes on Sir Amiloun, Seeing how hideous he was to look on. And then they looked at Amoraunt and saw How noble he was and fair in appearance, In the story as you may hear. Then they both said, by Saint John, In all the court there was no one</p>
1920	<p>Of fairehed half his pere. The gode man gan to him go, And hendeliche he asked him tho, As ye may understand, Fram wat lond that he com fro, And whi that he stode ther tho, And whom he served in lond. “Sir,” he seyde, “so God me save, Icham here mi lordes knave, That lith in Godes bond;</p>	<p>Half his equal in handsomeness! The good man went to him then And courteously asked him, As you might expect, What land he had come from And why he stood there then, And who he served in the land. “Sir,” he said, “so God help me, I am the servant of my lord here, Who endures in God’s bonds.</p>
1930	<p>And thou art gentil knight of blode, Bere our erand of sum gode Thurch grace of Godes sond.” The gode man asked him anon, Yif he wald fro that lazer gon And tewelich to him take; And he seyde he schuld, bi Seyn Jon, Serve that riche douke in that won, And richeman he wald him make; And he answerd with mild mode</p>	<p>If you are a gracious knight in blood, Bring some good out of our efforts, Through the grace of God’s plenty.” The good man asked him at once If he would leave that leper And stay with him faithfully; And he said, by Saint John, that he should Serve the rich duke in that residence And he would make him a prosperous man. The youth answered with a gentle manner And swore by Him who died on the Cross That while he could live and breathe,</p>
1940	<p>And swore bi Him that dyed on Rode Whiles he might walk and wake, For to winne al this warldes gode, His hende lord, that bi him stode, Schuld he never forsake. The gode man wende he hadde ben rage, Or he hadde ben a folesage That hadde his witt forlorn, Other he thought that his lord with the foule visage Hadde ben a man of heighe parage</p>	<p>For all this world’s goods He would never forsake His beloved lord, who stood nearby him. The good man believed he was mad, Or that he had been a court fool Who had lost his wits. Or else, he thought, that foul-looking lord Might have been a man of noble heritage And born from an aristocratic lineage.</p>
1950	<p>And of heighe kinde ycorn. Therefore he nold no more sain, Bot went him in to the halle ogain The riche douke biforn, “Mi lord,” he seyde, “listen to me The best bourd, bi mi leueté, Thou herdest seththen thou were born.” The riche douke badde him anon To telle biforn hem everichon Withouten more duelling.</p>	<p>Therefore he said no more, And only went into the hall again Before the regal duke. “My lord,” he said, “listen to me About the best joke, by my word, You ever heard since you were born.” The rich duke asked him immediately To describe it before every one of them Without more delay.</p>
1960	<p>“Now sir,” he seyde, “bi Seyn Jon, Ich was out atte gate ygon Right now on mi playing; Pover men y seighe mani thare, Litel and michel, lasse and mare, Bothe old and ying,</p>	<p>“Now sir,” he said, “by Saint John, I was just outside the gate Right now to have some fun. I saw many poor men there, Small and great, low and high, Both young and old,</p>

1970	<p>And a lazer ther y fond; Herdestow never in no lond Telle of so foule a thing. “The lazer lith up in a wain, And is so pover of might and main O fot no may he gon; And over him stode a naked swain, A gentiler child, for sothe to sain, In world no wot y non. He is the fairest gome That ever Crist yaf Cristendome Or layd liif opon, And on of the most fole he is That ever thou herdest speke, ywis, In this worldes won.”</p>	<p>And I found a leper there. You will never have heard of Such a foul thing in any land! The leper sits up in a cart And is so poor in strength and vigor That he cannot go on foot. And over him stood a half-dressed servant, A nobler youth, to tell the truth, Than any I know in the world. He is the fairest creature That Christ ever gave to Christendom Or endowed with life, And one of the biggest fools That you ever heard speak, in truth, In all this world’s lands.”</p>
1980	<p>Than seyde the riche douke ogain, “What foly,” he seyde, “can he sain? Is he madde of mode?” “Sir,” he seyde, “y bad him fain Forsake the lazer in the wain, That he so over stode, And in thi servise he schuld be, Y bihete hem bothe lond and fe, Anough of warldes gode;</p>	<p>Then the rich duke said again, “What silliness,” he asked, “does he say? Is he mad in his behavior?” “Sir,” he answered, “I gladly invited him To leave behind the leper in the cart That he took care of so, And said he would be in your service. I offered him both land and a living, And enough of worldly goods.</p>
1990	<p>And he answerd and seyde tho He nold never gon him fro; Therefore ich hold him wode.” Than seyde the douke, “Thei his lord be lorn, Par aventour, the gode man hath biforn Holpen him at his nede, Other the child is of his blod yborn, Other he hath him othes sworn His liif with him to lede.</p>	<p>And he answered and said then That he would never go from him. For this I believe he is mad.” Then the duke said, “Though his lord Is wretched, by chance the good man Helped him in his need before, Or the youth is born from his blood; Or he has sworn him oaths To lead his life with him.</p>
2000	<p>Whether he be fremd or of his blod, The child,” he seyde, “is trewe and gode, Also God me spede. Yif ichim speke er he wende, For that he is so trewe and kende, Y schal quite him his mede!” That douke astite, as y you told, Clepde to him a squier bold And hendelich gan hem sain: “Take,” he sayde, “mi coupe of gold, As ful of wine astow might hold</p>	<p>Whether he is a stranger or his kin, The youngster,” he added, “is loyal and good, So help me God! If I can speak to him before he goes on, He is so loyal and good-natured That I will give him his reward.” Just as quick, as I tell you, The duke called a bold squire And said to him graciously, “Take,” he said, “my gold cup, With as much wine as it can hold,</p>
2010	<p>In thine hondes tuain, And bere it to the castelgate, A lazer thou schalt finde therate Liggeand in a wain. Bid him, for the love of Seyn Martin,</p>	<p>In your two hands, And carry it to the castle gate. You will find a leper there, Lying in a cart. Invite him, for the love of St. Martin,³¹</p>

³¹ *Seyn Martin*: Martin of Tours (316-397), a Christian saint who tore his soldier’s cloak to split it with a beggar, leading to his conversion. Here the choice of saint is likely thoughtful.

	<p>He and his page drink this win, And bring me the coupe ogain.” The squier tho the coupe hent, And to the castel gat he went, And ful of win he it bare.</p>	<p>To drink this wine with his page And bring me the cup back again.” The squire then took the cup And went to the castle gate, Bearing the cup, full of wine.</p>
2020	<p>To the lazer he seyde, verrament, “This coupe ful of win mi lord the sent, Drink it, yife thou dare.” The lazer tok forth his coupe of gold, Bothe were gotten in o mold, Right as that selve it ware, Therin he poud that win so riche; Than were thai bothe ful yliche And noither lesse no mare.</p>	<p>He said to the leper, in truth, “My lord sends you this cup of wine. Drink it, if you dare.” The leper took out his gold cup. Both were made from one mold, Right as if they were the same. He poured in the rich wine. Then they were both exactly alike, And neither more nor less.</p>
2030	<p>The squier biheld the coupes tho, First his and his lordes also, Whiles he stode hem biforn, Ac he no couthe never mo Chese the better of hem to, So liche bothe thai worn. Into halle he ran ogain, “Certes, sir,” he gan to sain, “Mani gode dede thou hast lorn, And so thou hast lorn this dede now; He is a richer man than thou, Bi the time that God was born.”</p>	<p>The squire looked at the cups, First the leper’s and his lord’s as well, While he stood before them. But he could no longer Choose the right one of them, They were both so alike. He ran back into the hall. “For certain, sir,” he cried, “You have wasted many good deeds, And so you have wasted this one now! He is a richer man than you are, By the time that God was born!”</p>
2040	<p>The riche douke answerd, “Nay. That worth never bi night no day; It were ogaines the lawe!” “Yis, sir,” he gan to say, “He is a traitour, bi mi fay, And were wele worth to drawe. For when y brought him the win, He drough forth a gold coupe fin, Right as it ware thi nawe;</p>	<p>The rich duke answered, “No! That could never happen, by night or day; It would be against the law!” “Yes, sir,” he answered, “He is a thief, by my faith, And fully deserves to be pulled apart! For when I brought him the wine, He drew out a fine golden cup, Right as if it were your own.</p>
2050	<p>In this world, bi Seyn Jon, So wise a man is ther non Asundri schuld hem knawe.” “Now, certes,” seyde Sir Amis tho, “In al this world were coupes nomo So liche in al thing, Save min and mi brothers also, That was sett bituix ous to, Token of our parting; And yif it be so, with tresoun</p>	<p>In all this world, by Saint John, There is no man so wise That he could tell them apart.” “Now, for sure,” Sir Amis then said, “In all this world there are no cups So alike in every way, Except for mine and my brother’s as well, Which were given between us two As a token of our parting. And if it is so, my gracious friend, Sir Amiloun, was killed with treason, Without a lie.</p>
2060	<p>Mine hende brother, Sir Amiloun, Is slain, withouten lesing. And yif he have stollen his coupe oway, Y schal him sle me self this day, Bi Jhesu, heven king!” Fram the bord he resed than And hent his swerd as a wode man And drough it out with wrake, And to the castel gat he ran;</p>	<p>And if he has stolen his cup away, I will slay him myself this day, By Jesus, Heaven’s king! He reared up from the table And seized his sword as a madman And drew it out with anger, And he ran to the castle gate.</p>

2070	<p>In al the court was ther no man That him might atake. To the lazer he stirt in the wain And hent him in his honden tuain And sleynt him in the lake, And layd on, as he were wode, And al that ever about him stode Gret diol gan make. “Traitous!” seyde the douke so bold, “Where haddestow this coupe of gold And hou com thou ther to?”</p>	<p>In all the court there was no man Who might overtake him. He went to the leper in the cart And grabbed him by his two hands And slung him into the lake And attacked him as if he were crazed, And all who stood around there Began to make a great commotion. “Thief!” said the duke in boldness. “Where did you get this golden cup from? And how did you get it?”</p>
2080	<p>For bi Him that Judas sold, Amiloun, mi brother, it hadde in wold, When that he went me fro!” “Ya, certes, sir,” he gan to say, “It was his in his cuntray, And now it is fallen so; Bot certes, now that icham here, The coupe is mine, y bought it dere, With right y com ther to.”</p>	<p>For by Him that Judas betrayed, My brother Amiloun used to have it When he went away from me!” “Yes, certainly, sir,” the leper answered. “It was in his country, And now it has passed on so. But as sure as I am here, The cup is mine, and I paid for it dearly, And I came to it rightfully.”</p>
2090	<p>Than was the douke ful egre of mod; Was noman that about him stode That durst legge on him hond; He spurned him with his fot And laid on, as he were wode, With his naked brond, And bi the fet the lazer he drough And drad on him in the slough; For no thing wald he wond, And seyde, “Thef, thou schalt be slawe, Bot thou wilt be the sothe aknawe, Where thou the coupe fond.”</p>	<p>Then the duke was in a furious mood. There was no one would stood near him Who dared to lay a hand on him. He kicked him with his foot And charged at him, as if he were mad, With his naked sword. And by the feet he dragged the leper And raged over him in the mud. He would not stop for anything, And said, “Thief, you will be slain Unless you reveal the truth About where you found that cup.”</p>
2100	<p>Child Amoraunt stode the pople among And seye his lord with wough and wrong Hou reweliche he was dight. He was bothe hardi and strong, The douke in his armes he fong And held him stille upright. “Sir,” he seyde, “thou art unhende And of thi werkes unkende, To sle that gentil knight.</p>	<p>Young Amoraunt stood among the people And saw how dreadfully his lord was treated With wretchedness and injustice. He was both hardy and strong; He seized the duke in his arms And held him still upright. “Sir,” he said, “you are ungracious And ignorant of what you are doing To slay that noble knight.</p>
2110	<p>Wel sore may him rewe that stounde That ever for the toke he wounde To save thi liif in fight. “And ys thi brother, Sir Amylioun, That whilom was a noble baroun Bothe to ryde and go, And now with sorwe ys dreve adoun; Nowe God that suffred passioun Brenge him oute of his wo! For the of blysse he ys bare,</p>	<p>He might well sorely regret the time That he ever suffered wounds for you To save your life in battle. For this is your brother, Sir Amiloun, Who once was a stately baron Both as he rode and as he walked, And is now driven down by sorrow! Now may God, who suffered anguish, Bring him out of his woe! Because of you he is deprived of joy, And you only burden him with trouble</p>
2120	<p>And thou yeldyst him all with care And brekest his bones a two; That he halp the at thi nede,</p>	<p>And break his bones in two. After he helped you in your need,</p>

2130	<p>Well evell aquitest thou his mede, Alas, whi farest thou so?" When Sir Amis herd him so sain, He stirt to the knight ogain, Withouten more delay, And biclept him in his armes tuain, And oft, "Allas!" he gan sain; His song was "Waileway!" He loked opon his scholder bare And seighe his grimly wounde thare, As Amoraunt gan him say. He fel aswon to the grounde And oft he seyde, "Allas that stounde!" That ever he bode that day. "Allas," he seyde, "mi joie is lorn, Unkender blod nas never born, Y not wat y may do;</p>	<p>You reward him so foully. Alas, why are you acting this way?" When Sir Amis heard him say so, He leaped toward the knight again Without any more protest And grasped him in both his arms And began to cry "Alas!" His constant refrain was "Woe is me!" He looked upon Amiloun's bare shoulder And saw his savage scar there, As Amoraunt began to explain. He fell faint to the ground And repeatedly cried, "Alas the time!" That he had seen that day. "Alas!" he said, "My joys are lost; More shameful flesh was never born! I do not know how I can amend this!</p>
2140	<p>For he saved mi liif biforn, I have him yolden with wo and sorn And wrought him michel wo. "O brother," he seyde, "par charité, This rewely ded foryif thou me, That ichave smiten the so!" And he forgave it him also a swithe And kist him wel mani a sithe, Wepeand with eighen tuo. Than was Sir Amis glad and fain,</p>	<p>For he saved my life before, And I have repaid him with pain and sorrow And caused him great woe. "My friend," he cried, "For charity's sake, Forgive me this lamentable deed, That I have struck you so!" And he forgave him just as quickly And kissed him many times over, Weeping from both eyes. Then Sir Amis was glad and joyful.</p>
2150	<p>For joie he wepe with his ain And hent his brother than, And tok him in his armes tuain, Right til he com into the halle ogain, No bar him no nother man. The levedi tho in the halle stode And wend hir lord hadde ben wode, Ogaines him hye ran. "Sir," sche seyde, "wat is thi thought? Whi hastow him into halle ybrought</p>	<p>He wept from his eyes with happiness And embraced his brother then, And held him in his two arms Right until they came back into the hall. No other man carried him. The lady stood in the hall And thought that her lord had gone mad. She ran toward him. "Sir," she cried, "what are you thinking? In the name of Him who saved the world, Why have you brought him into the hall?"</p>
2160	<p>For Him that this world wan?" "O dame," he seyde, "bi Seyn Jon, Me nas never so wo bigon, Yif thou it wost understand, For better knight in world is non, Bot almost now ichave him slon And schamely driven to schond; For it is mi brother, Sir Amiloun, With sorwe and care is dreven adoun, That er was fre to fond."</p>	<p>I was never so full of remorse! If you would only understand. For there is no better knight in the world, But I have almost killed him And have disgracefully brought him to harm. For it is my brother, Sir Amiloun, Who has been ruined by sorrow and hardship, Who was once noble in times of trial."</p>
2170	<p>The levedi fel aswon to grounde And wepe and seyde, "Allas that stounde!" Wel sore wregand hir hond. As foule a lazer as he was, The levedi kist him in that plas, For nothing wold sche spare, And oft time sche seyde, "Allas!"</p>	<p>The lady fell faint to the ground And wept and said, "Alas the moment!" Sorely wringing her hands. As foul a leper as he was, The lady kissed him in that place; She would not stop for anything, And continually she cried "Alas!"</p>

2180	<p>That him was fallen so hard a cas, To live in sorwe and care. Into hir chaumber she gan him lede And kest of al his pover wede And bathed his bodi al bare, And to a bedde swithe him brought; With clothes riche and wele ywrought; Ful blithe of him thai ware. And thus in gest as we say, Tuelmoneth in her chaumber he lay, Ful trewe thai ware and kinde. No wold thai nick him with no nay, What so ever he asked night or day,</p>	<p>That the knight had fallen on such hard fortune To live in misery and worry. Into her chamber she brought him And threw off all of his ragged clothing And bathed his naked body, And brought him quickly to a bed With clothes that were fine and well-made. They were overjoyed to have him. And thus in the story as we say it, He stayed twelve months in her chamber. They were very dutiful and kind. They would never say no to him.</p>
2190	<p>It nas never bihinde; Of everich mete and everi drink Thai had hemselve, withouten lesing, Thai were him bothe ful minde. And bithan the tuelmonth was ago, A ful fair grace fel hem tho, In gest as we finde. So it bifel opon a night, As Sir Amis, that gentil knight, In slepe thought as he lay,</p>	<p>Whatsoever he asked for, day or night, It was never slow in coming. Of every dish and every drink They had themselves, without a lie, Both had him fully in mind. And by the time twelve months had passed, A wondrous blessing came to them, In the story as we find it. So it happened one night As Sir Amis, that gracious knight, Lay asleep, that he dreamed</p>
2200	<p>An angel com fram heven bright And stode biforn his bed ful right And to him thus gan say: Yif he wald rise on Cristes morn, Swiche time as Jhesu Crist was born, And slen his children tuay, And alien his brother with the blode, Thurch Godes grace, that is so gode, His wo schuld wende oway.</p>	<p>An angel came from Heaven's brightness And stood right before his bed, And began to say to him That if he would rise on Christmas morning At the same time as Jesus Christ was born, And slay his two children And anoint his brother with the blood, Through God's grace, that is so good, His disease would fade away.</p>
2210	<p>Thus him thought al tho thre night An angel out of heven bright Warned him ever more Yif he wald do as he him hight, His brother schuld ben as fair a knight As ever he was biforn, Ful blithe was Sir Amis tho, Ac for his childer him was ful wo, For fairer ner non born.</p>	<p>Thus he dreamed all through the night That an angel out of Heaven's radiance Warned him for evermore That if he would do as he was commanded, His brother would be as fair a knight As he ever was before. Then Sir Amis was very gladdened, But was very sad for his children, For there were none born who were so fair.</p>
2220	<p>Wel loth him was his childer to slo, And wele lother his brother forgo, That is so kinde ycorn. Sir Amiloun met that night also That an angel warned him tho And seyde to him ful yare, Yif his brother wald his childer slo, The hert blod of hem to Might bring him out of care. A morwe Sir Amis was ful hende And to his brother he gan wende And asked him of his fare;</p>	<p>He was greatly loath to kill his children, But more unwilling to deny his friend, Who had such a noble heritage. Sir Amiloun also dreamed that night That an angel warned him then And said to him directly That if his brother slayed his children, The heart's blood of the two Might bring him out of sickness. In the morning Sir Amis was gracious And made his way to his friend And asked him how he was.</p>
2230	<p>And he him answerd ogain ful stille,</p>	<p>And the other answered back softly,</p>

	<p> “Brother, ich abide her Godes wille, For y may do na mare.” Al so thai sete togider thare And speke of aventours, as it ware, Tho knightes hende and fre, Than seyde Sir Amiloun ful yare, “Brother, y nil nought spare To tel the in privité. Me thought tonight in me sweven 2240 That an angel com fram heven; For sothe, he told me That thurch the blod of thin children to Y might aschape out of mi wo, Al hayl and hole to be!” Than thought the douk, withouten lesing, For to slen his childer so ying, It were a dedli sinne; And than thought he, bi heven king, His brother out of sorwe bring, 2250 For that nold he nought blinne. So it bifel on Cristes night, Swiche time as Jhesu, ful of might, Was born to save mankunne, To chirche to wende al that ther wes, Thai dighten hem, withouten les, With joie and worldes winne. Than thai were redi for to fare, The douke bad al that ther ware, To chirche thai schuld wende, 2260 Litel and michel, lasse and mare, That non bileft in chamber thare, As thai wald ben his frende, And seyde he wald himselve that night Kepe his brother that gentil knight That was so god and kende. Than was ther non that durst say nay; To chirche thai went in her way, At hom bileft tho hende. The douke wel fast gan asprie 2270 The keys of the noricerie, Er than thai schuld gon, And priveliche he cast his eighe And aparceived ful witterlye Where that thai hadde hem don. And when thai were to chirche went, Than Sir Amis, verrament, Was bileft alon. He tok a candel fair and bright And to the keys he went ful right </p>	<p> “Brother, I wait here for God’s will, For I can do no more.” As they sat together there, Those noble and gracious knights spoke About adventures, such as they were. Sir Amiloun then said in earnestness, “Brother, I will not hesitate To talk to you in secrecy. I dreamed last night in my sleep That an angel came from Heaven. In truth, he told me That with the blood of your two children I might escape from my affliction, To be all healthy and whole.” The duke thought, without a lie, That to kill his children, so young, Would be a deadly sin. But then he resolved, by Heaven’s king, To bring his brother out of hardship. From that he would not flinch. So it happened on Christmas Eve, At such time as Jesus, full of might, Was born to save mankind, That all who were there readied themselves, Without a lie, to go to church With joy and all earthly pleasure. When they were ready to set forth, The duke requested all who were there That they should go on to church, Small and great, less and more, So that if they were his friends, None would be left in the chamber there. He said he would himself that night Keep his brother, that noble knight Who was so good and kind. There were none there who dared to say no. They went on their way to church And left those noble men at home. The duke had swiftly located The keys to the nursery Before they were to go, And he secretly cast his eye And perceived clearly Where they had been set. And when they were gone to church, Then Sir Amis, truly, Was left alone. He took a candle, fair and bright, And went straightaway to the keys </p>
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2280	<p>And tok hem oway ichon. Alon him self, withouten mo, Into the chaumber he gan to go, Ther that his childer were, And biheld hem bothe to, Hou fair thai lay togider tho And slepe bothe yfere. Than seyde himselve, “Bi Seyn Jon, It were gret rewethe you to slon, That God hath bought so dere!”</p>	<p>And took each one of them away. Alone himself, with no more delay,³² He went into the chamber Where his children were, And beheld the both of them, How beautifully they lay together And slept beside each other. Then he said to himself, “By Saint John, It would be heartbreaking to slay you, Who God has bought so dearly!”</p>
2290	<p>His kniif he had drawn that tide, For sorwe he sleynt oway biside And wepe with reweful chere. Than he hadde wopen ther he stode, Anon he turned ogain his mode And sayd withouten delay, “Mi brother was so kinde and gode, With grimly wounde he schad his blod For mi love opon a day; Whi schuld y than mi childer spare, To bring mi brother out of care? O, certes,” he seyde, “nay! To help mi brother now at this nede, God graunt me therto wele to spede, And Mari, that best may!” No lenger stint he no stode, Bot hent his kniif with dreri mode And tok his children tho; For he nold nought spille her blode, Over a bacine fair and gode</p>	<p>He drew his knife out at that moment; For sorrow he laid it away nearby And wept with a remorseful heart. When he had wept, he immediately Regained his composure where he stood And said without delay, “My brother was so kind and good. With horrible wounds he shed his blood For my love one day. Why should I spare my children then To bring my friend out of peril? Oh, surely, no!” he said. “To help my brother now in his need, May God grant me all success in it, Along with Mary, that blessed maid!” He did not waver a moment longer, But gripped his knife with a heavy heart And seized his children then. Because he would not spill their blood, He cut their throats in two Over a basin, good and strong. And when he had slain both of them, He laid them in their bed again— It was no wonder he was in anguish!— And covered them, so no one would see That anyone had been at them. He made his way out of the chamber. And when he was outside the room, He fastened the door closed at once, As tight as it was before. He hid the keys under a stone And thought that everyone would believe That they had been murdered. He then went to his brother And said to that troubled man, “‘At the same time as God was born, I have brought you my children’s blood. I hope it will do you good As the angel said before.”</p>
2300	<p>Her throtes he schar atuo. And when he hadde hem bothe slain, He laid hem in her bed ogain - No wonder thei him were wo - And hilde hem, that no wight schuld se, As noman hadde at hem be; Out of chaumber he gan go. And when he was out of chaumber gon, The dore he steked stille anon As fast as it was biforn;</p>	<p>He did not waver a moment longer, But gripped his knife with a heavy heart And seized his children then. Because he would not spill their blood, He cut their throats in two Over a basin, good and strong. And when he had slain both of them, He laid them in their bed again— It was no wonder he was in anguish!— And covered them, so no one would see That anyone had been at them. He made his way out of the chamber. And when he was outside the room, He fastened the door closed at once, As tight as it was before. He hid the keys under a stone And thought that everyone would believe That they had been murdered. He then went to his brother And said to that troubled man, “‘At the same time as God was born, I have brought you my children’s blood. I hope it will do you good As the angel said before.”</p>
2310	<p>The kays he hidde under a ston And thought thai schuld wene ichon That thai hadde ben forlorn. To his brother he went him than And seyde to that careful man, “Swiche time as God was born, Ich have the brought mi childer blod, Ich hope it schal do the gode As the angel seyde biforn.”</p>	<p>He then went to his brother And said to that troubled man, “‘At the same time as God was born, I have brought you my children’s blood. I hope it will do you good As the angel said before.”</p>
2320	<p>The kays he hidde under a ston And thought thai schuld wene ichon That thai hadde ben forlorn. To his brother he went him than And seyde to that careful man, “Swiche time as God was born, Ich have the brought mi childer blod, Ich hope it schal do the gode As the angel seyde biforn.”</p>	<p>He then went to his brother And said to that troubled man, “‘At the same time as God was born, I have brought you my children’s blood. I hope it will do you good As the angel said before.”</p>

³² *Alon him self, withouten mo*: The *withouten mo* may mean “with no more ado” or also “without anyone else.” ME rhetoric is fond of piling on synonyms, as well as double or triple negatives, for added emphasis.

2330	<p>“Brother,” Sir Amiloun gan to say, “Hastow slayn thine children tuay? Allas, whi destow so?” He wepe and seyde, “Waileway! Ich hat lever til domesday Have lived in care and wo!” Than seyde Sir Amis, “Be now stille; Jhesu, when it is His wille, May send me childer mo. For me of blis thou art al bare; Ywis, mi liif wil y nought spare,</p>	<p>“Brother,” Sir Amiloun cried out, “Have you killed your two children? Alas, why did you do it?” He wept and said, “Woe is us! I would have preferred to live In pain and misery until Doomsday!” Then Sir Amis said, “Be still now! Jesus, when it is His will, May send me more children. Because of me you are barren of joys. In truth, I would not spare my own life If it would help you now.”</p>
2340	<p>To help the now therfro.” He tok that blode, that was so bright, And alied that gentil knight, That er was hend in hale, And seththen in bed him dight And wreighe him wel warm, aflight, With clothes riche and fale. “Brother,” he seyde, “ly now stille And falle on slepe thurch Godes wille, As the angel told in tale;</p>	<p>He took that blood, which was so bright, And anointed that noble knight, Who was once strong in health, And afterward he put him in bed And covered him warmly, indeed, With blankets that were rich and plentiful. “Brother,” he said, “Lie still now And fall asleep through God’s will, As the angel told in the tale.</p>
2350	<p>And ich hope wele withouten lesing, Jhesu, that is heven king, Schal bote the of thi bale.” Sir Amis let him ly alon And in to his chapel he went anon, In gest as ye may here, And for his childer, that he hadde slon, To God of heven he made him mon And preyde with rewely chere Schuld save him fram schame that day,</p>	<p>And I fully believe, without falsehood, That Jesus, who is Heaven’s king, Will relieve you of your suffering.” Sir Amis let him lie alone And went at once into his chapel, In the story as you may hear, And for his children that he had slain, He made his plea to God in Heaven And prayed with a penitent heart That He would save him from shame that day,</p>
2360	<p>And Mari, his moder, that best may, That was him leve and dere; And Jhesu Crist, in that stede Ful wele He herd that knightes bede And graunt him his praier. Amorwe astite as it was day, The levedi com home al with play With knightes ten and five; Thai sought the kays ther thai lay; Thai founde hem nought, thai were oway,</p>	<p>That He would save him from shame that day, And to Mary, His Mother, that blessed maid, Who was beloved and dear to him. And Jesus Christ, in that place, Heard in full that knight’s petition And granted him his prayer. In the morning, as soon as it was day, The lady came home in high spirits With ten knights and five more. They looked for the keys where they laid them. They could not find them; they were gone. It was a torment to be alive!</p>
2370	<p>Wel wo was hem olive. The douk bad al that ther wes Thai schuld hold hem still in pes And stint of her strive, And seyde he hadde the keys nome, Schuld noman in the chaumber come Bot himself and his wive. Anon he tok his levedi than And seyde to hir, “Leve leman, Be blithe and glad of mode;</p>	<p>The duke asked of all who were there That they would keep themselves quiet And stop being anxious, And he said he had taken the keys And that no man should go into the chamber Except himself and his wife. Afterward he took his lady And said to her, “My dear heart, Be content and glad in mood.</p>
2380	<p>For bi Him that this warld wan, Bothe mi childer ich have slan, That were so hende and gode;</p>	<p>For in the name of Him who saved this world, I have slain both my children, Who were so gentle and good.</p>

	<p>For me thought in mi sweven That an angel com fram heven And seyde me thurch her blode Mi brother schuld passe out of his wo; Therefore y slough hem bothe to, To hele that frely fode.” Than was the levedi ferly wo</p>	<p>For I had a vision in my sleep That an angel came from Heaven And instructed me that through their blood My brother would pass out of his troubles. Therefore I killed the both of them To heal that noble man.” Then the lady was grief-stricken And saw that her lord was also.</p>
2390	<p>And seighe hir lord was also; Sche comfort him ful yare, “O lef liif,” sche seyde tho, “God may sende ous childer mo, Of hem have thou no care. Yif it ware at min hert rote, For to bring thi brother bote, My lyf y wold not spare. Shal noman oure children see, Tomorrow shal they beryed bee</p>	<p>“Oh, dear one!” she said, “God may send us more children. Do not be troubled for them. If it were at the base of my heart To bring your brother a remedy, I would not spare my own life. No one will see our children; Tomorrow they shall be buried As if they died naturally!”</p>
2400	<p>As they faire ded ware!” Thus the lady faire and bryght Comfort hur lord with al hur myght, As ye mow understonde; And seth they went both ful ryght To Sir Amylion, that gentil knyght, That ere was free to fonde. When Sir Amylion wakyd thoo, Al his fowlehed was agoo Through grace of Goddes sonde;</p>	<p>Thus the lady, fair and beautiful, Comforted her lord with all her might, As you may understand. And later they both went straight To Sir Amiloun, that gracious knight, Who had been so generous in facing trials. When Sir Amiloun woke up then, All his foulness was gone Through the grace of God’s command. He was as fair a man then As he ever was before, Since he was born on the earth. Then they were all happy; They could not express all their joy And they thanked God that day. As you may listen and learn, They went quickly into the chamber Where the children were laying. They found the children safe and well, Without blemish or wound, And sitting together playing!</p>
2410	<p>Than was he as feire a man As ever he was yet or than, Seth he was born in londe. Than were they al blith, Her joy couth noman kyth, They thonked God that day. As ye mow listen and lyth, Into a chamber they went swyth, Ther the children lay; Without wemme and wound</p>	<p>They wept for joy where they stood, And thanked God with grateful hearts That their troubles were all gone. When Sir Amiloun was healthy and whole And had grown so vigorous in strength Both to walk and ride, Child Owen was made a brave squire. He was glad and content at heart To serve beside his lord. Then one day the knight said He would travel home to his country, To have words with his wife at that time.</p>
2420	<p>Hool and sound the children found, And layen togeder and play. For joye they wept, there they stood, And thanked God with myld mood, Her care was al away. When Sir Amylion was hool and fere And wax was strong of powere Both to goo and ryde, Child Oweys was a bold squyer, Blithe and glad he was of chere,</p>	<p>When Sir Amylion was hool and fere And wax was strong of powere Both to goo and ryde, Child Oweys was a bold squyer, Blithe and glad he was of chere, To serve his lord beside.</p>
2430	<p>To serve his lord beside. Than saide the knyght uppon a day, He wolde hoom to his contray, To speke with his wyf that tyde;</p>	<p>To have words with his wife at that time.</p>

<p>2440</p> <p>2450</p> <p>2460</p> <p>2470</p>	<p>And for she halp him so at nede, Wel he thought to quyte hur mede, No lenger wold he abyde. Sir Amys sent ful hastely After mony knyght hardy, That doughty were of dede, Wel fyve hundred kene and try, And other barons by and by On palfray and on steede. He preked both nyght and day Til he com to his contray, Ther he was lord in lede. Than had a knyght of that contré Spoused his lady, bryght of ble, In romaunce as we rede. But thus, in romaunce as y yow say, They com hoom that silf day That the bridal was hold; To the gates they preked without delay, Anon ther began a soory play Among the barouns bold. A messengere to the hal com And seide her lord was com hom As man meriest on molde. Than wox the lady blew and wan; Ther was mony a sory man, Both yong and olde. Sir Amys and Sir Amylion And with hem mony a stout baron With knyghtes and squyers fale, With helmes and with haberyon, With swerd bryght and broun, They went in to the hale. Al that they there araught, Grete strokes there they caught, Both grete and smale. Glad and blyth were they that day, Who so myght skape away And fle fro that bredale. When thei had with wrake Drove oute both broun and blake</p>	<p>For the help she had given him in his need, He fully intended to give her what she deserved.³³ He would delay no longer. Sir Amis hastily sent For many hardy knights Who were valiant in deeds— A good five hundred, tried and keen— And other barons by and by, On palfreys and on steeds.³⁴ They galloped both day and night Until he came to his country Where he was lord of the land. A knight of that country Had married his lady, beautiful in her face, In the romance as we read it. But as it happened, in the story as I tell you, They came home the same day That the wedding celebration was held. They dashed to the gates without delay. Soon there began a grim play Among the bold barons. A messenger came to the hall And said that her lord had come home, As the merriest man on earth. Then the lady turned pale and ashen; There was many a sorry man, Both young and old! Sir Amis and Sir Amiloun, And with them many a stout baron With knights and countless squires, With helmets and with mailcoats, With swords bright and gleaming, Went into the hall. All who they confronted there, Both great and small, Were caught by fierce strokes. It was a glad and thankful man Who was able to escape that day And flee from that bridal feast. When they had driven out Both free and bound in vengeance³⁵</p>
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³³ *Quyte hur mede*: Other than the Anglo-Saxon *litote*, a sort of humorous understatement, irony and sarcasm is rare in medieval English literature. Here the sense of Sir Amis paying his traitorous wife her *mede*, ‘reward,’ seems close to PDE ‘just desserts.’

³⁴ *On palfray and on steede*: Neither term refers to a breed. *Steed* suggests a warhorse, but a *palfrey* is a small horse used for riding or hunting. They were prized as fast and comfortable horses, but unsuited for battle. Sir Thopas riding out to war in full armor on a palfrey would have been humorous. A real knight would be humiliated.

³⁵ *Both broun and blake*: See *Havelock*, 1009, and *Athelston*, 291. A ME idiom here likely meaning ‘all different types of ordinary people,’ based on the colors of their clothing.

2480	<p>Out of that worthy woon, Sir Amylyon for his lady sake And grete logge he let make Both of lym and stoon. Thereyn was the lady ladde And with bred and water was she fed, Tyl her lyvedays were goon. Thus was the lady brought to dede, Who therof rought, he was a queede, As ye have herd echoon. Then Sir Amylion sent his sond To erles, barouns, fre and bond, Both feire and hende. When they com, he sesed in hond Child Oweys in al his lond,</p>	<p>Out of that stately hall, Sir Amiloun, for the sake of his lady, Had a large cabin made Of both mortar-lime and stone.³⁶ The lady was placed there in it And she was fed with bread and water Until her life's days were over. Thus the lady was brought to death. Whoever cared about it was worthless! As each one of you has learned. Then Sir Amiloun sent his summons To earls and barons, free and bound, Both fair and noble. When they came, he placed all of his land In young Owen's hand,</p>
2490	<p>That was trew and kynde; And when he had do thus, ywys, With his brother, Sir Amys, Agen then gan he wende. In muche joy without stryf Togeder ladde they her lyf, Tel God after her dide send. Anoon the hend barons tway, They let reyse a faire abbay And feffet it ryght wel thoo, In Lombardy, in that contry,</p>	<p>Who had been faithful and kind. And when he had done this, in truth, Then he made his way on again With his brother, Sir Amis. They led their lives together In great joy without conflict Until God sent for their souls. At once, they established a fair abbey For the two noble barons, And endowed it generously In Lombardy, in that country, To sing for them until Judgment Day And for their parents also.³⁷</p>
2500	<p>To senge for hem tyl Domesday And for her eldres also. Both on oo day were they dede And in oo grave were they leide, The knyghtes both twoo; And for her trewth and her godhede The blisse of hevyn they have to mede, That lasteth ever moo.</p>	<p>They both died on the same day And they were laid in one grave, Both of the two knights. And for their loyalty and their godliness, They have the bliss of Heaven as a reward, Which lasts forevermore.</p>
2509	Amen	Amen.

³⁶ *Lym and stoon*: The equivalent of cement and brick. Unlike Sir Amiloun's lodge made from wood, lime and stone is more expensive but can last centuries. Sir Amiloun may be being more generous with his lady, or he may be making the point that it is a true and much more permanent prison, along with the 'bread and water' diet.

³⁷ One employment for clerics was to sing prayers for the dead in order to shorten their time in purgatory. Abbeys could be founded for this purpose, as was All Soul's College, Oxford.

Amis and Amiloun: Treuþe and the Heroes' Spiritual Journey

The 1990s *Star Trek* films and television shows attempted to conform to the plot rules of the original series, occasionally exposing logical inconsistencies unforeseen in the cartoonish 1960s episodes. Similarly, the characters and imaginary settings of animated shorts often translate poorly when expanded into feature-length movies. The same analogous criticism has been attributed to the romance *Amis and Amiloun* for its supposed inability to reconcile its simpler folktale tropes and Anglo-Norman sources into a coherent structure. Attempts to create realistic and sustained narratives based on folktale characters and stories can be problematic. Reasons are needed to explain why dragons and wolves are evil. But in fairy tales such motives are tautologically assumed: the dragon is evil because dragons are evil, even if deeper psychological or symbolic themes operate underneath the narrative machinery.

Partly the values of *Amis and Amiloun* simply do not age well. The poem has a strange morality where its protagonists “quite literally get away with murder.”¹ Amis slaughters his children and lies about Belisaunt’s virginity. Amiloun kills the steward through a deceitful act of impersonation. All of this happens in order to uphold a rarified code of conduct without any censure from the poet. How then can the poem be homiletic, as the Auchinleck compilers seemed to feel it was?² If the text has no ethical answers to these questions in either Christianity or courtly *treuþe*, “we at least expect it to be logical,

¹ Kathryn Hume, “*Amis and Amiloun* and the Aesthetics of Middle English Romance,” *Studies in Philology* 70:1 (1973): 38.

² The poem sits between *Specuturn Guidonis* and *Marie Maudelayne*. Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 111.

and *Amis and Amiloun* seems to be neither.”³ At best, the morals perplex a modern audience. A middle position argues that the English redactor has done his best to resolve the limitations of his sources, consisting of earlier versions and various folktale tropes of evil stewards, wooing women, and trials by combat.⁴ At worst, the poem is a failure. Foster throws up his hands in defeat at a text where “sleaze abounds and is respectfully rewarded,”⁵ concluding that perhaps critics vainly wish to attribute artifice to the poet “rather than admit ineptitude.”⁶

Amis and Amiloun share matching initial As in this and earlier analogues, and the poem does conform to a certain symmetrical binary construction. In the first half, *Amis* faces hardship and is rescued by *Amiloun*, and these roles reverse in the second half.⁷ At the centrepiece lies the combat between *Amis-Amiloun* and the steward, forming the narrative and moral nexus of the story, as it sets in motion the successive action and issues of the second portion of the poem. Yet the moral problem with the scene remains: “we know that this is all wrong. When *Amiloun* wins, we are relieved; after all, the steward is a scoundrel and *Amis* was ensnared; but we are not reconciled to the fraudulent ruse.”⁸ Both the poet and the narrative seem to excuse *Amis* and *Amiloun* while condemning the steward, whom even the narrator concedes “hadde the right” (908). Yet upon finer inspection, a consistent morality does function in the poem justifying its

³ Hume, 27-8.

⁴ Edward Foster, “Simplicity, Complexity, and Morality in Four Medieval Romances,” *Chaucer Review* 31:4 (1997): 411.

⁵ Foster, 419.

⁶ Foster, 419.

⁷ Hume, 25.

⁸ Foster, 414.

categorization as homiletic: duty rooted in Christian love and charity is preferable to self-righteous legalism. The steward follows only the letter of the law for personal advantage, whereas Amis and Amiloun, through the tests given them, gradually prove and temper their *treuþe* into a more Christlike fraternity informed by faith.

The steward's actions demonstrate a fundamental contrast between his and Amis and Amiloun's conception of *treuþe*. They also set the narrative conflict of the poem in motion. After witnessing Amis and Belisaunt making love, he scurries to the king to expose the two, lamenting "in thi court thou hast a thef / that hath don min hert gref / schame it is to sain / for, certes, he is a traitour strong / when he with tresoun and with wrong / thi douhter hath forlain!" (787-92). The steward indeed tells the truth that Amis has taken Belisaunt's virginity, but salted in with the charges are some misrepresentations and lies. The steward has no evidence of premeditated long-term subterfuge, that "ever he hath ben traitour" (800), and the claim that Amis has "don min hert gref" is either an outright falsehood—the steward clearly delights in incriminating his enemy—or else refers to the *gref* of Amis' refusal of his proffering of brotherhood, a dishonest attribution of his feelings of outrage to an unrelated situation.

The steward displays his own calculated self-interest in his actions. Plainly he does not care about the king or Belisaunt as people, for he has full warning of Amis and Belisaunt, "that gret love was bituix hem to" (704) for "wele four days other five" (711), but waits until after the damage is done for his own benefit. As a fellow steward in the household, he has equal responsibility for Belisaunt but glosses over the ticklish question of why he failed to intervene if he had foreknowledge of her seduction, distracting the king with lurid details of the *tresoun*. The steward delays naming Amis until the dramatic

climax of his deliberation, progressively building the king's emotions through his frustrated suspense into a primal rage. The steward concludes his histrionics by subtly inserting the imperative that Amis should be "hong this day" (798) while the king is thinking less than lucidly, hoping that he will spend his energies in summary justice without coming to any uncomfortable questions.

Delaney sees sexual jealousy toward Amis in the steward, who "responds like the proverbial scorned woman"⁹ after Amis's rejection of his offer to replace Amiloun in his affections exclusively. Equally, the steward really has no need to spy on Amis and Belisaunt the entire duration they are together (769), but perhaps his voyeurism has another purpose: "he likes to watch."¹⁰ Delaney points to historical same-sex unions such as that of the young Edward II and Piers Gaveston as possible influences, and finds the A-A (same) / B (Belisaunt, different) figuration suggestive. Romances were certainly capable of pursuing multiple levels of meaning through contemporary allusions or word-devices, but asserting that Amis and Amiloun "form the *real* couple"¹¹ of the poem attempts to read in a homoerotic submeaning which does not easily fit the hagiographic tone of the English text. After hearing praise of Amiloun's saintly tribulations and Amoraunt's *caritas*, an audience would have found deeply offensive a sexual reading of

⁹ Sheila Delaney, "A, A, and B: Coding Same-Sex Union in *Amis and Amiloun*," in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: University Press, 2004), 68.

¹⁰ Delaney, 69.

¹¹ Delaney, 65.

“at his rigge he dight him yare” (1832), referring to Amoraunt’s carrying of his leprous maternal uncle on his back through the winter.¹²

The steward seems less a jilted lover and more a Malvolio figure, driven by pride. Early in the poem he resents Amis and Amiloun, but for their intimacy with the duke and not with each other: “for the douke was so wele her frende, / he hadde therof gret envie” (212-3). The steward also shares Malvolio’s self-serving legalism. Baldwin notes that “Amis and Amiloun embody a genuine (if flawed) treuþe—fidelity in motive and spirit. The steward represents a false treuþe, technically correct but malicious in motive.”¹³ This Christian distinction between obeying the intent and the letter of the law (Mark 3:1-6) also plays out in Amiloun’s harridan wife, who sides with the steward and condemns Amiloun’s leprosy as divine revenge: “the is bitid this hard chaunce / dathet who the bimene!” (“This hard luck is fated for you! Damn whoever feels sorry for you!” 1568-9). Although Amiloun’s wife has a legal pretext in banishing him, she “lacks any redeeming spiritual virtue, such as mercy and compassion, which would have prompted her at least to alleviate her husband’s distress,”¹⁴ just as the steward insists under law that Belisaunt and her mother be burned. If *Amis and Amiloun* does consist of binary pairs, the wife’s Pharisaic legalism makes her the structural correlative to the steward.

¹² Delaney (69) asserts that this can be a sexual pun: “he dight him yare” might also mean “at his back he serviced him.” While *dight* is recorded with a sexual meaning in MED, it seems about as strong as “I did her” in vulgar PDE. Benson notes that the prudish editors of MSS Harley 7333 *Canterbury Tales* were intent on bowdlerizing the text and censored most examples of *swyven*, *ers*, and even *fart*, but left in *dight*. Larry D. Benson, “The ‘Queynte’ Punnings of Chaucer’s Critics,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1984): 32-3.

¹³ Dean R. Baldwin, “*Amis and Amiloun*: The Testing of Treuþe,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 16 (1980): 361.

¹⁴ Ojars Kratins, “The Middle English Amis and Amiloun: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?” *PMLA* 81:5 (1966): 352.

The theme of virtue through fidelity to *treuþe* is carried by a series of tests, “arranged roughly in ascending order of difficulty,”¹⁵ from the heroes’ separation, through the blandishments of the steward and Belisaunt, up to Belisaunt’s deflowering. Her impulsive passion forces Amis into a test of his knightly integrity, which he fails, only to be rescued by Amiloun’s ruse. The trick is worthy of “wily Odysseus,” and the audience cheers the result. Yet a nagging sense remains of a moral and logical violation in a world where *treuþe* also means telling the truth. Here the central dilemma of the pledge emerges: Amiloun is bound to never fail Amis “for wele no wo” (155, 296) in a situation where his brother faces shame and possible death (1281), but must be an accessory to Amis’ perjury against his lord (304) to save him. The strict terms of *treuþe* are breached in either case. Amiloun may with courtly justification condemn Amis as first violator and avoid such an impasse outright,¹⁶ but he selflessly impugns his own personal honor instead in fidelity to the spirit of his vows.

The poem’s judgment of Amiloun’s actions seems inconsistent here. An angel intones that “Jhesu sent the bode bi me / to warn the anon” (1262-3) against impersonating Amis in battle. If so, Amiloun should certainly not *win*, “since the trial by combat is predicated upon the belief that the right will be shown by God’s fighting on its side.”¹⁷ Nor does the poet imply any divine anger, twice stating that the folk “bisought God” (1301) to help Amis and then having Amiloun decapitate the steward and thank

¹⁵ Baldwin, 358.

¹⁶ Trounce notes that in the French *chansons*, “any breach on the part of one brother entitled the other to abrogate the bond.” A. McIntyre Trounce, ed., *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*, Early English Text Society O.S. 224 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 13.

¹⁷ Kratins, 350.

God (1368) without any hint of irony or censure. Upon parting, Amis thanks him repeatedly for “his cost and his gode dede” (1443). What then to make of Amiloun’s consequent tribulations? After defeating the steward, he is scourged by leprosy as the voice warns, is betrayed and banished by his wife, and wanders the countryside in poverty and hardship. For those who would prefer not to spend an English winter half-starved, leprous, and homeless in a wheelbarrow, Amiloun does not seem well-rewarded by God for his sacrifice.

Numerous critics have asserted that the angel does not threaten Amiloun with punishment, but rather he “puts Amiloun’s trewþe to the test by placing before him a choice.”¹⁸ The statement “thou schalt have an eventour strong” (1256) conspicuously omits any suggestion of sin or wrongdoing. The angel warns “if thou this bataile underfong” (1255) without mentioning the steward at all. Rather, the vision functions as “a visitation of divine grace”¹⁹ intended to intensify Amiloun’s virtue by increasing his sacrifice. The poet either has trouble reconciling his sources or perhaps intends some ambiguity here, for Amiloun is no Gawain who can escape with the technical penalty of a nick²⁰ as he has taken a life. Hume proposes that the leprosy *suggests* punishment without actually being so in order to drive home the point that Amiloun owes God penitence for his lesser act of deceit.²¹

¹⁸ Kratins, 351.

¹⁹ Kratins, 351.

²⁰ Baldwin, 361.

²¹ Hume, 29.

Another path out of this ethical quagmire consists of interpreting Amiloun's troubles as a divine test but also as a progression of his *treuþe* toward a more saintly perfection. Amiloun does not have the steward's or his wife's cold legalism, but his fidelity does have a whiff of proud self-sufficiency. The poet makes considerable use of binary structure and prefiguration, and here Amiloun's role in court as chief steward (191), with possible policing duties (in the Anglo-Norman *Amis e Amilun* he is a military chief²²) becomes significant. Amiloun's victory also comes with martial glory befitting his court honors, and he accepts the laurels of the procession "as prince proude in pride" (1380). Langland writes of his lepers, "for love of here low hertes / oure lord hath hem graunted / here penaunce and here purgatorie."²³ Similarly, Amiloun's trials and indignities humble him toward a *treuþe* more closely resembling what the poet would call 'the pattern of Christ.' The narrator consequently pulls every stop in portraying Amiloun's abasement with maximum sentimental pathos as they go "sore wepeand fro dore to dore" (1702). If any heavenly punishment is intended, it is ameliorative, 'medicinal' chastisement rather than condemnation, in contradistinction to Amiloun's faithless wife, who cannot see the difference.

Amiloun accepts his condition passively without complaint as a model of saintly patience. The genre outlines of medieval romance are vaguely limited, and *Amis and Amiloun* has been marked out as a "homiletic romance," as "secular hagiography," or as not even a romance. Childress feels that Amis, in his patient suffering of ridicule and

²² Dannenbaum, 613.

²³ William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. W.W. Skeats (London: Early English Text Society, 1873), Passus X, 184-5, quoted in Susan Dannenbaum, "Insular Tradition in the Story of Amis and Amiloun," *Neophilologus* 67:4 (1983): 620.

hardship, does not behave as a romance hero at all.²⁴ Yet while Amis and Amiloun do not slay real monsters and Saracens, as in the stanzaic *Guy of Warwick*, the heroic quest here is internal, one of growing spiritual progress. Leprosy was commonly seen as divine punishment, but for saints medieval tradition also saw aspects of blessing and sacrifice in the ailment: St. Hugh preached that such sufferers were “beloved of God as was Lazarus.”²⁵ Additionally, like Redcrosse, Amiloun has his own Una here in the form of Amoraunt, who demonstrates “a selfless and uncomplicated loyalty that is seen nowhere else in the poem.”²⁶ Amoraunt, who shares yet another *Ami-* prefix, has been explained as “a personification of the love between Amis and Amiloun,”²⁷ both guiding Amiloun as a model of selfless *caritas* and literally carrying him toward Amis.

Thus far, a self-serving application of *treuþe* has brought destruction to the steward and foreshadowed it for Amiloun’s wife, in distinction to Amiloun’s journey toward a fidelity grounded in Christlike sacrifice. The angel implicitly patterns Amiloun after Christ, who “suffred passioun” (1253). Amis, however, does not seem to undergo any particularly Dantean cleansing by fire in being a *riche douke*, happily married to Belisaunt, who “with gamen and play / fram chirche com the right way” (1888-9). His carefree exuberance seems designed to highlight Amiloun’s ragged saintliness. Yet a parallel test of Amis’ loyalty also awaits in another heavenly intervention by Christ, “the

²⁴ Diana T. Childress, “Between Romance and Legend: ‘Secular Hagiography’ in Middle English Literature,” *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 319. Childress cites “homiletic romance” and “secular hagiography” as Dieter Mehl’s and Ojars Kratin’s terms, respectively (312).

²⁵ In Rotha Mary Clay, *The Mediaeval Hospitals of England* (London, 1909), 66, quoted in Kratin’s 353.

²⁶ Foster, 415.

²⁷ John C. Ford, “Merry Married Brothers: Wedded Friendship, Lovers’ Language and Male Matrimonials in Two Middle English Romances,” *Medieval Forum* 3 (2003) [8], accessed 12 July 2010 at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~medieval/Volume3/Brothers.html>.

perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2), designed to assay and purify Amis’ trust and sense of duty. The trial is also designated for Christmas Eve, a symbolically matching occasion of Christ’s sacrifice.

Amis receives an order to slaughter his two children from an angel, for “yif he wald do as he him hight” (2210-2), their blood will save Amiloun’s life. The *bode* portends not only a test straining Amis’ fidelity to *treuþe* to its limits but also the ultimate abasement of his former role as protector of the household. Where God’s test of Amiloun sought to humble his knightly pride, Amis’ test now structurally matches his earlier self-regard in his station as chief butler. The poet again perhaps suggests that a hint of hubris in Amis’ acquiescence to Belisaunt’s passions needs to be burned away:

Amis gave his sons to help his friend, but his anguish at giving up the most valued ‘fruits’ of his former sinful adventure serves as atonement for those sins. We are meant to feel that his debt to God, like that to Amiloun, is finally paid, though in strict logic, this could not be.²⁸

The scene obviously recalls Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 22), with God’s orders to Abraham a similar test of his trust and humility. Although modern critics find the violence of Amis’ actions and the poet’s moral approval distasteful, Amis has an additional complication Abraham lacks: the latter has no promise of reward, whereas the children’s death will save Amiloun “thurch Godes grace, that is so gode (2208). Nor does the poet present the decision as easy for Amis, depicting their murder in a considerably lengthy treatment with realistic touches of candles and nursery keys and their father’s tormented heart: “for sorwe he sleynt oway biside / and wepe with reweful chere” (2291-2). Lastly, the

²⁸ Hume, 29.

harshness of the scene needs to be read in light of the genre. The audience knows they are hearing a romance and not a Greek tragedy, and that according to its rules the children are unlikely to remain dead for long. As Hume notes sympathetically, few romancers “had to deal with problems as complex as this.”²⁹

Belisaunt is perhaps easier to parse. In her first appearances, she is impetuous and perhaps a touch imperious, telling Amis, “thou nast no croun” (“you have no tonsure,” 614), mocking his ethics by comparing him to a monk. Similar to Lady Bertilak’s testing of Gawain, Belisaunt aggressively pursues Amis while the master is hunting, in both poems a Venusian allusion. To underscore Belisaunt’s passionate desire, the poet has nightingales singing (536), birds associated with carnality.³⁰ The final stroke is for her to threaten Amis like Potiphar’s wife, to which he capitulates. Yet at the end of the poem she has evidently also developed a more Christlike nature, obediently accepting a contagious leper into her household as she “kist him in that plas” (2174), kindly taking care of the man who saved her from a “strong fer” (1216) when she was in danger of execution. The strongest indication of her changed temper, which the poet emphasizes, and which modern audiences have the most difficulty with, is her dutiful endurance of having her children slain by her husband. In an answer Chaucer’s Griselde would have trouble sputtering, she replies that “God may sende ous childer mo / of hem have thou no care” (2393-4). As indigestible as the scene seems, like the other heroes, Belisaunt has undergone a saintly evolution.

²⁹ Hume, 30.

³⁰ Hume, 35.

In the final denouement both Amiloun and the children become healed and reanimated. Aquinas writes that God “knows how to make orderly use of evil by ordering it to good,”³¹ and a Christian audience would have been expected to see such an outcome as providential grace. Perhaps objections to the protagonists deserving such mercy in the “moral confusion”³² of the story in fact miss the point in demanding that characters must merit forgiveness, as the emphasis of the scene lies in God freely endowing both Amis and Amiloun with the purest form of grace, unmerited, which they are now meant to emulate themselves. Gawain receives the same deliverance when he is spared by being gently laughed at by the Green Knight for his “devotion to an ideal he cannot achieve.”³³ The action underscores God’s generous mercy in the poem just as Aurelius’ grace toward Dorigen distinguishes him as *fre*.

Blood-brotherhood was not always viewed as ennobling or benign. James tells his followers, “do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else” (James 5:12). The ceremony seemingly originates in Norse rites where blood was actually exchanged, and the English descendants of the Danelaw may have had “cherished memories”³⁴ of such bonds. By the fourteenth century such ideals were apparently viewed as debased in practice. Strohm notes that such oaths “held for the medieval sensibility a possible implication of connivance and dubious alliance, of self-advancement that neglects the

³¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (London, 1959), Quaestio 114, Art. 1, Obj. 3, quoted in John Finlayson, “The Marvellous in Middle English Romance,” *Chaucer Review* 33:4 (1999): 381.

³² Foster, 416.

³³ Baldwin, 365.

³⁴ Trounce, 14.

total Christian community.”³⁵ Chaucer’s most hellish characters exemplify this pursuit of opportunistic confederacies, with the despicable revelers of the *Pardoner’s Tale*, the summoner and devil of the *Friar’s Tale*, and the merchant and John of the *Shipman’s Tale* all betraying each other through calculated and insincere vows. Even Chaucer’s Palamon and Arcite are divided through *treuþe* when Palamon invokes their earlier pledge in order to claim Emily for his own, and Arcite summarily brushes off such agreements, stating “who shal yeve a lover any lawe?” (CT I.1164). In the *Early South English Legendary’s* life of St. James, a pilgrim conspicuous for not being bound by oaths of *treuþe* turns out to be the most loyal, and the moral lesson is clear: “betere is trewe dede þane fals word.”³⁶

Much of the ethos of the poem now seems implausible to a modern audience which doubts that St. Edmund’s severed head really called “here, here, here!” Other analogues of the poem, such as *Ami & Amilice*, depict both a more secular mindset and less interest in loyalty as a moral or religious theme.³⁷ The English redactor, however, has a considerably more pious tone, possibly modeled on the ostensibly earliest version of the poem written by a French monk named Raoul le Tourtier around 1090. Loomis asserts that this text, thoroughly pietistic in form, has its own source in church legends surrounding Charlemagne.³⁸ *Athelston*, with its similar plot vehicle of the violation of brotherhood oaths among four men, also seems to have been altered by the English

³⁵ Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 96.

³⁶ *The Early South-English Legendary*, ed. Carl Horstmann (London: EETS, 1887), line 223, quoted in P.J. Heather, “Sworn-Brotherhood,” *Folklore* 63:3 (1952): 171.

³⁷ Baldwin, 358.

³⁸ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, *Medieval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), 65, 68.

redactor to have a newly devout tone.³⁹ Kratins objects that Amis and Amiloun are not saintly because their bond is to men and not God.⁴⁰ The clergy apparently remained wary of romance, as the stories borrowed hagiographic themes but still looked to temporal baronial ends such as honor, land and family rather than purely heavenly ones.⁴¹ Yet the poet praises “her trewth and her godhede” (2506), arguing that the purest bonds of fraternity concomitantly serve both earthly and spiritual goals, even if the lay knight does not wholly conduct himself as an *imitatio Christi*.

A homiletic reading of *Amis and Amiloun* demonstrates that the imperatives of chivalric *treupe* and Christian morality do not necessarily conflict. Rather, in the protagonists the latter surpasses the former. Amis and Amiloun pass through a series of ascending tests which not only prove their fidelity to each other but also display a spiritual progression toward a purer form of selfless love, contrasted against the steward’s and wife’s mania for legal self-justification. Just as God tells the Israelites that He is tired of burnt offerings perfunctorily given (Isaiah 1:11), the *Amis and Amiloun* poet reveals the shallowness of contractual duty. The moral theme begins with Amiloun’s acceptance of a duty that transcends the letter of their ‘rash promise,’⁴² continues with his sacrifice to fulfill the imperative to protect Amis, and finally echoes in Amis’ surrender of his children, an act dovetailing perfect obedience to God with a higher love of one’s brother.

³⁹ Trounce, 4.

⁴⁰ Kratins, 354.

⁴¹ Susan Dannenbaum, “*Guy of Warwick* and the Question of Exemplary Romance,” *Genre* 17:4 (1984): 356.

⁴² Baldwin, 357.

A hero's "process of education" was a fitting didactic theme for romance writers,⁴³ and Amis and Amiloun demonstrate heroism not by blind adherence to vows but through growing toward a superior maturity of spirit.

⁴³ C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals 939-1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 242, quoted in Elaine M. Treharne, "Romanticizing the Past in the Middle English *Athelston*," *Review of English Studies* 50:197 (1999): 11.

CHAPTER 2

Athelston

Athelston survives in one manuscript: Caius College Library, MS 175 (c. 1500). I take as my text source Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, eds. *Athelston. Four Romances of England*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/athelfrm.htm>. Other editions include Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930), and A. McIntyre Trounce, ed., *Athelston: A Middle English Romance* (1951).

Main characters:

Athelstone, king of England

The queen

Egelond, earl of Stone

Edith, countess to Egelond and sister to Athelstone

Alaric, bishop of Canterbury

Wickmond, earl of Dover

Athelstone the messenger

1	Lord that is off myghtys most, Fadyr and Sone and Holy Gost, Bryng us out of synne And lene us grace so for to wyrke To love bothe God and Holy Kyrke That we may hevene wynne. Lystnes, lordyngys, that ben hende, Of falsnesse, hou it wil ende	Our Lord, who is of the highest might, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Deliver us from sin And grant us the grace to bring ourselves To love both God and holy church So that we may win Heaven. Hear, lordings, in your graciousness, About disloyalty and how it will end
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<p>10</p> <p>20</p> <p>30</p>	<p>A man that ledes hym therin. Of foure weddyd bretheryn I wole yow tell That wolden yn Yngelond go dwel, That sybbe were nought of kyn. And all foure messangeres they were, That wolden yn Yngelond lettrys bere, As it wes here kynde. By a forest gan they mete With a cros, stood in a strete Be leff undyr a lynde, And, as the story telles me, Ylke man was of dyvers cuntré, In book iwreten we fynde — For love of here metyng thare, They swoor hem weddyd bretheryn for evermare, In trewth the trewely dede hem bynde. The eldeste of hem ylkon, He was hyght Athelston, The kyngys cosyn dere; He was of the kyngys blood, Hys eemes sone, I undyrstood; Therefore he neyghyd hym nere. And at the laste, weel and fayr,</p>	<p>A man who leads himself into it. I will tell you about four sworn brothers¹ Who wished to dwell in England, Who were related, but not by family. All four of them were messengers Who would carry letters in England, As it was their trade. They met in a forest Near a cross standing on a road By the leaves under a linden tree. And, as the story tells me, Each man was from a different country, As we find it written in the book. For the fellowship of their meeting, They swore themselves brothers forever, Binding themselves earnestly in oaths. The oldest one of them Was called Athelstone, The king's dear cousin.² He was of the king's blood, His uncle's son, as I understand. Therefore he stayed near to him. And at the end, fair and clear,³</p>
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¹ *Of foure weddyd bretheryn*: The four men are not married, but like Sir Amis and Amiloun, they have taken an oath of brotherhood to be loyal to each other until death. In pagan Nordic culture men cut themselves and literally intermingled blood to become 'blood brothers.' This pledge was seen as nobler than marriage vows: in 306-7 the queen realizes that the bishop will honor the king before he does her (TEAMS). A. McIntyre Trounce, ed., *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*, Early English Text Society O.S. 224 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

² *Cosyn*: ME is not very exact on family titles and the term can indicate various familial relationships. There were several ruling Athelstans before the Norman conquest and the poet may not mean any of them, but see Treharne, who believes that King Athelstan (c. 894-939) is clearly meant. Athelstan also had a sister named Edith. Elaine M. Treharne, "Romanticizing the Past in the Middle English *Athelston*," *Review of English Studies* 50:197 (1999): 1-21. There was no bishop Alaric of Canterbury and Wymonde was apparently a stock villain's name.

³ *Weel and fayr*: This may simply be a formula saying that the king had a graceful passing, but it may also be emphasizing that there was no foul play in the king's death and thus a peaceful succession took place, which was certainly not always the case for an English king.

	<p>The kyng him dyyd withouten ayr. Thenne was ther non hys pere But Athelstone, hys eemes sone; To make hym kyng wolde they nought schone, To corowne hym with gold so clere. Now was he kyng semely to se: He sendes afftyr his bretheryn thre And gaff hem here warysoun. 40 The eldest brothir he made Eerl of Dovere — And thus the pore man gan covere — Lord of tour and toun. That other brother he made Eerl of Stane — Egeland was hys name, A man of gret renoun — And gaff him tyl hys weddyd wyff Hys owne sustyr, Dame Edyff, With gret devocoun. 50 The ferthe brothir was a clerk, Mekyl he cowde of Goddys werk. Hys name it was Alryke. Cauntyrbury was vacant And fel into that kyngys hand; He gaff it hym that wyke, And made hym bysschop of that stede, That noble clerk, on book cowde rede — In the world was non hym lyche. Thus avaunsyd he hys brother thorwgh Goddys gras, And Athelstone hymselfen was 60 A good kyng and a ryche. And he that was Eerl of Stane — Sere Egeland was hys name — Was trewe, as ye schal here.</p>	<p>The king died without an heir. There was at the time no one his peer Except Athelstone, his uncle's son. They did not refuse to make him king, To crown him with shining gold. Now he was king, a fitting sight. He sent for his three friends And gave them their reward. He made the oldest brother Earl of Dover, And thus the poor man was elevated, A lord of town and tower. The other brother he made Earl of Stone⁴— Egelond was his name, A man of great renown— And he gave him as his wedded wife His own sister, Dame Edith, With great solicitude. The fourth brother was a cleric Who knew much about God's work. His name was Alaric. Canterbury was vacant, And fell into that king's hand. He gave him that posting And made him bishop of that place, That noble cleric, who could read a book; There were none like him in the world. Thus through God's grace he advanced his friends, And Athelstone himself was A good and prosperous king. And he who became Earl of Stone, Sir Egelond was his name, Was faithful, as you will hear.</p>
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⁴ *Stane*: There are many English Stones. Perhaps this is the Stone near Dartford or the one near Faversham, both on the road between London and Canterbury. It seems odd that Athelston would give a close friend an unimportant earldom, but this is not likely Maidstone, which is called as such in the Domesday Book.

<p>70</p> <p>80</p> <p>90</p> <p>100</p>	<p>Thorwgh the myght off Goddys gras, He gat upon the countas Twoo knave-chyldren dere. That on was fyfftene wyntyr old, That other thryttene, as men me told: In the world was non here pere — Also whyt so lylve-flour, Red as rose off here colour, As bryght as blosme on brere. Bothe the Eerl and hys wyff, The kyng hem lovede as hys lyff, And here sones twoo; And offtensythe he gan hem calle Bothe to boure and to halle, To counsayl whenne they scholde goo. Therat Sere Wymound hadde gret envye, That Eerle of Dovere, wyttyrlye. In herte he was ful woo. He thoughte al for here sake False lesyngys on hem to make, To don hem brenne and sloo. And thanne Sere Wymound hym bethoughte: “Here love thus endure may noughte; Thorwgh wurd oure werk may sprynge.” He bad hys men maken hem yare; Unto Londone wolde he fare To speke with the kyng. Whenne that he to Londone come, He mette with the kyng ful sone. He sayde, “Welcome, my derelyng.” The kyng hym fraynyd seone anon, By what way he hadde igon, Withouten ony dwellyng. “Come thou ought by Cauntyrbury, There the clerkys syngen mery Bothe erly and late? Hou faryth that noble clerk,</p>	<p>Through the might of God’s blessings, With the countess the earl fathered Two dear boys. One of them was fifteen years old, The other thirteen, as men have told me. In the world they had no peer. They were as white as a lily, Red as a rose in color, As bright as a blossom on a briar. The king loved both the earl and his wife As much as his own life, Along with their two sons. And often he would call them Both to his chamber and to the hall, For counsel when they were there. For that, the Earl of Dover, Sir Wickmond, had great envy for certain. He was aggrieved at heart. He wished on their account To impugn false lies on them, To have them burned and slain. And then Sir Wickmond resolved to himself, “Their love will not endure as it is! The job might be done through words.” He ordered his men to get themselves ready; He would go to London To speak with the king. When he arrived in London, He met with the king immediately, Saying, “Welcome, dear friend!” The king asked him soon after By what way he had come, Without any stopover. “Did you pass near Canterbury, Where the monks sing merrily, Both early and late? How does that noble cleric fare,</p>
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<p>110</p> <p>120</p> <p>130</p>	<p>That mekyl can on Goddys werk? Knowest thou ought hys state? And come thou ought be the Eerl of Stane, That wurthy lord in hys wane? Wente thou ought that gate? Hou fares that noble knyght, And hys sones fayr and bryght My sustyr, yiff that thou wate?” “Sere,” thanne he sayde, “withouten les, Be Cauntyrbery my way I ches; There spak I with that dere. Ryght weel gretes thee that noble clerk, That mykyl can of Goddys werk; In the world is non hys pere. And also be Stane my way I drowgh; With Egelond I spak inowgh, And with the countesse so clere. They fare weel, is nought to layne, And bothe here sones.” The king was fayne And in his herte made glad chere. “Sere kyng,” he saide, “yiff it be thi wille To chaumbyr that thou woldest wenden tylle, Consayl for to here, I schal thee telle a swete tydande, There comen nevere non swyche in this lande Of all this hundryd yere.” The kyngys herte than was ful woo With that traytour for to goo; They wente bothe forth in fere; And whenne that they were the chaumbyr withinne, False lesyngys he gan begynne On hys weddyd brother dere. “Sere kyng,” he saide, “woo were me, Ded that I scholde see thee, So moot I have my lyff! For by Hym that al this worl wan, Thou has makyd me a man,</p>	<p>Who knows so much of God’s work? Do you know anything about his condition? And did you pass nearby the Earl of Stone, To the residence of that admirable lord? Were you anywhere near their gate? How does that noble knight fare, And his sons, fair and bright, Or my sister, if you know?” “Sire,” he said, “without a lie, I chose to go by Canterbury. There I spoke with that dear person. That noble priest greeted you courteously, Who knows so much about God’s work. There are none his peer in the world. And I also took my way past Stone. I talked enough with Egelond, And with the beautiful countess. They are doing well—there is nothing to hide— Along with both their sons.” The king was Pleased and was cheered in his heart. “Sire king,” he said, “If it is your will That you would go to your chamber To hear private counsel, I will give you an interesting report. Nothing like it has come to this land In a hundred years.” The king’s heart was distraught In going forth with that traitor. Both of them went in together. And when they were within the chamber, He began to ply falsehoods On his dear sworn brother. “Sire king,” he said, “it would be horrible If I were to see you dead, So long as I am alive! For by Him who redeemed all this world, You have made me a man</p>
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<p>140</p> <p>150</p> <p>160</p>	<p>And iholpe me for to thryff. For in thy land, sere, is a fals traytour. He wole doo thee mykyl dyshonour And brynge thee of lyve. He wole deposen thee slyly, Sodaynly than schalt thou dy By Chrystys woundys fyve!” Thenne sayde the kyng, “So moot thou the, Knowe I that man, and I hym see? His name thou me telle.” “Nay,” says that traytour, “that wole I nought For al the gold that evere was wrought — Be masse-book and belle — But yiff thou me thy trowthe will plyght That thou schalt nevere bewreye the knyght That thee the tale schal telle.” Thanne the kyng his hand up raughte, That false man his trowthe betaughte, He was a devyl of helle! “Sere kyng,” he sayde, “thou madyst me knyght, And now thou hast thy trowthe me plyght Oure counsayl for to layne: Sertaynly, it is non othir But Egelane, thy weddyd brothir — He wolde that thou were slayne; He dos thy sustyr to undyrstand He wole be kyng of thy lande, And thus he begynnes here trayne. He wole thee poysoun ryght slyly; Sodaynly thanne schalt thou dy,</p>	<p>And helped me to prosper. But in this land, sir, there is a false traitor. He will do you great dishonor And will take away your life. He will depose you slyly, And then you will suddenly die, By Christ’s five wounds!”⁵ Then the king said, “As you live and breathe, Would I know the man if I see him? Tell me his name.” “No,” said the traitor, “I will not do that For all the gold that was ever made, By mass-book or bell,⁶ Unless you pledge your vow That you will never betray the knight Who has told you the story.” Then the king raised up his hand, Giving his promise to that false man. He was a devil from Hell! “Sire King,” he said, “you made me a knight, And now you have pledged your word To conceal our conversation. Certainly, it is no other Than Egelond, your brother. He wishes that you were dead. He has your sister under the impression That he will be king of this land, And so he leads her astray. He intends to poison you cunningly. You will then suddenly die,</p>
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⁵ *By Chrystys woundys fyve*: Like lines 135 and 146, simply an oath for emphasis. Scripture reports that Christ received five wounds during crucifixion, four by nails through his limbs and one by a spear in his side.

⁶ *Masse-book and belle*: Similarly, church hymnals, bibles, and bells and all of the implements of service were also used for oaths, whether in seriousness or in profanity. Here their use emphasizes Sir Wickmond’s hypocrisy.

<p>170</p> <p>180</p> <p>190</p>	<p>By Him that suffryd payne.” Thanne swoor the kyng be Cros and Roode: “Meete ne drynk schal do me goode Tyl that he be dede; Bothe he and hys wyf, hys soones twoo, Schole they nevere be no moo In Yngelond on that stede.” “Nay,” says the traytour, “so moot I the, Ded wole I nought my brother se; But do thy beste rede.” No lengere there then wolde he lende; He takes hys leve, to Dovere gan wende. God geve hym schame and dede! Now is that traytour hom iwent. A messanger was afftyr sent To speke with the kyng. I wene he bar his owne name: He was hoten Athelstane; He was foundelyng. The lettrys were imaad fullyche thare, Unto Stane for to fare Withouten ony dwellyng, To fette the eerl and his sones twoo, And the countasse alsoo, Dame Edyve, that swete thyng. And in the lettre yit was it tolde, That the kyng the eerlys sones wolde Make hem bothe knyght; And therto his seel he sette. The messanger wolde nought lette; The way he rydes ful ryght.</p>	<p>By Him who suffered pain!” Then the king swore, by the wooden Cross, “Neither food or drink will do me good Until he is dead, Both he and his wife, and his two sons! They will no longer be in England In that place.” “No,” said the traitor, “so help me God, I will not see my brother dead. But follow your best advice.” Then he would not stay any longer. He said his goodbyes and left for Dover. May God give him shame and death! When the traitor had gone home, A messenger was afterwards summoned To speak with the king. I believe he had his own name; He was also called Athelstone.⁷ He was an orphaned child. The letters were made out in full there, For him to go to Stone Without any delay To fetch the earl and his two sons And the countess also, Dame Edith, that sweet lady. It was also stated in the letter That the king would make Both of the earl’s sons knights, And to this he set his seal. The messenger did not delay; He rode the way swiftly.</p>
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⁷ *Athelstane*: This is a different Athelston. There may be a poetic significance or it may simply reflect the popularity of the name. Dickerson argues that the youth is “the alter ego of the arrogant King Athelston, who was once a messenger.” A. Inskip Dickerson, “The Subplot of the Messenger in *Athelston*,” *Papers on Language & Literature* 12 (1976): 124.

<p>200</p> <p>210</p> <p>220</p> <p>230</p>	<p>The messenger, the noble man, Takes hys hors and forth he wan, And hyes a ful good spede. The eerl in hys halle he fandē; He took hym the lettre in his hande Anon he bad hym rede: “Sere,” he sayde also swythe, “This lettre oughte to make thee blythe: Thertoo thou take good hede. The kyng wole for the cuntas sake Bothe thy sones knyghtes make — To London I rede thee spede. The kyng wole for the cuntas sake Bothe thy sones knyghtes make, The blythere thou may be. Thy fayre wyff with thee thou bryng — And ther be ryght no lettyng — That syghte that sche may see.” Thenne sayde that eerl with herte mylde, “My wyff goth ryght gret with chylde, And forthynkes me, Sche may nought out of chaumbyr wyn, To speke with non ende of here kyn Tyl sche delyveryd be.” But into chaumbyr they gunne wende, To rede the lettrys before that hende And tydingys tolde here soone. Thanne sayde the cuntasse, “So moot I the, I wil nought lette tyl I there be, Tomorwen or it be noone. To see hem knyghtes, my sones fre, I wole nought lette tyl I there be; I schal no lengere dwelle. Cryst foryelde my lord the kyng, That has grauntyd hem here dubbyng. Myn herte is gladyd welle.” The eerl hys men bad make hem yare;</p>	<p>The noble man, this messenger, Took his horse and went forth And hastened at top speed. He found the earl in his hall. He gave him the letter into his hand And asked him to read it straightaway. “Sir,” he said as quickly, “This letter ought to make you glad. Therefore take heed of it. The king will, for the countess’ sake, Make both your sons knights. I advise you to hurry to London. The king will, for the countess’ sake, Make both your sons knights, To make you all the happier. Bring your fair wife with you, And let there be no delay, So that she may see that sight.” Then the earl said with a tender heart, “My wife is very much with child, And so I regret that She cannot go from her chamber To speak with anyone of her kin Until she has given birth.” But they made their way to the chamber To read the letter before that gracious lady And soon told her the news. Then the countess said, “As I live and breathe, I will not rest until I am there Tomorrow, before it is noon. To see my noble sons knighted, I will not delay until I am there. I will not linger any longer. May Christ reward my lord the king Who has granted them their dubbing! My heart is very glad.” The earl had his men ready themselves.</p>
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<p>240</p> <p>250</p> <p>260</p>	<p>He and hys wyff forth gunne they fare, To London faste they wente. At Westemynstyr was the kyngys wone; There they mette with Athelstone, That afftyr hem hadde sente. The goode eerl soone was hent And feteryd faste, verrayment, And hys sones twoo. Ful lowde the countasse gan to crye, And sayde, "Goode brothir, mercy! Why wole ye us sloo? What have we ayens yow done, That ye wole have us ded so soone? Me thynkith ye arn ourn foo." The kyng as wood ferde in that stede; He garte hys sustyr to presoun lede — In herte he was ful woo. Thenne a squyer, was the countasses frende, To the qwene he gan wende, And tydyngys tolde here soone. Gerlondes of chyryes off sche caste, Into the halle sche come at the laste, Longe or it were noone. "Sere kyng, I am before thee come With a child, doughtyr or a sone. Graunte me my bone, My brothir and sustyr that I may borwe Tyl the nexte day at morwe, Out of here paynys stronge; That we mowe wete by comoun sent In the playne parlement."</p>	<p>He and his wife set out, Traveling quickly to London. The king's home was at Westminster. There they met with Athelstone, Who had sent for them. The good earl was at once seized And chained fast, in truth, And his two sons as well. The countess began to cry loudly, And said, "Good brother, have mercy! Why do you want to execute us? What have we done against you, That you will have us dead so soon? I feel like I am your enemy!" The king behaved at that moment like a madman. He ordered his sister sent to prison; He was distressed at heart. Then a squire who was the countess' friend Made his way to the queen And soon gave her the news. She threw off her garlands of cherries,⁸ Finally coming into the hall, Well before it was noon. "Sire king, I have come before you With a child, a daughter or a son. Grant me my plea, that I might Act as guarantor to my brother and sister Until tomorrow morning when they Can be released from their strong pains, So that we may decide this by common assent In the open parliament."⁹</p>
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⁸ *Gerlondes of chyryes off sche caste*: A mysterious line, perhaps only meaning that the queen is snacking on cherries to emphasize her innocence of what is happening. Wright notes that cherries were very popular in medieval England (TEAMS). T. Wright and J. O. Halliwell, *Reliquiae Antiquae*, Vol. 2 (London: J. R. Smith, 1845), 85-103.

<p>270</p> <p>280</p> <p>290</p>	<p>“Dame,” he saide, “goo fro me! Thy bone shall nought igranted be, I doo thee to undyrstande. For, be Hym that weres the corowne of thorn, They schole be drawen and hangyd tomorn, Yyff I be kyng of lande!” And whenne the qwene these wurdes herde, As sche hadde be beten with yerde, The teeres sche leet down falle. Sertaynly, as I yow telle, On here bare knees doun she felle, And prayde yit for hem alle. “A, dame,” he sayde, “verrayment Hast thou broke my comaundement Abyyd ful dere thou schalle.” With hys foot — he wolde nought wonde — He slowgh the chyld ryght in here wombe; She swownyd amonges hem alle. Ladyys and maydenys that there were, The qwene to here chaumbyr bere, And there was dool inowgh. Soone withinne a lytyl spase A knave-chyld iborn ther wase, As bryght as blosme on bowgh. He was bothe whyt and red;</p>	<p>“My lady,” he replied, “get away from me! Your request will not be granted, I will have you understand! For, by Him who wore the crown of thorns, They will be drawn and hanged tomorrow, If I am the king of this land!” And when the queen heard these words, She let the tears fall down As if she had been beaten with a stick. For certain, as I tell you, She fell down on her bare knees And begged for them all. “Well, madam,” he said, “Truly you have Defied my commandments! You will pay for it dearly.” With his foot—he would not hold back— He killed the child right in her womb.¹⁰ She fainted before them all. The ladies and maidens who were there Bore the queen to her chamber, And there was commotion enough. Soon, within a short time A baby boy was delivered, As bright as a blossom on the bough. He was both white and red;¹¹</p>
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⁹ As with *Amis and Amiloun*, the queen asks if she can be a guarantor to her brother and sister so that they can be freed. The queen, who is also heavily pregnant, is evidently worried about her sister’s condition in prison, making the king’s response even more callous.

¹⁰ *He slowgh the chyld ryght in here wombe*: TEAMS notes a little dryly that “many critics have commented on the cruelty in this passage.” Although the poet’s tone clearly disapproves strongly, Rowe notes that this act would not have been seen as a crime in the time period. Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, “The Female Body Politic and the Miscarriage of Justice in *Athelston*,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995), 87. Alternatively, Loomis states that ballad-form stories still conventionally retained scenes of violence that were no longer usual in romance. Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, “*Athelston*, a Westminster Legend,” *PMLA* 36:2 (1921): 232.

<p>300</p> <p>310</p>	<p>Of that dynt was he ded — His owne fadyr hym slowgh! Thus may a traytour baret rayse And make manye men ful evele at ayse, Hymselff nought afftyr it lowgh. But yit the qwene, as ye schole here, Sche callyd upon a messangere, Bad hym a lettre fonge. And bad hym wende to Cauntyrbery, There the clerkys syngen mery Bothe masse and evensonge. “This lettre thou the bysschop take, And praye hym for Goddys sake, Come borewe hem out off here bande. He wole doo more for hym, I wene, Thanne for me, though I be qwene — I doo thee to undyrstande. An eerldom in Spayne I have of land; Al I sese into thyn hand, Trewely, as I thee hyght, And hundryd besauntys of gold red. Thou may save hem from the ded, Yyff that thyn hors be wyght.” “Madame, brouke weel thy moregeve, Also longe as thou may leve. Therto have I no ryght. But of thy gold and of thy fee, Cryst in hevene foryelde it thee;</p>	<p>From that blow he was dead. His own father had killed him! Thus may a traitor raise havoc And make many men ill at ease. He would have nothing to laugh about later! But still the queen, as you will hear, Called for a messenger,¹² Asking him to deliver a letter, And had him go to Canterbury, Where the priests sing merrily, Both for mass and evensong. “Take this letter to the bishop, And petition him for God’s sake, To come rescue them out of their bonds. He will do more for his brother, I think, Than for me, even though I am queen, I will have you understand That I have as land an earldom in Spain; I give it all into your hand, Truly, as I promise you, And a hundred coins of red gold. You may save them from death If your horse is valiant.” “Madam, enjoy your wedding gifts yourself, As long as you may live. I have no right to it, To your gold or to your property. Christ in Heaven has given it to you.</p>
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¹¹ *Whyt and red*: This is not a macabre description of the stillborn boy’s bruises but the colors of aristocratic breeding, used approvingly by romance poets. French & Hale argue that the “brown and black” of *Amis & Amiloun* and of *Havelock* alternatively suggest the common people, although the idiom is disputed (TEAMS). Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, ed., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1930).

¹² *A messangere*: The poet uses the indefinite article *a*, but this is evidently the same Athelston (not the king) who rides to Stone to fetch Egelond and his wife. The messenger complains that he has ridden thirty miles (321). London to Stone near Faversham is forty-six miles, but to Stone near Dartford is fifteen—a return journey? For further discussion see Dickerson, 115-16.

320	<p>I wole be there tonyght. Madame, thrytty myles of hard way I have reden syth it was day. Ful sore I gan me swynke; And for to ryde now fyve and twenti thertoo An hard thyng it were to doo, Forsothe, ryght as me thynke. Madame, it is nerhande passyd prime, And me behoves al for to dyne, Bothe wyn and ale to drynke.</p>	<p>I will be there tonight. Madam, I have ridden thirty miles Of rough road since it was sundown. I have done hard work. And to ride now another twenty-five Would be a difficult thing to do, In truth, so far as I can see. My lady, it is nearly six in the morning,¹³ And it is right for me to eat, And to drink both wine and ale.</p>
330	<p>Whenne I have dynyd, thenne wole I fare. God may covere hem of here care, Or that I slepe a wynke.” Whenne he hadde dynyd, he wente his way, Also faste as that he may, He rod be Charynge-cross And entryd into Flete-strete And sithen thorwgh Londone, I yow hete, Upon a noble hors. The messenger, that noble man,</p>	<p>When I have eaten, then I will set out. May God relieve them from their cares Before I sleep a wink.” When he had finished, he went his way, As fast as he could. He rode by Charing Cross And entered into Fleet Street And then through London, I assure you, Upon a splendid horse. The messenger, that noble man,</p>
340	<p>On Loundone-brygge sone he wan — For his travayle he hadde no los — From Stone into Steppyngbourne, Forsothe, his way nolde he nought tourne; Sparyd he nought for myre ne mos. And thus hys way wendes he Fro Osprynge to the Blee. Thenne myghte he see the toun</p>	<p>Soon reached London Bridge. For his labors he had no praise.¹⁴ From Stone into Sittingbourne, In truth, he did not alter his course. He did not stop for mud or bog. And in this way he traveled From Ospringe to the Blean forest. Then he could see the town</p>

¹³ *Prime* is about 6 AM, according to the monastic prayer divisions of the day: matins, prime, terce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline. Medieval time was much less clock-bound and was often reckoned by the canonical hours or by movements of the tides (such as *undertide*). *Nona hora*, the ninth hour of the day, was originally 3 PM, only shifting to 12 and becoming modern *noon* in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. *Bevis of Hampton* seems to have the modern meaning when the barons believe that Miles has slept through mid-morning until noon (3237).

¹⁴ *He hadde no los*: Some commentators read this as ‘loss,’ as in “he lost no time.” I agree with TEAMS that the sense is that the poet is extolling the the unsung messengers throughout the story, describing their labors in detail and complaining that it is thankless work, without *los*, praise.

<p>350</p> <p>360</p> <p>370</p> <p>380</p>	<p>Of Cauntyrbery, that noble wyke, Therin lay that bysschop ryke, That lord of gret renoun. And whenne they runggen undernbelle, He rod in Londone, as I yow telle: He was non er redy; And yit to Cauntyrbery he wan, Longe or evensong began; He rod mylys fyffty. The messenger nothing abod; Into the palays forth he rod, There that the bysschop was inne. Ryght welcome was the messenger, That was come from the qwene so cleer, Was of so noble kynne. He took hym a lettre ful good speed And saide, "Sere bysschop, have this and reed," And bad hym come with hym. Or he the lettre hadde halff iredde, For dool, hym thoughte hys herte bledde; The teeres fyl ovyr hys chyn. The bysschop bad sadele hys palfray: "Also faste as thay may, Bydde my men make hem yare; And wendes before," the bysschop dede say, "To my maneres in the way; For nothyng that ye spare, And loke at ylke fyve mylys ende A fresch hors that I fynde, Schod and nothing bare; Blythe schal I nevere be, Tyl I my weddyd brother see, To kevere hym out of care."</p>	<p>Of Canterbury, that noble work, Where that powerful bishop lived, That lord of great renown. When they had rung the morning bell, He was still riding in London, I tell you. He was not ready earlier. And yet he reached Canterbury Long before the six o'clock songs; He rode fifty miles. The messenger did not linger. He rode forth into the palace Where the bishop was inside. There was a warm welcome for the messenger, Who had come from the radiant queen, Who was of such a regal family. He gave him a letter with urgency And said, "Sir Bishop, take this and read," And asked that he come with him. Before he had read half the letter, He thought his heart had been pierced for sorrow. The tears fell from his chin. The bishop ordered his palfrey saddled. "As fast as they can, Have my men make themselves ready. And go on ahead," the bishop stressed, "To my manors along the way. Spare no difficulty. And see that at every five miles' space I will find a fresh horse, Shod and never barehooved. I will never be at peace Until I see my blood brother, To deliver him from trouble."</p>
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<p>390</p> <p>400</p> <p>410</p>	<p>On nyne palfrays the bysschop sprong, Ar it was day, from evensong — In romaunce as we rede. Sertaynly, as I yow telle, On Londone-brygge ded doun felle The messangeres stede. “Alas,” he sayde, “that I was born! Now is my goode hors forlorn, Was good at ylke a nede; Yistryday upon the grounde, He was wurth an hundryd pounce, Ony kyng to lede.” Thenne bespak the erchebysschop. Oure gostly fadyr undyr God, Unto the messangere: “Lat be thy menyng of thy stede, And thynk upon oure mykyl nede, The whylys that we ben here; For yiff that I may my brother borwe And bryngen hym out off mekyl sorwe, Thou may make glad chere; And thy warysoun I schal thee geve, And God have grauntyd thee to leve Unto an hundryd yere.” The bysschop thenne nought ne bod: He took hys hors, and forth he rod Into Westemynstyr so lyght; The messanger on his foot alsoo: With the bysschop come no moo, Nether squyer ne knyght. Upon the morwen the kyng aros, And takes the way, to the kyrke he gos, As man of mekyl myght.</p>	<p>The bishop rode nine palfreys Before it was day, from evensong,¹⁵ In the romance as we read. For certain, as I tell you, The messenger’s horse fell down dead On London Bridge. “Alas!” he cried, “that I was ever born! Now I have lost my good horse, Who was ready in every need! Yesterday on the ground He was worth a hundred pounds, Fit for any king to ride!” Then the archbishop, Our spiritual father under God, Spoke to the messenger. “Let go your moaning for your horse, And concentrate on our great need, The reason that we are here. For if I can rescue my brother And bring him out of his great sorrow, You will be of good cheer. And I will reward you with an income, Even if God grants you to live For a hundred years.” The bishop did not stay any longer. He took his horse, and rode Into the morning sun of Westminster, With the messenger on foot as well. No more came with the bishop, Neither squire nor knight. In the morning the king arose And made his way to the chapel, As a man of great authority.</p>
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¹⁵ *Evensong*: Early evening and the sixth of the seven canonical hours, also known as vespers. The poem betrays a rather working-class concern with time.

<p>420</p> <p>430</p> <p>440</p> <p>450</p>	<p>With hym wente bothe preest and clerk, That mykyl cowde of Goddys werk, To praye God for the ryght. Whenne that he to the kyrke com; Tofore the Rode he knelyd anon, And on hys knees he felle: “God, that syt in Trynyté A bone that thou graunte me, Lord, as Thou harewyd helle — Gyltless men yiff thay be, That are in my presoun free, Forcursyd there to yelle, Of the gylt and thay be clene, Leve it moot on hem be sene, That garte hem there to dwelle.” And whenne he hadde maad his prayer, He lokyd up into the qweer; The erchebysschop sawgh he stande. He was forwondryd of that caas, And to hym he wente apas, And took hym be the hande. “Welcome,” he sayde, “thou erchebysschop, Oure gostly fadyr undyr God.” He swoor be God levande, “Weddyd brother, weel moot thou spede, For I hadde nevere so mekyl nede, Sith I took cros on hande. Goode weddyd brother, now turne thy rede; Doo nought thyn owne blood to dede But yiff it wurthy were. For Hym that weres the corowne of thorn, Lat me borwe hem tyl tomorn, That we mowe enquere, And weten alle be comoun asent In the playne parlement Who is wurthy be schent. And, but yiff ye wole graunte my bone,</p>	<p>With him went both priest and cleric, Who knew much about God’s work, To pray to God for the right direction. When he arrived in the chapel, He kneeled at once before the Cross And fell on his knees. “God, who sits in Trinity, Grant me a plea, Lord, Just as you conquered Hell. If they are guiltless men Who are in my strong prison, Condemned there to yell, If they are innocent of their guilt, Grant that it may be seen by them Who caused them to be there.” And when he had made his prayer, He looked up into the choir loft And saw the archbishop standing. He was astonished by the sight And went to him quickly, And took him by the hand. “Welcome,” he said, “Archbishop, Our saintly father under God.” The archbishop swore by the living God, “My sworn brother, may you prosper long, For I never had such an urgent need Since I took the cross in my hand. Good brother, now change your mind. Do not put your own blood to death Unless it were justified. For Him that wore the crown of thorns, Let me be surety for them until tomorrow, So that we may have an inquiry And decide by common assent In the full parliament Who is worthy to be punished. And if you will not grant my plea,</p>
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<p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>It schal us rewe bothe or none, Be God that alle thyng lent.” Thanne the kyng wax wrothe as wynde, A wodere man myghte no man fynde Than he began to bee: He swoor othis be sunne and mone: “They scholen be drawen and hongyd or none — With eyen thou schalt see! Lay down thy cros and thy staff, Thy mytyr and thy ryng that I thee gaff; Out of my land thou flee! Hyghe thee faste out of my syght! Wher I thee mete, thy deth is dyght; Non othir then schal it bee!” Thenne bespak that erchebysschop, Oure gostly fadyr undyr God, Smertly to the kyng: “Weel I wot that thou me gaff Bothe the cros and the staff, The mytyr and eke the ryng; My bysschopryche thou reves me, And Crystyndom forbede I thee! Preest schal ther non syngge; Neyther maydynchyld ne knave Crystyndom schal ther non have; To care I schal thee brynge. I schal gare crye thorwgh ylke a toun That kyrkys schole be broken doun And stoken agayn with thorn. And thou shalt lygge in an old dyke, As it were an heretyke, Allas that thou were born!</p>	<p>We will both regret it before noon, By God, who gave all things.” Then the king grew as furious as the winds. No one might find a man more enraged Than he became. He swore oaths by the sun and moon: “They will be hanged and drawn before noon! You will see it with your own eyes. Lay down your cross and your staff, Your miter and your ring that I gave you. Flee out of my land! Get yourself quickly out of my sight! Wherever I meet you, your death is decided. It will not be any other way!” Then the archbishop, Our devout father under God, Spoke sharply to the king: “I know very well that you gave me Both the cross and the staff, The miter and the ring as well. You rob me of my bishop’s office, And in turn I excommunicate you! No priest shall sing. No one shall have church or sacrament, Neither maiden-child nor boy. I will bring you to grief! I will go proclaiming through each town That churches shall be broken down And struck at with thorns. And your body will lie in an old ditch, As if you were a heretic.¹⁶ Alas that you were born!</p>
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¹⁶ *As it were an heretyke*: This is a very serious matter. The archbishop is not only excommunicating the king and his realm but denying him a Christian burial, which was also refused to heretics, criminals, and suicides. King John was forced to submit to Innocent III in 1213 after interdiction had threatened his rule.

<p>490</p> <p>500</p> <p>510</p>	<p>Yiff thou be ded, that I may see, Assoylyd schalt thou nevere bee; Thanne is thy soule in sorwe. And I schal wende in uncouthelond, And gete me stronge men of hond; My brothir yit schal I borwe. I schal brynge upon thy lond Hungyr and thyrst ful strong, Cold, drougthe, and sorwe; I schal nought leve on thy lond Wurth the gloves on thy hond To begge ne to borwe.” The bysschop has his leve tan. By that his men were comen ylkan: They sayden, “Sere, have good day.” He entryd into Flete-strete; With lordys of Yngelond gan he mete Upon a noble aray. On here knees they kneleden adoun, And prayden hym of hys benysoun, He nykkyd hem with nay. Neyther of cros neyther of ryng Hadde they non kyns wetyng; And thanne a knyght gan say. A knyght thanne spak with mylde voys: “Sere, where is thy ryng? Where is thy croys? Is it fro thee tan?” Thanne he sayde, “Youre cursyd kyng Hath me refft of al my thyng, And of al my worldly wan; And I have entyrdytyd Yngelond: Ther schal no preest synge Masse with hond, Chyld schal be crystenyd non, But yiff he graunte me that knyght, His wyff and chyldryn fayr and bryght: He wolde with wrong hem slon.” The knyght sayde, “Bysschop, turne agayn;</p>	<p>If you are dead, I will see to it That you will never be absolved. Then your soul will be in torment. And I will travel to faraway lands And gather strong men of might. I will save my brother yet. I will bring upon your land Fierce hunger and thirst, Cold, drought, and misery. I will leave nothing on your land Worth the gloves on your hand, To beg or to borrow.” The bishop took his leave. By then all of his men had arrived. They said, “Sire, good day.” He entered into Fleet Street; He proceeded to meet with the lords of England In a noble array. They stooped down on their knees And beseeched him for his blessing. He refused them with ‘no.’ They had no idea at all where Either his cross or his ring were. And then a knight spoke up. The knight said in a low voice, “Sir, where is your ring? Where is your cross? Have they been taken from you?” The bishop replied, “Your accursed king Has left me without all of my things And all of my worldly goods, And I have excommunicated England. There will be no priests singing mass with hands And no child will be christened, Unless he releases to me that knight, And his wife and children, fair and innocent. He wrongly wishes to slay them.” The knight answered, “Bishop, change your mind!</p>
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520	<p>Of thy body we are ful fayn; Thy brothir yit schole we borwe. And, but he graunte us oure bone, Hys presoun schal be broken soone, Hymselff to mekyl sorwe. We schole drawe doun both halle and boures, Bothe hys castelles and hys toures, They schole lygge lowe and holewe. Though he be kyng and were the corown, We scholen hym sette in a deep dunjoun:</p>	<p>We are very glad of your presence. We will secure your brother yet. And unless he grants us our demand, His prison will soon be broken into, And himself driven to great sorrow. We will pull down both halls and rooms, Both his castles and his towers. They will lay low and razed. Even if he is king and wears a crown, We will throw him in a deep dungeon.</p>
530	<p>Oure Crystyndom we wole folewe.” Thanne, as they spoken of this thyng, Ther comen twoo knyghtes from the kyng, And sayden, “Bysschop, abyde, And have thy cros and thy ryng, And welcome whyl that thou wylt lyng, It is nought for to hyde. Here he grauntys thee the knyght, Hys wyff and chyldryn fayr and bryght; Again I rede thou ryde.</p>	<p>We will follow our Christian faith.” Then, as they spoke about this matter Two knights came from the king And said, “Bishop, please wait, And have your cross and your ring, And be welcome while you wish to stay. There is no need to hide. The king grants you here the knight And his wife and children, fair and innocent. Again I advise you to come back.</p>
540	<p>He prayes thee pur charyté That he myghte asoylyd be, And Yngelond long and wyde.” Hereof the bysschop was ful fayn, And turnys hys brydyl and wendes agayn — Barouns gunne with hym ryde — Unto the Brokene-cros of ston; Thedyr com the kyng ful soone anon, And there he gan abyde. Upon hys knees he knelyd adoun,</p>	<p>He petitions you for charity’s sake That he might be forgiven, Along with England near and far.” For this the bishop was gladdened And turned his bridle and went back, With the barons riding alongside him, To the Chester Cross of stone.¹⁷ The king came there immediately after And there he waited. He kneeled down upon his knees</p>

¹⁷ *The Broken-cros of stone*: Zupitza identifies this as the Chester Cross in the Strand in Westminster, near present-day Charing Cross. Among other functions, the cross marked the limits of Westminster. J. Zupitza, “Die Romanze von Athelston,” *Englische Studien* 13 (1883): 331-414. Trounce (123) and other scholars believe the line refers to the Broken Cross near St. Paul’s Cathedral, which existed by 1379 and until 1390, supplying a possible dating for the poem. See also the discussion in Rowe, 94.

550	<p>And prayde the bysschop of benysoun, And he gaff hym that tyde. With holy watyr and orysoun, He asoylyd the kyng that weryd the coroun, And Yngelond long and wyde. Than sayde the kyng anon ryght: “Here I graunte thee that knyght, And hys sones free, And my sustyr hende in halle. Thou hast savyd here lyvys alle:</p>	<p>And implored the bishop for his blessing. This time he gave it to him With holy water and prayer. He absolved the king who wore the crown, And England far and wide. Then the king at once said, “Here I grant you that knight, And his noble sons, And my sister, so gracious in the hall. You have saved all of their lives.</p>
560	<p>Iblessyd moot thou bee.” Thenne sayde the bysschop also soone: “And I schal geven swylke a dome — With eyen that thou schalt see! Yiff thay be gylty off that dede, Sorrere the doome thay may drede, Thanne schewe here schame to me.” Whanne the bysschop hadde sayd soo, A gret fyr was maad ryght thoo, In romaunce as we rede —</p>	<p>May you be blessed.” The bishop replied just as promptly, “And I will render such a judgment That you will see it with your eyes. If they are guilty of that deed, They will dread an even sorrier doom. Present their crimes to me.”¹⁸ When the bishop had spoken so, At once a great fire was made, In the romance as we read it.</p>
570	<p>It was set, that men myghte knawe, Nyne plowgh-lengthe on rawe, As red as ony glede. Thanne sayde the kyng: “What may this mene?” “Sere, of gylt and thay be clene, This doom hem thar nought drede.” Thanne sayde the good Kyng Athelstone: “An hard doome now is this on: God graunte us alle weel to spede.”</p>	<p>It was raised, as men might know, As long as nine plow lengths in a row, As red as any glowing coal. Then the king said, “What is this for?” “Sire, if they are innocent of guilt, They need not fear this ordeal.” Then the good king Athelstone said, “¹⁸This judgment is a hard one. God grant that we all fare well.”</p>

¹⁸ The bishop is invoking trial by ordeal, a legal process by which innocence or guilt would be determined by healing from (or surviving) a painful or dangerous test. Priests were forbidden to participate by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) but trial by ordeal took centuries to be fully replaced by the modern trial system. American economist Peter Leeson asserts that what appears to be a highly questionable legal method could actually be psychologically effective, as innocent parties tended to consent to ordeal, expecting divine protection, and the guilty would confess, fearing mortal punishment. Peter T. Leeson, “Ordeals,” accessed 21 May 2010 at <http://www.peterleeson.com/Ordeals.pdf>.

580	<p>They fetten forth Sere Egelan — A trewere eerl was ther nan — Before the fyr so bryght. From hym they token the rede scarlet, Bothe hosyn and schoon that weren hym met, That fel al for a knyght. Nyne sythe the bysschop halewid the way That his weddyd brother scholde goo that day, To praye God for the ryght. He was unbleschyd foot and hand; 590 That sawgh the lordes of the land, And thankyd God of Hys myght. They offeryd him with mylde chere Unto Saint Powlys heyghe awtere, That mekyl was of myght. Doun upon hys knees he felle, And thankyd God that harewede helle And Hys modyr so bryght. And yit the bysschop tho gan say: “Now schal the chyldryn gon the way 600 That the fadyr yede.” Fro hem they tooke the rede scarlete, The hosen and schoon that weren hem mete, And al here worldly wede. The fyr was bothe hydous and rede, The chyldryn swownyd as they were ded; The bysschop tyl hem yede; With careful herte on hem gan look; Be hys hand he hem up took:</p>	<p>They brought forth Sir Egelond— There was no truer earl— Before the fire so bright. From him they took the red scarlet, Both the hose and shoes fitting for him Which were permitted for a knight. The bishop sanctified the path nine times That his brother would go that day, To beseech God for justice. He was unharmed in hand and foot. This was seen by the lords of the land, Who thanked God for His might. They offered him with gentle hands Unto Saint Paul’s high altar, Which was of great authority. He fell down on his knees And thanked God, who conquered Hell, And His mother so fair. But still the bishop continued on, “Now the children shall go the way”¹⁹ That the father went.” From them they took the red scarlet, And the hose and shoes fit for them, And all their worldly clothes. The fire was both hideous and red, And the children fainted as if they were dead. The bishop went to them And looked on them with attentive heart. He took them up by his hand and said,</p>
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¹⁹ Why do the children and the countess need to undergo the ordeal? The three tests form a narrative triplet, but Bellamy also argues that in Anglo-Saxon law “the crime of treason was so horrible that the traitor’s offspring were contaminated by his misdeed and ought to be destroyed with him.” The bishop evidently wishes to clear the entire family from any such stain and believes the children will be unharmed. J. Bellamy, *The Law of Treason in England in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1970), 4, quoted in Treharne, 15. The punishment of family members also serves as a chilling disincentive to treason and is still done in absolutist regimes such as North Korea.

<p>610</p> <p>620</p> <p>630</p>	<p>“Chyldryn, have ye no drede.” Thanne the chyldryn stood and lowgh: “Sere, the fyr is cold inowgh.” Thorwghout they wente apase. They weren unbleschyd foot and hand: That sawgh the lordys of the land, And thankyd God of His grace. They offeryd hem with mylde chere To Seynt Poulys hyghe awtere This myracle schewyd was there. And yit the bysschop efft gan say: “Now schal the countasse goo the way There that the chyldryn were.” They fetten forth the lady mylde; Sche was ful gret igon with chylde In romaunce as we rede — Before the fyr whan that sche come, To Jesu Cryst he prayde a bone, That leet His woundys blede: “Now, God lat nevere the kyngys foo Quyk out of the fyr goo.” Therof hadde sche no drede. Whenne sche hadde maad here prayer, Sche was brought before the feer, That brennyd bothe fayr and lyght. Sche wente fro the lengthe into the thrydde; Stylelle sche stood the fyr amydde, And callyd it merye and bryght. Hard schourys thenne took here stronge Bothe in bak and eke in wombe;</p>	<p>“Children, have no fear.” Then the children stood and laughed, “Sir, the fire is cold enough!” They passed through it quickly And were unharmed in hand and foot. That was seen by the lords of the land, Who thanked God for His grace. They offered them with kind hands To Saint Paul’s high altar Where this miracle was displayed. And yet the bishop again continued, “Now the countess will go the way That the children went there.” They brought forth the gentle lady. She was very much with child, As we read in the romance. When she came before the fire, She prayed a plea to Jesus Christ, Who let His wounds bleed: “Now, may God never let the king’s enemy Walk out of the fire alive.” Because of that she had no dread. When she had made her prayer, She was brought before the fire, Which burned both strong and bright. She went from the start into the third part.²⁰ She stood still in the middle of the fire And called it merry and bright. Then she was taken by the pains of labor, Both in her back as well as in womb,</p>
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²⁰ *Into the thrydde*: Trounce posits that the countess walks over the third of nine burning plowhares, explaining why the bishop sanctifies the path nine times (586). A. McIntyre Trounce, ed., *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*, Early English Text Society O.S. 224 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 17. The scene would also remind the audience of the popular legend of Emma (c. 985-1052), mother of Edward the Confessor, who also walks across nine plowshares to vindicate herself from false charges of adultery.

<p>640</p> <p>650</p> <p>660</p>	<p>And sithen it fell at syght. Whenne that here paynys slakyd was, And sche hadde passyd that hydous pas, Here nose barst on bloode. Sche was unbleschyd foot and hand: That sawgh the lordys of the land, And thankyd God on Rode. They comaundyd men here away to drawe, As it was the landys lawe; And ladyys thanne tyl here yode. She knelyd down upon the ground And there was born Seynt Edemound: Iblessed be that foode! And whanne this chyld iborn was, It was brought into the plas; It was bothe hool and sound Bothe the kyng and bysschop free They crystnyd the chyld, that men myght see, And callyd it Edemound. “Halff my land,” he sayde, “I thee geve, Also longe as I may leve, With markys and with pounde; And al afftyr my dede — Yngelond to wysse and rede.” Now iblessyd be that stounde! Thanne sayde the bysschop to the Kyng: “Sere, who made this grete lesyng, And who wroughte al this bale?”</p>	<p>Which came to everyone’s notice.²¹ When her pains had lessened, And she had passed that hideous stage, Her nose began to bleed. She was unharmed in hand and foot. That was seen by the lords of the land, Who thanked God on the Cross. They ordered men to move away As it was the custom of the land, And then ladies went to her. She kneeled down on the ground And there was born Saint Edmund.²² Blessed be that child! And when the boy was born, It was brought into the open. It was both whole and sound. Both the king and the noble bishop Christened the child, so that men might see it, And named it Edmund. “Half my land,” he said, “I give you, As long as I may live, With pennies and with pounds, And all else after my death, To guide and rule England. Now blessed be that moment!” Then the bishop said to the king, “Sire, who made this great lie, And who brought about all this evil?”</p>
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²¹ *And sithen it fell at syght*: No one seems to have come up with a clear idea of what this line means. Some suggest a scribal error, that the lady *sighed* in pain. TEAMS posits that “the baby has dropped into the birthing position.” I am suggesting simply that ‘it’ is the onset of labor which the crowd notices. Another possibility is that this is a period euphemism for a woman’s water breaking.

²² Likely this is St. Edmund of East Anglia, king of the East Angles (c. 840-869) and famously martyred by the Vikings. However, the historical Edmund had different parents and was born in Nuremberg. Some of the poem’s place names do not exist in the ninth century. Either a different Edmund is meant, or else these are anachronisms which would not have troubled the poet or audience, which did not have Wikipedia.

<p>670</p> <p>680</p> <p>690</p>	<p>Thanne sayde the kyng, “So moot I thee, That schalt thou nevere wete for me, In burgh neyther in sale; For I have sworn be Seynt Anne That I schal nevere bewreie that manne, That me gan telle that tale. They arn savyd thorwgh thy red; Now lat al this be ded, And kepe this counseyl hale.” Thenne swoor the bysschop, “So moot I the, Now I have power and dignyté For to asoyle thee as clene As thou were hoven off the fount-ston. Trustly trowe thou therupon, And holde it for no wene: I swere bothe be book and belle, But yiff thou me his name telle, The ryght doom schal I deme: Thyselff schalt goo the ryghte way That thy brother wente today, Though it thee evele beseme.” Thenne sayde the kyng, “So moot I the, Be schryffte of mouthe telle I it thee; Therto I am unblyve. Sertaynly, it is non othir But Wymound,oure weddyd brother; He wole nevere thryve.”</p>	<p>The king answered, “So help me God, You will never learn that from me, Neither in town nor in the hall. For I have sworn by Saint Anne²³ That I will never betray that man Who told me that tale. They are saved through your counsel; Now let all this be finished, And keep such matters private.” The bishop then swore, “As I live and breathe, I have the power and dignity To absolve you as clean As if you were lifted from the baptismal font! Believe in it truly, And do not think of it as a guess. But I swear both by the book and bell,²⁴ That unless you tell me his name, I will pronounce justice! You yourself will walk the same way That your brother went today, Even if it ill suits you.”²⁵ Then the king answered, “For better or worse, I will tell you by confession of mouth, Though I am reluctant to do it. For sure, it is no other But Wickmond, our sworn brother. He will never prosper.”</p>
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²³ *Seynt Anne*: Believed to be the mother of the Virgin Mary, and the patron saint of childbirth (TEAMS).

²⁴ *Book and belle*: Swearing by a book in medieval romance means, of course, the Bible. Here the oath may refer to the Catholic rite of excommunication, where a Bible is closed, bells are rung, and a candle is snuffed. See also *Guy of Warwick*, 735.

²⁵ There is some speculation on what exactly the king needs absolution for. At worst, he has caused the entire debacle by betraying his brother and has killed his son. At minimum, the bishop is irritated by the king’s flippant speech to let sleeping dogs lie and is offering a face-saving way for him to reveal Wickmond and receive forgiveness for breaking his promise.

<p>700</p> <p>710</p> <p>720</p> <p>730</p>	<p>“Allas,” sayde the bysschop than, I wende he were the treweste man, That evere yit levyd on lyve. And he with this ateynt may bee, He schal be hongyd on trees three, And drawen with hors fyve.”</p> <p>And whenne that the bysschop the sothe hade That that traytour that lesyng made, He callyd a messangere, Bad hym to Dovere that he scholde founde, For to fette that Eerl Wymounde: (That traytour has no pere!) Sey Egelane and hys sones be slawe, Bothe ihangyd and to-drawe. (Doo as I thee lere!) The countasse is in presoun done; Schal sche nevere out of presoun come, But yiff it be on bere.”</p> <p>Now with the messenger was no badde; He took his hors, as the bysschop radde, To Dovere tyl that he come. The eerl in hys halle he fand: He took hym the lettre in his hand On hygh, wolde he nought wone: “Sere Egelane and his sones be slawe, Bothe ihangyd and to-drawe: Thou getyst that eerldome. The countasse is in presoun done; Schal sche nevere more out come, Ne see neyther sunne ne mone.”</p> <p>Thanne that eerl made hym glade, And thankyd God that lesyng was made: “It hath gete me this eerldome.” He sayde, “Felawe, ryght weel thou bee! Have here besauntys good plenté For thyn hedyr-come.”</p> <p>Thanne the messenger made his mon:</p>	<p>“Alas,” said the bishop in return, “I thought he was the truest man Who has ever yet lived his life. If he is guilty of this, He will be hanged on three beams And dragged with five horses!”</p> <p>And when the bishop had discovered the truth That the traitor had made such lies, He called a messenger, Ordering him to hasten to Dover To seize Earl Wickmond. That scoundrel had no equal! “Tell him Egelond and his sons are dead, Both hanged and drawn. Do as I direct you! The countess is clapped in prison. She will never come out of jail Unless it is on a funeral bier.”</p> <p>Now there was no delay for the messenger. He rode his horse, as the bishop ordered, Until he had come to Dover. He found the earl in his hall. He gave him the letter into his hand, And swiftly; he did not dally. “Sir Egelond and his sons are slain, Both hanged and drawn. You have received that earldom. The countess is shut into prison. She will never again come out, Nor see either the moon or sun.”</p> <p>Then the earl was very pleased And thanked God that the lie had worked. “It has gotten me the earldom!” He said, “Fellow, may all be well with you! Take a good plenty of coins For your travel here.”</p> <p>Then the messenger made his request:</p>
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<p>740</p> <p>750</p> <p>760</p>	<p>“Sere, of youre goode hors lende me on: Now graunte me my bone; For yystyrday deyde my nobyl stede, On youre arende as I yede, Be the way as I come.” “Myn hors be fatte and cornfed, And of thy lyff I am adred.” That eerl sayde to him than, “Thanne yiff min hors sholde thee sloo, My lord the kyng wolde be ful woo To lese swylk a man.” The messenger yit he brougte a stede, On of the beste at ylke a nede That evere on grounde dede gange, Sadelyd and brydelyd at the beste. The messenger was ful preste, Wyghtly on hym he sprange. “Sere,” he sayde, “have good day; Thou schalt come whan thou may; I schal make the kyng at hande.” With sporys faste he strook the stede; To Gravysende he come good spede, Is fourty myle to fande. There the messenger the traytour abood, And sethyn bothe insame they rod To Westemynstyr wone. In the palays there thay lyght; Into the halle they come ful ryght, And mette with Athelstone. He wolde have kyssyd his lord swete. He sayde: “Traytour, nought yit! lete! Be God and be Seynt Jhon!</p>	<p>“Sire, from your good horses give me one. Now grant me my reward! For yesterday my noble steed died, On your errand as I went, On the way as I came.” “My own horse is fat and corn-fed, And I am anxious for your safety.”²⁶ The earl then continued, “Then, if my horse should throw you, My lord the king would be well saddened To lose such a man.” He brought to the messenger a steed, One of the best in such a need That ever went on the ground, Saddled and bridled in the finest way. The messenger was ready in full, And sprang on him nimbly. “Sir,” he said, “good day to you. You may come when you will. I will make the king aware.” With firm spurs he struck the steed. He reached Gravesend with good speed, A journey of forty miles. There the messenger awaited the traitor, And after they both rode together To the town of Westminster. They dismounted there in the palace. They came right away into the hall And met with Athelstone. Wickmond wished to kiss his sweet lord. The king shouted, “Traitor, not so fast! Stop! By God and by Saint John!</p>
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²⁶ These are presumably Wymonde’s words, who feels that his own horse is too spoiled for hard riding and might throw the messenger, and thus he gives him a steed. The act is inexplicably kind for Wymonde, although the fat, useless horse may echo his own moral slackness and dissolution.

<p>770</p> <p>780</p> <p>790</p>	<p>For thy falsnesse and thy lesyng I slowgh myn heyr, scholde have ben kyng, When my lyf hadde ben gon.” There he denyd faste the kyng, That he made nevere that lesyng, Among hys peres alle. The bysschop has hym be the hand tan; Forth insame they are gan Into the wyde halle. Myghte he nevere with crafft ne gynne, Gare hym shryven of hys synne, For nought that myghte befall. Thenne sayde the goode Kyng Athelstone: “Lat hym to the fyr gon, To preve the trewth with alle.” Whenne the kyng hadde sayd soo, A gret fyr was maad thoo, In romaunce as we rede. It was set, that men myghten knawe, Nyne plowgh-linge on rawe, As red as ony glede. Nyne sythis the bysschop halewes the way That that traytour schole goo that day: The wers him gan to spede. He wente fro the lengthe into the thrydde, And down he fell the fyr amydde: Hys eyen wolde hym nought lede. Than the eerlys chydryn were war ful smerte, And wyghtly to the traytour sterte, And out of the fyr him hade; And sworn bothe be book and belle: “Or that thou deye, thou schalt telle Why thou that lesyng made.” “Certayn, I can non other red, Now I wot I am but ded: I telle yow nothyng gladde — Certayn, ther was non other wyte:</p>	<p>For your falseness and your lying I killed my heir who should have been king After my life was finished.” He strongly denied to the king That he ever made such a deception, In front of all his peers. The bishop seized him by the hand; They went forth together Into the wide hall. He would never, with any trick or excuse, Have himself absolved of his sin, For anything that might happen. Then the good king Athelstone pronounced, “Let him go to the fire To prove the truth before all.” When the king had spoken so, A great fire was then raised, In the romance as we read it. It was set, as men might know, As long as nine plow-lengths in a row, As red as any glowing coal. The bishop blessed the path nine times Where the traitor would walk that day. For him his fortunes would turn for the worse. He went from the start into the third part, And down he fell in the middle of the fire. His eyes could not guide him. Then the earl’s children were fully aware, And quickly ran to the traitor, And pulled him out of the fire. They swore both by the book and bell, “Before you die, you will confess Why you told that lie.” “For sure, I have no other course. Now I know I am almost dead. I tell you no good news— For certain, there was no other cause:</p>
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<p>800</p> <p>810</p> <p>814</p>	<p>He lovyd him to mekyl and me to lyte; Therefore envye I hadde.” Whenne that traytour so hadde sayde, Fyve good hors to hym were tayde, Alle men myghten see with yghe — They drowen him thorwgh ylke a strete, And sethyn to the Elmes, I yow hete, And hongyd him ful hyghe. Was ther nevere man so hardy, That durste felle hys false body: This hadde he for hys lye. Now Jesu, that is Hevene-kyng, Leve nevere traytour have betere endyng, But swych dome for to dye.</p> <p><i>Explicit</i></p>	<p>He loved Egelond too much and me too little, And because of that I had jealousy.” When the criminal had spoken so, Five strong horses were tied to him,²⁷ Which all men could see with their eyes. They dragged him through each street And after to the Elms, I assure you, And hanged him very high. There was no man so bold Who dared take down his sinful body. This was what he got for his lies! Now may Jesus, who is Heaven’s king, Allow no traitor to have a better ending, But such a sentence to die.</p> <p>The End.</p>
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²⁷ As in *Amis and Amiloun*, Wickmond’s sentence is to be hanged and drawn, i.e. dragged through unpaved streets behind horses. Here the hanging follows. Bodies might be left hanging for weeks as a public example, and thus the lines that no man dared take him down (808-9).

The Malleable King in *Athelston*

Athelston, like *Amis and Amiloun*, begins with a sworn oath of brotherhood. There the similarities end. Loomis believes that *Athelston* has a ballad-based origin and points to the formulaic preference for threes in the story. She notes the three trials by ordeal of Egelond, his children, and the countess, noting that the first two “appear to prove nothing”¹ besides structurally fulfilling the pattern. Similarly, although *Athelston* may have been thematically influenced by the earlier *Amis and Amiloun*, the latter is a didactic tale of the heroes’ progress from a personal and contractual oath to a more spiritually mature Christian brotherhood, whereas *Athelston* concerns itself with “falsnesse, hou it wil ende” (8). The tale is more explicitly about the betrayal of bonds and its tragic consequences rather than about loyalty to them, and it ends not with praise for the heroes but an ominous request that Christ “leve nevere traytour have betere endyng / but swych dome for to dye” (812-3). *Athelston* comprises a rather unorthodox romance, having none of the usual markings of heroic deeds, monsters, Saracens, or a love story. While not as dull as *Sir Thopas*’ Popering, the setting is a rather prosaic Westminster.²

Yet *Athelston* achieves a considerable sophistication for its brief 814 lines. Wymonde, despite his stock villain’s name, has a fairly well-shaded characterization surpassing the usual ‘jealous steward’ trope. The poet includes such realistic domestic touches as the queen munching cherries (256) and the messenger protesting that he needs to eat breakfast (328). Mehl complains that King Athelston is “completely unreasonable

¹ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, “Athelston, a Westminster Legend,” *PMLA* 36:2 (1921): 230.

² Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 150.

and has the simple credulity of some fairy-tale character.”³ The hero of the story may be Alyric, and critics have asserted that the king and bishop allude to Henry II and Thomas à Becket.⁴ The story exalts clergy over royalty generally, and Pound notes that Westminster was one of many monasteries which kept paid minstrels.⁵ Yet Wymonde and Alyric are static characters, and Egelond barely figures in the story. While he does not function as the final hero, King Athelston does act as structural protagonist, the first character of the story and the person who undergoes the most change. The poem may be a warning against treason, but it has as its didactic subtheme good kingship generally.⁶ Wymonde, the messenger, and Alyric ultimately represent negative, ameliorative, and positive moral examples for the impressionable king.

The poem seemingly leaves little doubt as to what the audience ought to feel about Wymonde, consistently labeling him a traitor and firmly intoning that he deserves his punishment: “this hadde he for hys lye” (810). Nevertheless, the text does allow some subtlety in making Wymonde less than a monster. He has an honest motive in being jealous of Athelston’s affections for Egelond and confesses that “he lovye him to mekyl and me to lyte” (800). Although the poet does not leave much of a fine moral shading in calling him “a devyl of helle” (156), perhaps Wymonde even has a hint of justification in

³ Mehl, 148.

⁴ For an example see Gordon Hall Gerould, “Social and Historical Reminiscences in the Middle English *Athelston*,” *Englische Studien* 36 (1906): 193-208.

⁵ Louise Pound, “The English Ballads and the Church,” *PMLA* 35:2 (1920): 183. Pound relates an account of a minstrel entertaining at Westminster in 1338 with songs of Colbrand (*Guy of Warwick*) and Queen Emma. In Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, *Medieval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), 146. See also Edmund Bolton Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (1774-81) 1840 ed., 81-2.

⁶ Elaine M. Treharne, “Romanticizing the Past in the Middle English *Athelston*,” *Review of English Studies* 50:197 (1999): 19.

being a sworn-brother who receives not the king's sister nor the archbishopric of Canterbury as reward, but little Dover, geographically and emotionally the farthest from Athelston's court. Upon his arrival for a visit, the king seems more interested in knowing "hou faryth that noble clerk" (100) than about Wymonde's welfare.

Moreover, Wymonde does not compass usurping the king but merely the removal of his competitors. Thus he functions as the king's antagonist solely by essentially threatening to corrupt the king into emulating him. The danger is that the king may become like Wymonde, as he does for a period. Upon being lured by Wymonde's offer of inside information, the king "his hand up raughte" (154) as he enters into a more limited oath of confidence contradicting his wider obligation to his brothers. Upon taking the oath, the king echoes Wymonde's lie by undertaking a lie of his own, promising to Egelond's family "that the kyng the eerlys sones wolde / make hem bothe knyght" (194-5). The poison spreads as the king becomes increasingly inclined to arbitrary violence, at first rejecting the queen's rightful petition for a judicial hearing and then perhaps exemplifying some jealousy over the queen's love for Egelond himself as he kicks her (283), seemingly to batter her into emotional obedience. Her miscarriage also symbolizes the miscarriage of justice being committed.⁷ Structurally, Wymonde symbolizes what Athelstone potentially could and nearly does become, making the king's rejection of his proffered kiss (760) additionally poignant.

The messenger also occupies an interesting position. Dickerson argues that he serves as a minor hero in the poem in the same category as earthy, hard-working

⁷ Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, "The Female Body Politic and the Miscarriage of Justice in *Athelston*," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 98, quoted in TEAMS' Introduction to *Athelston*.

protagonists such as Gamelyn and Havelock.⁸ In displaying the middle-class virtues of self-reliance and strength, the messenger earns considerable respect and attention from the poet, who lavishes some thirty lines on his horse journey to the bishop, ending with the encomium that “for his travayle he hadde no los” (“for all his efforts he got no praise,” 341). Dickerson then asserts that the poetic decision to name the messenger Athelston as well was not random but significant in that he represents “the alter ego of the arrogant King Athelston, who was once a messenger.”⁹ Whereas King Athelston purely serves his own interests, the messenger serves others: the king, the queen, and the bishop in turn. Crane believes that the messenger “displays an amoral readiness to transmit false as well as true messages,”¹⁰ but in relaying the ruse that Egelond is dead he obeys the explicit orders of the bishop, who warns “doo as I thee lere!” (708). The poet does not censure him for presumably fulfilling his duties.

As an occupation, the medieval messenger pursued a trade acceptable to both gentry and commoner,¹¹ as demonstrated by the king’s youthful employment. The messenger is called noble by the poet twice (199, 339) even though he was a foundling (186). Treharne asserts that the fictional Athelston was modeled on the historical King Athelstan (c. 894-939), whom contemporary chroniclers claimed to be illegitimate.¹² The

⁸ A. Inskip Dickerson, “The Subplot of the Messenger in *Athelston*,” *Papers on Language & Literature* 12 (1976): 121.

⁹ Dickerson, 124.

¹⁰ Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 72.

¹¹ Dickerson, 117.

¹² Treharne (14) cites William of Malmesbury’s *De Gestis Regum Anglorum*. I follow her lead in calling the historical king Athelstan and the fictional king Athelston.

poet more likely includes this odd detail to emphasize that the messenger is not noble but demonstrates the sort of natural *gentillesse* the Wife of Bath praises. The messenger has a sort of selfless ethic of duty that has died in the king, accompanying Alyric back to Westminster even though his job is technically complete.¹³ His grouching about his horse and his insistence on breakfast are comic but also call attention to his normal limitations as a human being. Yet chiefly he serves to show what the king has lost both by his example and by literally and symbolically bringing the bishop back to him.

As the king prays in a moment of hesitation over his actions, “he lokyd up into the qweer / the erchebysschop sawgh he stande” (430-1). The vision of the archbishop shining from on high is not terribly subtle but effectively denotes a narrative shift toward the king’s redemption through Alyric’s holy offices. The poet then intensifies Athelston’s moral dissolution into proud absolutism in order to accentuate Alyric’s virtue. The bishop first appeals to their shared brotherhood pledge: “goode weddyd brother, now turne thy rede / doo nought thyn owne blood to dede” (441-2), only resorting to righteous anger when the king wrathfully compounds the injustice of his summary execution of Egelond by promising the same to the bishop for merely petitioning him (462-3), both an extrajudicial act of royal violence and an outright breach of the vows agreed on by the four brothers long before.

The blood-brotherhood oaths of the four men has a community aspect that the more intimate pledges of Amis and Amiloun lack. The king’s pact with Wymonde

¹³ Dickerson 119. Dickerson feels that the messenger compromises his altruism somewhat by accepting money from the queen (308-19), but I do not see such any such meaning in the lines. He seems to refuse it all, saying “Cryst in hevne foryelde it thee” (319).

equally relies on secret confederation and violates this openness. When Alyric is stripped of his office by the king, the bishop's men readily agree that they will help to secure "thy brothir" (521).¹⁴ The poet immediately follows the private scene of Alyric and the increasingly isolated king with the public spectacle of the bishop and the "lordys of Yngelond" (499) as he announces the interdiction of the nation. Here the king is at his moral nadir, having broken his *treuwe*, threatened the life of an archbishop, and brought about the excommunication of England. The barons reflect this upsetting of the natural order by threatening open rebellion (522-9). Yet the intercession of the bishop wins over Athelston, who repents and "prayde the bysschop of benysoun" (550).

The trial by ordeal of burning ploughshares forms a problematic scene. Trounce asserts that historically it was not done in England, but a romance audience would have known the popular legend of Emma, mother of Edward the Confessor, who walks across nine burning ploughshares to exonerate herself from false charges of adultery.¹⁵ Yet here the questionable legal means paints the bishop in a poor light. The countess is innocent, just as the Emma chroniclers sympathize with her plight against the vindictive Norman archbishop.¹⁶ Crane objects that Alyric fails justice in ordering a non-parliamentary

¹⁴ John C. Ford, "Merry Married Brothers: Wedded Friendship, Lovers' Language and Male Matrimonials in Two Middle English Romances," *Medieval Forum* 3 (2003) [4], accessed 12 July 2010 at <http://www.sfsu.edu/~medieval/Volume3/Brothers.html>

¹⁵ A. McIntyre Trounce, ed., *Athelston: A Middle English Romance*, Early English Text Society O.S. 224 (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 15. The Emma legend may be partly apocryphal as it is not well attested and includes miraculous visitations from St. Swythun, but was well-known enough to possibly form the basis of the scene. Both the countess and Emma walk across nine ploughshares (571).

¹⁶ Robert of Jumièges, Archbishop of London in 1043 (though named as Archbishop of Canterbury by Hall) apparently headed a political conspiracy to discredit the dowager queen. When the still influential Emma appealed to other bishops from her confinement in Wherwell Priory, Robert excoriated them for defending "a vile beast and not a woman." Mrs. Matthew Hall, *The Queens Before the Conquest*, Vol. II (London: Henry Colburn, 1854), 327. See also Robert of Gloucer's *Chronicle*, lines 6880-99.

judgment for Egelond and his family,¹⁷ and Rowe similarly argues that the ordeals vindicate Athelston by showing that a formal appeal to counsel was unnecessary.¹⁸ Yet Alyric submits the defendants to an acceptable ecclesiastical process for the time period, and Athelston, most importantly, is shown to be completely wrong in his accusation. Moreover, for the bishop the ordeal is less a trial than a public proof of the family's innocence. The poet does not impute any condemnatory or purgative attribute to the fire. The faithless king and not the bishop calls the ordeal a "hard doome" (578). Alyric instructs Egelond's children, "have ye no drede" (609), and as they walk through unharmed they joke that "the fyr is cold inowgh" (611).¹⁹

Such miracles are otherwise simply part of the furniture of romance. The ordeal also permits the indelible (or indelicate) image of the countess going into labor in the flames and giving birth to Saint Edmund. Ford suggests that, as Amoraunt embodies Amis and Amiloun's pledge, here Edmund's birth symbolizes the renewed love of the brothers.²⁰ The king's murder of his son for selfish motives threatens public stability by leaving him heirless, and in pledging his kingdom to Edmund he newly emulates Alyric's sense of responsibility for his people. The root source of the king's evil must still be purged, however, and the bishop must also threaten the king with the fires until he fully renounces his secret alliance with Wymonde. Where Athelston previously requires the

¹⁷ Crane, 73.

¹⁸ Rowe, 83.

¹⁹ In an actual purgatorial fire, Virgil also tells Dante to "put down your every fear" (*Purg.* XXVII.31) but Dante reports that "I'd have thrown myself in molten glass to find coolness" (49-51). Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, *Electronic Literature Foundation*, accessed 24 October 2010 at http://www.divinecomedy.org/divine_comedy.html.

²⁰ Ford [8].

threat of baronial revolt to submit, the bishop's spiritual authority now suffices. The disclosure is in more ways than one a confession, and the king himself refers to it as a "schryffte of mouthe" (689). Only then has the bishop fully redeemed Athelston. Wymonde's actual death is perfunctory, with the difference that he does receive some form of public trial to underscore the king's repudiation of his arbitrary ways in favor of following God's will.

Although the bishop guides and reproves him, the king has displayed the least steadiness of any character in the poem. Both Alyric and the messenger function with more prudence and reason, and even the wives have more common sense. Critics have noticed the unusual agency of the women compared to those of other period romances. The countess' patient endurance of the fire ordeal forms the highlight of the trial scene. In comparison to the countess' prominence her husband Egelond appears "curiously passive"²¹ in the narrative and seems to take no role in his family's defense. Similarly, the queen knows her legal procedures, asking to act as security for her brother until a parliament can deliberate.²² Despite her violent beating and miscarriage, the king is ultimately forced to see that refusing the queen's advice has proven destructive to his own kingship.²³ Loomis notes the strong ameliorative influence of the church and the

²¹ Nancy Mason Bradbury, "Beyond the Kick: Women's Agency in *Athelston*," in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. Corinne Sanders (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 151.

²² Treharne, 12.

²³ Mary Ellzey, "The Advice of Wives in Three Middle English Romances: *The King of Tars*, *Sir Cleges*, and *Athelston*," *Medieval Perspectives* 7 (1992): 50.

women of Athelston,²⁴ and in the countess' miraculous walk through the flames the two forces merge.

Is the king thus good or bad in the poet's depiction? Treharne argues that the poem is an exemplum of how a good king should *not* act:

The *Athelston*-poet... demonstrates through his protagonist the human fallibility of the divinely appointed ruler. We see a depiction of an imaginary, hierarchic Anglo-Saxon society in which Church and king are made to co-operate in the provision of temporal and spiritual harmony.²⁵

The king is not evil but is too easily swayed and requires strong guidance to avoid the temptations of tyranny. Does the poet mean a particular king? The historical Athelstan was considered deeply religious and a promulgator of law codes and order, and he was for some poets an English Charlemagne, representing a former Golden Age.²⁶ Yet in later depictions his image deteriorates into one of despotism. In Layamon and William of Malmesbury he progressively becomes an illegitimate and aggressive usurper,²⁷ though in the stanzaic *Guy of Warwick* he is merely weak and vacillating against the Danes and Colbrand's threat. Edward the Confessor might also have served as a model. Edward had opposed Emma before and in light of their animosity Hall suggests he was "too easily imposed upon"²⁸ in hastily believing the charges against her.

Another possibility is a young Richard II, who did slide into absolutism in his last years before his deposition. Richard was equally criticized as mercurial and overly

²⁴ Loomis, 226.

²⁵ Treharne, 2.

²⁶ Trownce, 29.

²⁷ Treharne, 9.

²⁸ Hall, 324.

influenced by favorites. His unpopular tutor, Simon Burley, was made constable of Dover in 1384, just as Wymonde is created as its earl. Both were men of lower birth (41).

Gower complains that “the king, an ignorant boy, ignores the moral accomplishments by which he would grow from a child to a man.”²⁹ Rowe also relates an actual incident from 1384 where a friar falsely told Richard of a plot against him by John of Gaunt and the king violently ordered a summary execution. In the next year the archbishop of Canterbury complained to Richard about this abrogation of law and custom, and the king had to be restrained from killing him with his sword.³⁰ The extant *Athelston* manuscript of Gonville and Caius No. 175 dates to the late 1300s and line 546 has “the Brokene-cros of ston,” which Trounce located near St. Paul’s Cathedral.³¹ The cross was known to exist only between 1370-90. A suggestible and capricious Richard might have been one of the poet’s indirect themes, and Rowe even posits a propagandistic aim of legitimizing Henry IV’s claims to the throne.³²

An additionally interesting connection is the unusual lack of respect the characters of *Athelston* use in their pronouns of address for the king. The countess is the only character in the poem to use formal *you* for Athelston (246), and only out of fear. Works such as *King Horn* (c. 1200) use *thou* prevalently, but *Horn* is early, at a time when OE

²⁹ “Rex, puer indoctus, morales negligit actus / in quibus a puero crescere possit homo.” (*Vox Clamantis* VI.vii.555-6). G.C. Macaulay, ed., *The Complete Works of John Gower, vol. 4, The Latin Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 246, quoted in Rowe 88. I use partly Rowe’s translation and mine.

³⁰ Ranulph Higden, *Polychronium Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis*, ed. Joseph Lumby, Rolls Series, vol. 41 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1886), 9:33-34, quoted in Rowe, 90.

³¹ Trounce, 123. But see the footnote to line 546. Zupitza claimed that the cross was the Chester Cross delimiting Westminster, about which dates are unknown. J. Zupitza, “Die Romanze von Athelston,” *Englische Studien* 13 (1883): 331-414.

³² Rowe, 80.

þu has not fully divided into ME *you* and informal *thou*. *Athelston* is much later, and the poet addresses the audience as *you* (352). As a social inferior the messenger also uses *you*, albeit inconsistently, for Wymonde (731, 734). In other English romances it is unusual for a king to be addressed with *thou*. Sir Bevis says *you* to King Edgar (3501), and even Bevis' mother says *you* to the German usurper she marries (3313). Children generally use *thou* or *ye*, as does Floris (85), but Sir Degare says *you* to the king (1072). The identification of Athelston with Richard is supposition, but the pronoun address of the poem does subtly imply a young and unseasoned monarch who has yet to command firm respect from subordinates.

The *Athelston* poet capably operates on numerous possible levels. Athelston's signification remains opaque, and the poem may refer abstractly to models of kingship. His failings could be applied to many English kings as well as to Richard. Nevertheless, as Crane asserts, the poem lacks the natural and implicit faith in good governance that the Auchinleck romances tend to assume.³³ Structurally and thematically, the poem has a clear and sturdy mechanism. The main characters of the poem, Wymonde, the messenger, and the bishop, grouped with the wives, function respectively as corrupting, guiding, and ideal examples for Athelston to emulate. If Amis and Amiloun do have a typographical meaning in their initial letters as Delaney asserts—A-A-B for their names and Belisaunt's³⁴—Alyric (A) similarly redeems Athelston (A) back from the moral and alphabetic opposite of Wymonde (W). The poet displays a dexterous ability and would

³³ Crane, 73.

³⁴ Sheila Delaney, "A, A, and B: Coding Same-Sex Union in *Amis and Amiloun*," in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: University Press, 2004), 63-4.

not be beyond such linguistic touches, as evinced by his subtlest use of narrative symbolism: the messenger, the bishop, and the wives all play a role in attempting to warn and inform Athelston about the ruinous path he follows, a fitting occupation for a poem about messengers.

CHAPTER 3

Bevis of Hampton

Bevis of Hampton survives in numerous manuscripts: Auchinleck (c. 1330), University Library, Cambridge Ff. 2.38 (c. 1450), Caius College, Cambridge, Gonville and Caius 175 (c. 1375), Royal Library, Naples XIII, B 29 (c. 1450), Egerton 2862 (c. 1400), Chetham Library No. 8009 (c. 1500), Douce Fragments No. 19, and in an early printed text by Wynkyn de Worde (c. 1500). I take as my text source Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, eds. *Bevis of Hampton. Four Romances of England*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999.

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/bevisfrm.htm>. Herzman *et al.* use mainly Auchinleck with some lines from Egerton. Other editions include Eugen Kölbing, ed., *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (1885).

Main Characters

Bevis
Guy, Bevis' father
Saber, Bevis' uncle
Saber Florentine, bishop of Cologne
King Ermine
Josanne, Ermine's daughter
Brademonde, Josanne's suitor
King Yvor, Josanne's suitor
Miles, Josanne's suitor
Boniface, Josanne's servant
Ascopard, Bevis' servant

1	Lordinges, herkneth to me tale! Is merier than the nightingale, That I schel singe; Of a knight ich wile yow rounne, Beves a highte of Hamtounne,	Lords and ladies, listen to my tale! What I will rhyme about Is merrier than a nightingale. ¹ I will tell you about a knight: Bevis was his name, of Southampton,
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¹ The first two lines are duplicated almost word for word in *Sir Thopas* (VII.833-4): “yet listeth, lordes, to my tale / murier than the nightingale.”

<p>10</p> <p>20</p> <p>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>50</p>	<p>Withouten lesing. Ich wile yow tellen al togadre Of that knight and of is fadre, Sire Gii. Of Hamtoun he was sire And of al that ilche schire, To wardi. Lordinges, this, of whan I telle, Never man of flesch ne felle Nas so strong. And so he was in ech strive. And ever he levede withouten wive, Al to late and long. Whan he was fallen in to elde, That he ne mighte himself welde, He wolde a wif take; Sone thar after, ich understonde, Him hadde be lever than al this londe Hadde he hire forsake. An elde a wif he tok an honde, The kinges doughter of Scotlonde, So faire and bright. Allas, that he hire ever ches! For hire love his lif a les With mechel unright. This maide ichave of ytold, Faire maide she was and bold And fre yboren; Of Almayne that emperur Hire hadde loved paramur Wel thar beforen. Ofte to hire fader a sente And he him selve theder wente For hire sake; Ofte gernede hire to wive; The king for no thing alive Nolde hire him take. Sithe a yaf hire to sire Gii, A stalword erl and hardi Of Southhamtoun. Man, whan he falleth in to elde. Feble a wexeth and unbelde Thourgh right resoun. So longe thai yede togedres to bedde, A knave child betwene hem thai hedde, Beves a het. Faire child he was and bolde, He nas boutte seve winter olde, Whan his fader was ded. The levedi hire misbethoughte And meche aghen the right she wroughte In hire tour: “Me lord is olde and may nought werche, Al dai him is lever at cherche,</p>	<p>Without any lie. I will tell you all together About that knight and his father, Sir Guy. Guy was lord of Southampton And of all that county He was guard. Gentlemen, about this person I tell you of There was never a man of flesh and blood Who was so mighty, And so he prevailed in every battle. But he lived his days without a wife For too long and until too late. When he saw he was falling into old age, When he might no longer govern himself, He decided to take a wife Soon after, as I understand. It would have been better had he rejected her Rather than losing all his land. As an elderly man he took a wife in hand, The king of Scotland’s daughter, So fair and bright. Alas, that he ever chose her! For her love he lost his life With great injustice. This maid I have mentioned Was a beautiful and strong-willed woman, And nobly born. She had been the lover Of the Emperor of Germany A long time before then. The emperor often sent word to her father, And he himself went to him For her sake. He often asked for her hand, But the king would not let him take her For anything alive. And then he gave her to Sir Guy, A sturdy and hardy earl From Southampton. But man, when he falls into old age, Grows feeble and timid In his right reasoning. They laid in bed together Until they had a child between them, Who was called Bevis. He was a fair and bold child, And he was not yet seven years old When his father was dead. The lady had malicious thoughts And she schemed against goodness In her tower: “My lord is old and can’t work, And he would rather spend all day</p>
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60	<p>Than in me bour. Hadde ich itaken a yong knight, That ner nought brused in werre and fight, Also he is, A wolde me loven dai and night, Cleppen and kissen with al is might And make me blis. I nel hit lete for no thinge, That ich nel him to dethe bringe With sum braide!”</p>	<p>In church than in our bed.² If I had married a young knight Who was never scarred from wars and fighting As this man is, He would love me day and night, And hold me and kiss me with all his might, And bring me joy. I won't stop at anything Until I can bring him to death With some trick!”</p>
70	<p>Anon right that levedi fer To consaile clepede hir masager And to him saide: “Maseger, do me surté, That thow nelt nought discure me To no wight! And yif thow wilt, that it so be, I schel thee yeve gold and fe And make the knight.”</p>	<p>Right away that fierce woman Called her messenger to consult with her And said to him: “Messenger, give me your word That you won't give me away To anyone! And if you agree that it will be so I will give you gold and property And make you a knight.”</p>
80	<p>Thanne answerde the masager - False a was, that pautener, And wel prut - “Dame, boute ich do thee nede, Ich graunte, thow me forbede The londe thourgh out.” The levedi thanne was wel fain: “Go,” she seide, “in to Almaine Out of me bour! Maseger, be yep and snel, And on min helf thow grete wel</p>	<p>Then the messenger answered— He was dishonest, a troublemaker, And full of pride— “My lady, if I don't do your bidding I vow, may you banish me From throughout the land.”³ The lady was well pleased. “Go,” she said, “to Germany And out of my bower! Messenger, be prompt and quick And plead strongly on my behalf To that emperor, And ask that on the first day Which comes in the month of May, For the sake of my love, That he be ready to fight With his army in our forest Beside the sea. I will send my lord there For him to prove his love, to destroy And to kill.</p>
90	<p>That emperur, And bid, in the ferste dai, That cometh in the moneth of May, For love of me, That he be to fighte prest With is ferde in hare forest Beside the se. Me lord ich wile theder sende For his love, for to schende And for to sle;</p>	<p>And out of my bower! Messenger, be prompt and quick And plead strongly on my behalf To that emperor, And ask that on the first day Which comes in the month of May, For the sake of my love, That he be ready to fight With his army in our forest Beside the sea. I will send my lord there For him to prove his love, to destroy And to kill.</p>
100	<p>Bid him, that hit be nought beleved, That he ne smite of his heved And sende hit me!</p>	<p>Tell him that I won't believe a word he says Until he chops off his head And sends it to me!⁴</p>

² The lustful wife who betrays her husband is a romance standard. Like the seductive Salome, here the wife also receives Guy's head. An interesting variation is Bertilak's wife in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, who only tempts Gawain as a test. Another example is Amiloun's spouse, who banishes Amiloun and then remarries.

³ TEAMS renders the line as a conditional: “I believe that you would banish me.”

⁴ The lady's manipulation is to question the both the emperor's bravery and honesty: the emperor is to kill her husband to prove his intentions, and until then she will not believe his professions of love.

	<p>And whan he haveth so ydo, Me love he schel underfo, Withouten delai! Thanne seide that masager: “Madame, ich wile sone be ther! Now have gode dai!” Now that masager him goth. 110 That ilche lord him worthe wroth, That him wroughte! To schip that masager him wode. Allas! The wind was al to gode, That him over broughte. Tho he com in to Almayne, Thar a mette with a swain And grette him wel. “Felawe,” a seide, “par amur: Whar mai ich finde th’emperur? 120 Thow me tel!” “Ich wile thee telle anon right: At Rifoun a lai tonight, Be me swere!” The masager him thanked anon And thederwardes he gan gon Withouten demere. Th’empereur thar a fonde; Adoun a knevlede on the grounde, Ase hit was right, 130 And seide: “The levedi of South Hamtone Thee grette wel be Godes sone, That is so bright, And bad thee, in the ferste day That cometh in the moneth o May, How so hit be, That ye be to fighte prest With your ferde in hare forest Beside the se. Hire lord she wile theder sende 140 For the love, for to schende, With lite meini; Thar aboute thow schost be fouse, And thow schelt after her wedde to spouse, To thin amy.”</p>	<p>And when he has done so, He will receive my love Without delay.” The messenger then answered, “Madam, I will soon be there. Now goodbye!” Then that messenger was gone.⁵ He became wicked to the same lord Who had provided for him! The messenger took to his ship; Alas, the wind was all too good Which brought him over. When he arrived in Germany, He met a servant there And greeted him well. “Fellow,” he said, “for kindness’ sake, Where can I find the emperor? Let me know!” “I will tell you right away. He’s spending the night at Erfurt,⁶ By the neck on my head.”⁷ The messenger thanked him at once And went in that direction Without delay. He found the emperor there And knelt down to the ground, As it was fitting, And said, “The lady of Southampton Greets you courteously by God’s son, Who is so bright, And asks of you that on the first day Which comes in the month of May, However it may be, That you be ready to fight With your army in her forest Beside the sea. She will entice on her lord, For the sake of your love, to fight With only a few retainers. In that place you should be as resolute As you are in your love, In your efforts to wed her.”</p>
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⁵ *Now that masager him goth*: The poet often switches from past tense to present to lend immediacy to the action, but in translation it sounds slightly confusing and so I have avoided it.

⁶ *Rifoun*: I cannot find this place name. There is a Ripon in Yorkshire (but this would not require a ship), a Rifön in Sweden, and a Riphahnstraße in Cologne. Other MSS give *Repayn* and *Refon*. The French analogue has *Retefor*, and a French book on Roman literature from 1921 claims this is Erfurt. Paul Meyer and Gaston Paris, *Romania: Recueil Trimestriel* (Paris: Mario Roques, 1921), 142, accessed 28 May 2010 at <http://www.archive.org/stream/romania4748pariuoft#page/n149/mode/2up/search/retefor>.

⁷ *Be me swere*: ME *swere* does not mean *swear* or *oath*, but *neck*.

150	<p>“Sai,” a seide, “Icham at hire heste: Yif me lif hit wile leste, Hit schel be do! Gladder icham for that sawe, Than be fouel, whan hit ginneth dawe, And sai hire so! And for thow woldes hire erande bede, An hors icharged with golde rede Ich schel thee yeve, And withinne this fourtene night Me self schel dobbe thee to knight, Yif that ich live.” The mesager him thankede yerne; Hom ayen he gan him terne To Hamtoun;</p>	<p>“Tell her,” he exclaimed, “I am at her command! So long as my life will last, It shall be done. I am more pleased with that news Than the birds are when it begins to dawn, And say that to her! And for you who has performed her errand, I will give to you A horse loaded with red gold, And within these fourteen nights I will dub you a knight myself,⁸ If I live to do it.” The messenger thanked him earnestly And turned back home again To Southampton.</p>
160	<p>The levedi a fond in hire bour, And he hire clepede doceamur And gan to roun: “Dame,” a seide, “I thee tel: That emperur thee grette wel With love mest: Glad he is for that tiding, A wile be prest at that fighting In that forest. Yif thow ert glad the lord to sle, Gladder a is for love of thee Fele sithe!” The mesager hath thus isaid, The levedi was right wel apaid And maked hire blithe. In Mai, in the formeste dai, The levedi in hire bedde lai, Ase hit wer nede; Hire lord she clepede out of halle And seide, that evel was on hire falle, She wende be ded.</p>	<p>He found the lady in her bower And he called her sweetly And began to whisper: “My lady,” he said, “I tell you, The emperor greets you fondly With ardent love. He is very pleased with the news. He will be ready to fight In that forest. If you are glad for the lord to be slain, He is gladder many times more For love for you!” When the messenger had spoken so, The lady was very satisfied And made herself cheerful. In May, on the first day The lady lay in her bed As though out of necessity. She called her lord from the hall And said that bad fortune had come to her. She expected to die.</p>
170	<p>That erl for hire hath sorwe ikaught And askede, yif she disired aught, That mighte hire frevre. “Ye,” she seide, “of a wilde bor I wene, me mineth, boute for Al of the fevre!” “Madame,” a seide, “for love myn, Whar mai ich finde that wilde swin? I wolde, thow it hadde!”</p>	<p>The earl was distraught over her And asked if she wanted anything That might give her comfort. “Yes,” she said, “from a wild boar, I think, if I remember, there will be A remedy for all of my fever!” “My lady,” he answered, “for my love, Where would I find a wild boar? I wish you could have one!” And she answered with calculated treason, “By the sea in our forest, There they breed.” The earl swore, by God’s grace,</p>
180	<p>And she answerde with tresoun mest, Be the se in hare forest, Thar a bradde. That erl swor, be Godes grace,</p>	<p>And she answered with calculated treason, “By the sea in our forest, There they breed.” The earl swore, by God’s grace,</p>

⁸ *Fourtene night*: The medieval English reckoned time in nights and not days, and being a warrior, the German emperor seems to operate in fortnights.

200	<p>In that forest he wolde chace, That bor to take; And she answerde with tresoun than; “Blessed be thow of alle man For mine sake!” That erl is hors began to stride, His scheld he heng upon is side, Gert with swerd; Moste non armur on him come, Himself was boutte the ferthe some Toward that ferd. Allas, that he nadde be war Of is fomen, that weren thar, Him forte schende: With tresoun worth he ther islawe And ibrought of is lif-dawe, Er he hom wende!</p>	<p>To chase and capture a boar In that forest. And then she answered with treachery, “May you be blessed of all men For my sake!” The earl prepared to mount his horse. He hung his shield upon his side, Armed with a sword. He wore almost no armor And was himself only the fourth To make up that group. Alas, that he was unwary Of his enemies, who were there To slaughter him!</p>
210	<p>Whan he com in to the forest, Th’emperur a fond al prest; For envi A prikede out before is ost, For pride and for make bost, And gan to crie: “Aghilt thee, treitour! thow olde dote! Thow shelt ben hanged be the throte, Thin heved thow schelt lese; The sone schel anhanged be And the wif, that is so fre, To me lemman I chese!” Th’erl answerde at that sawe: “Me thenketh, thow seist ayen the lawe, So God me amende! Me wif and child, that was so fre, Yif thow thenkest beneme hem me, Ich schel hem defende!”</p>	<p>With treason he would be slain there And separated from his life Before he returned home. When he came to the forest, He found the emperor all ready. In arrogance, He spurred on before his host, In pride and to make a boast, And began to cry out: “Surrender, villain! You old fool! You will be hanged by the throat, And you will lose your head! Your son will also be hanged, And your lady, who is so beautiful, I will choose as my mate!” The earl answered that speech: “I believe you speak in defiance of the law, So help me God! For my wife and child, who are so royal, If you think you will take them from me I will defend them!”</p>
220	<p>Th’erl answerde at that sawe: “Me thenketh, thow seist ayen the lawe, So God me amende! Me wif and child, that was so fre, Yif thow thenkest beneme hem me, Ich schel hem defende!” Tho prikede is stede Sire Gii, A stalword man and hardi, While he was sounde; Th’emperur he smot with is spere, Out of is sadel he gan him bere And threw him to grounde. “Treitour,” a seide, “thow ert to bolde! Wenestow, thegh ich bo olde, To ben afered? That thow havest no right to me wif, I schel thee kithe be me lif!”</p>	<p>Then Sir Guy spurred his horse. He was a sturdy and hardy man While he was healthy. He struck the emperor with his spear, Flung him out of his saddle, And threw him to the ground. “Traitor!” he said. “You are too rash! Did you think that because I am old I would be afraid? I will show you, by my life, That you have no right to my wife!” And he drew out his sword. The earl held his blade out And would have slain the emperor If there had not been help. Knights came out in vast number, Well ten thousand in total,</p>
230	<p>And drough is swerd. That erl held is swerd adrawe, Th’emperur with he hadde slawe, Nadde be sokour: Thar come knightes mani and fale, Wel ten thosent told be tale,</p>	<p>And he drew out his sword. The earl held his blade out And would have slain the emperor If there had not been help. Knights came out in vast number, Well ten thousand in total,</p>
240	<p>And drough is swerd. That erl held is swerd adrawe, Th’emperur with he hadde slawe, Nadde be sokour: Thar come knightes mani and fale, Wel ten thosent told be tale,</p>	<p>Well ten thousand in total,</p>

	To th'emperur. Tho Sire Gii him gan defende, Thre hondred hevedes of a slende With is brond;	To the emperor's aid. Sir Guy began to defend himself. ⁹ He struck off three hundred heads With his broadsword.
250	Hadde he ben armed wel, ywis, Al the meistré hadde ben his, Ich understonde. Thre men were slawe, that he ther hadde, That he with him out ladde And moste nede; To have merci, that was is hope; Th'emperur after him is lope Upon a stede.	Had he been well-armed, in fact, The victory would have all been his, I understand. Three men were slain that he had there, Whom he had led out with him, And who he now needed the most. To have mercy was his hope, As the emperor rode toward him Upon a steed.
260	Th'eryl knewlede to th'emperur, Merci a bad him and sokour And is lif: "Merci, sire, ase thow art fre, Al that ichave, I graunte thee, Boute me wif! For thine men, that ichave slawe, Have her me swerd idrawe And al me fe: Boute me yonge sone Bef And me wif, that is me lef, That let thow me!"	The earl knelt before the emperor And asked him for mercy and grace And his life: "Sir, if you are noble, have mercy. All that I have I grant you, Except for my wife! For your men that I have slain, Take my drawn sword here And all my property. But for my young son Bevis, And my wife, who is dear to me, Leave them to me!"
270	"For Gode," queth he, "that ich do nelle!" Th'emperur to him gan telle, And was agreved, Anon right is swerd out drough And the gode knight a slough And nam is heved. A knight a tok the heved an honde: "Have," a seide, "ber this sonde Me leve swet!"	"By God," he said, "I will do none of it!" The emperor looked on him And was enraged. At once he pulled out his sword And killed the good knight, And took off his head. Another knight took the head in his hand. "Take it!" the emperor said. "Carry this token To my sweet love!"
280	The knight to Hamtoun tho gan gon, The levedi thar a fond anon And gan hire grete: "Dame," a seide, "to me atende: Th'emperur me hider sende With is pray!" And she seide: "Blessed mot he be! To wif a schel wedde me To morwe in the dai. Sai him, me swete wight, That he come yet to night In to me bour!"	The knight took off for Hampton. He soon found the lady And greeted her. My lady," he said, "listen to me. The emperor has sent me here With his prey." And she replied, "May he be blessed! He will wed me as his wife Tomorrow in the daytime. Tell him, my dear thing, To come tonight already, Into my bedchamber!"
290	The mesager is wei hath holde,	The messenger took his way

⁹ *Sire Gii him gan defende*: Sometimes the *gan* suggests *began*, but grammatically in ME it normally simply formed an auxiliary to the simple past: *he gan riden* (he rode). A sense of beginning was indicated by *for*: *he gan for to riden*. I am attempting to take the sense from the context. "Chaucer's Grammar," Harvard University, accessed 22 May 2010 at <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/pronunciation/>.

<p>300</p> <p>310</p> <p>320</p> <p>330</p>	<p>Al a seide, ase she him tolde, To th'emperur. Now scholle we of him mone, Of Beves, that was Guis sone, How wo him was: Yerne a wep, is hondes wrong, For his fader a seide among: "Allas! Allas!" He cleped is moder and seide is sawe: "Vile houre! Thee worst to-drawe And al to-twight! Me thenketh, ich were ther-of ful fawe, For thow havest me fader slawe With mechel unright! Allas, moder, thee faire ble! Evel becometh thee, houre to be, To holde bordel, And alle wif houren for thee sake, The devel of helle ich hii betake, Flesch and fel! Ac o thing, moder, I schel thee swere: Yif ich ever armes bere And be of elde, Al that hath me fader islawe And ibrought of is lif dawe, Ich shel hem yilden!" The moder hire hath understonde, That child she smot with hire honde Under is ere. The child fel down and that was scathe, His meister tok him wel rathe, That highte Saber. The knight was trewe and of kinde, Strenger man ne scholde men finde To ride ne go. A was ibrought in tene and wrake Ofte for that childes sake Ase wel ase tho. That childe he nam up be the arm, Wel wo him was for that harm, That he thar hadde. Toward is kourt he him kende; The levedi after Saber sende And to him radde. "Saber," she seide, "thow ert me lef, Let sle me yonge sone Bef, That is so bold!</p>	<p>And repeated everything as she told him To the emperor. Now we shall speak Of Bevis, who was Guy's son, And how sorrowful he was. He wept earnestly; he wrung his hands. For his father he continually cried, "Alas, alas!" He called to his mother and spoke his mind: "Vile whore! You deserve to be Drawn and quartered! In my opinion, I would be very glad to see it! You have slain my father With great injustice! Alas, mother, your innocent looks! Evil suits you, to someday be a madam And to run a brothel, And to whore out all wives for your sake! I would send them all to Hell, Flesh and bones! And one more thing, mother, I swear to you— If I ever bear arms And be of a proper age, For everyone who attacked my father And finished the days of his life, I will pay them back!" The mother understood him in full, And she struck the child with her hand Under his ear. The child fell down, and that was a pity! He was taken away quickly by his master,¹⁰ Who was called Saber. The knight was loyal and his kin. No one might find a stronger man To ride or to walk. He would often face pain and hardship For that child's sake, As he did at the moment. He took the child up by the arm. He would have sadness for the punishment Which he had for that. He escorted him toward the court. The lady followed Saber And called to him: "Saber," she coaxed, "you are dear to me. Have my young son Bevis executed, Who is so insolent!</p>
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¹⁰ *Meister*: Bevis' uncle, teacher, and guardian, and to judge from his mother's parenting skills, his authority figure. This is not the same Saber as the one introduced in 2926, the bishop of Cologne, Saber Florentine. In Germanic culture and literature there is often a special relationship between nephews and maternal uncles. In *Beowulf* the hero is also raised by his uncle Hygelac.

340	<p>Let him anhang swithe highe, I ne reche, what deth he dighe, Sithe he be cold!” Saber stod stille and was ful wo; Natheles a seide, a wolde do After hire sawe; The child with him hom he nam, A swin he tok, whan he hom cam, And dede hit of dawe. The childes clothes, that were gode,</p>	<p>Let him hang very high. I don't care what death he faces, So long as his body is cold!” Saber stood still and was afraid. Nevertheless, he said he would do What she commanded. He took the child home with him. He took a swine when he arrived home And slaughtered it. The child's clothes, which were costly, Were all spattered with the blood In many places, As if the child were hacked apart. He decided to show them to the mother, And so he did. At length the boy began to be afraid. Saber dressed him in tattered clothing, That gentle fellow, And said, “Son, you will watch Over my sheep on the field For the next fortnight. And when the celebrating has come to its end, I will send you to another land Far to the south, To a rich earl who will guide you And teach you court manners In your youth. And when you are old enough That you might take care of yourself, And are of age, Then you will return to England And win back your heritage Into your hand by war. I will help you with all my might, With the edge of a sword, to hold your rights Until you are old enough!” The child thanked him and wept bitterly, And went forth with the sheep Upon the green. Bevis was a shepherd on the hillside. He looked homeward to the town That should have been his. He beheld the tower, Hearing trumpets and drums And great joy! “Lord!” he said, “remember me! Was I once an earl's son And now I am a shepherd? If I could face that emperor, I would avenge my father well, For all his army! He took a club and went forth, Deeply agitated and full of rage, Toward the tower.</p>
350	<p>Al a bisprengde with that blode In many stede, Ase yif the child were to-hewe, A thoughte to his moder hem schewe, And so a dede. At the laste him gan adrede, He let clothen in pouer wede That hende wight, And seide: “Sone, thow most kepe Upon the felde mine schepe This fourte night! And whan the feste is come to th'ende, In to another londe I schel thee sende Fer be southe, To a riche erl, that schel thee gie And teche thee of corteisie In the youthe. And whan thow ert of swich elde, That thow might the self wilde, And ert of age,</p>	
360	<p>Thanne scheltow come in te Ingelonde, With werre winne in to thin honde Thin eritage. I schel thee helpe with alle me might, With dent of swerd to gete thee right, Be thow of elde!” The child him thankede and sore wep, And forth a wente with the schep Upon the velde. Beves was herde upon the doun He lokede homward to the toun, That scholde ben his; He beheld toward the tour, Trompes he herde and tabour And meche blis. “Lord,” a seide, “on me thow mone! Ne was ich ones an erles sone And now am herde? Mighte ich with that emperur speke, Wel ich wolde me fader awreke For al is ferde!”</p>	
370	<p>He nemeth is bat and forth a goth, Swithe sori and wel wroth, Toward the tour;</p>	
380		
390		

	<p>“Porter!” a sede, “Let me in reke! A lite thing ich ave to speke With th’emperur.” “Go hom, truant!” the porter sede, “Scherewe houre sone, I thee rede, Fro the gate:</p>	<p>“Porter!” he said, “let me in quickly! I have a small matter to talk about With the emperor!” “Go home, you little thug!” the porter said. “Good-for-nothing son of a whore! I would advise you to get away from the gate!</p>
400	<p>Boute thow go hennes also swithe, Hit schel thee rewe fele sithe, Thow come ther-ate! Sixte the scherewe, “Ho be itte, A loketh, as a wolde smite With is bat: Speke he ought meche more, I schel him smite swithe sore Upon is hat.”</p>	<p>If you do not move out of here fast, You will regret it as many times As you set foot in here!” The lout continued, “See there How he looks, how he would attack With his bat! If he says much more, I will thump him sorely On his hat!”</p>
410	<p>“For Gode,” queth Beves, “natheles, An houre sone for soth ich wes, Wel ich it wot! I nam no truant, be Godes grace!” With that a lefte up is mace Anon fot hot. Beves withoute the gate stod. And smot the porter on the hod, That he gan falle; His heved he gan al to cleve And forth a wente with that leve</p>	<p>“By God,” Bevis said, “even if I truly am a whore’s son, And I know it well— I am no beggar, by God’s grace!” With that he lifted up his club Advancing straight away. Bevis stood outside the gate And struck the porter on the hood So that he fell down And broke his own head apart. With that answer Bevis went forth Into the hall.</p>
420	<p>In to the halle. Al aboute he gan beholde, To th’emperur he spak wordes bolde With meche grame: “Sire,” a sede, “what dostow here? Whi colles thow aboute the swire That ilche dame? Me moder is that thow havest an honde: What dostow her upon me londe Withouten leve?</p>	<p>He looked all about him. To the emperor, he spoke audacious words With grim anger: “Sir,” he said, “what are you doing here? Why is that woman there Embracing you about the neck? The one you have in hand is my mother. What is she doing in my realm Without permission?</p>
430	<p>Tak me me moder and mi fe, Boute thow the rather hennes te, I schel thee greve! Nastow, sire, me fader slawe? Thow schelt ben hanged and to-drawe, Be Godes wille! Aris! Fle hennes, I thee rede!” Th’emperur to him sede: “Foul, be stille!”</p>	<p>Take away my mother and my goods, But if you’d rather not leave, I will bring you grief! Did you not, sir, murder my father? You will be hanged and drawn, By God’s will! Get up! Fly away from here, I advise you!” The emperor shushed him, “Fool! Be quiet!”</p>
440	<p>Beves was nigh wod for grame, For a clepede him “foul” be name, And to him a wond; For al that weren in the place, Thries a smot him with is mace And with is honde. Thries a smot him on the kroun; That emperur fel swowe adoun, Thar a sat.</p>	<p>Bevis was nearly mad with anger, For being called a fool by name, And he turned to him. In spite of all that were there, He struck him three times with his mace And with his hand. Three times he cracked him on the head And the emperor fell down unconscious Where he sat.</p>

450	<p>The levedi, is moder, gan to grede: “Nemeth that treitour!” she sede, “Anon with that!” Tho dorste Beves no leng abide; The knightes up in ech a side, More and lasse, Wo hem was for the childes sake, Boute non of hem nolde him take Hii lete him pase. Beves goth faste ase he mai, His meister a mette in the wai, That highte Saber,</p>	<p>The lady, his mother, began to shout: “Seize that traitor!” she cried. “Be quick about it!” Bevis could not linger any longer. The knights on each side, High and low, Felt sympathy for the child’s sake. As none of them would grab him, They let him pass. Bevis ran as fast as he could. He met his master on the way, Who was called Saber,</p>
460	<p>And he him askede with blithe mod: “Beves!” a seide, “for the Rode, What dostow her?” “I schel thee telle al togadre: Beten ichave me stifadre With me mace; Thries I smot him in the heved, Al for ded ich him leved In the place!” “Beves,” queth Saber, “thow ert to blame!”</p>	<p>And he asked him with a cheerful air, “Bevis,” he said, “for the sake of the Cross, What are you doing here?” “I will tell you at once. I have beaten my stepfather With my mace. Three times I struck him in the head And have left him for dead In the palace!” “Bevis,” replied Saber, “you are to blame!”</p>
470	<p>The levedi wile now do me schame For thine sake! Boute thow be me consaile do, Thow might now sone bringe us bo In meche wrake!” Saber Beves to his hous ladde, Meche of that levedi him dradde. The levedi out of the tour cam, To Saber the wei she nam.</p>	<p>The lady will now do me harm For your sake! Unless you do as I advise you, You might quickly bring us both Into great peril!” Saber took Bevis to his house,¹¹ Greatly dreading that lady. The woman came from the tower And she made her way to Saber. “Saber” she said, “where is Bevis, That wicked traitor, that foul thief?”</p>
480	<p>“Dame,” a seide, “ich dede him of dawe Be thee red and be thee sawe: This beth his clothe, thow her sext.” The levedi seide: “Saber thow lixt! Boute thow me to him take, Thow schelt abegge for is sake.” Beves herde his meister threte; To hire a spak with hertte grete And seide: “Lo, me her be name!”</p>	<p>“Madam,” he said, “I put him to death By your counsel and your orders. Here are his clothes, as you can see.” The lady answered, “Saber, you lie! Unless you bring me to him, You will pay for his sake!” Bevis heard his master threatened. He spoke to her with a fierce heart And said, “Here I am, by name! Do not harm my master on my account! If you are looking for me, then here I am!”</p>
490	<p>Do me meister for me no schame! Yif thow me sext, lo, whar ich am here!” His moder tok him be the ere; Fain she wolde a were of live. Foure knightes she clepede blive: “Wendeth,” she seide, “to the stronde: Yif ye seth schipes of painim londe, Selleth to hem this ilche hyne,</p>	<p>Wishing eagerly for him to be dead. She called four knights at once: “Go,” she said, “to the shore. If you see ships from pagan lands, Sell them this boy here.</p>

¹¹ For unexplained reasons the meter shifts here into couplets for the remainder of the poem.

500	<p>That ye for no gode ne fine, Whather ye have for him mor and lesse, Selleth him right in to hethenese!" Forth the knightes gonne te, Til that hii come to the se, Schipes hii fonde ther stonde Of hethenese and of fele londe; The child hii chepeden to sale, Marchaundes thai fonde ferli fale And solde that child for mechel aughte And to the Sarasins him betaughte.</p>	<p>If there's no goods or finery, Whether you're offered, more or less, Sell him straightaway to the heathens!"¹² The knights marched forth Until they came to the sea. They found ships standing there From heathen lands and many others. They bargained the child for sale, Meeting with many merchants. They sold the child for a good price And handed him over to the Saracens.¹³</p>
510	<p>Forth thai wente with that child, Crist of hevene be him mild! The childe hertte was wel colde, For that he was so fer isolde; Natheles, though him thoughte eile, Toward painim a moste saile. Whan hii rivede out of that strond, The king highte Ermin of that londe; His wif was ded, that highte Morage, A doughter a hadde of yong age, Josiane that maide het,</p>	<p>They sailed off with that boy. May Christ of Heaven be mild to him! The child's heart was cold with fear For he had been sold so far away. Nevertheless, whatever grief he felt, He had to sail to Armenian lands When they had passed from those shores.¹⁴ The king of that land was called Ermine. His wife was deceased, who was called Marah. He had one daughter of young age Who was called Josanne.</p>
520	<p>Hire schon wer gold upon hire fet; So faire she was and bright of mod, Ase snow upon the rede blod - Wharto scholde that may discrive? Men wiste no fairer thing alive, So hende ne wel itaught; Boute of Cristene lawe she kouthe naught. The marchauns wente an highing And presente Beves to Ermyrn King. The king thar of was glad and blithe</p>	<p>Her shoes were gold upon her feet. She was as beautiful and bright in spirit As snow upon red blood. To what could she be compared? Men knew no fairer thing alive, So graceful or so well brought up. But she knew nothing of Christian belief. The traders moved in haste And presented Bevis to King Ermine.</p>
530	<p>And thankede hem mani a sithe: "Mahoun!" a seide, "thee might be proute, And this child wolde to thee aloute; Yif a wolde a Sarasin be, Yit ich wolde hope, a scholde the! Be Mahoun, that sit an high, A fairer child never I ne sigh, Neither a lingthe ne on brade,</p>	<p>The king was glad and pleased And thanked them many times. "Mohammed!" he said. "You would be proud If this child were to incline to you If he would be a Saracen, As I hope he will prosper to! By Mohammed, who sits on high, I never saw a fairer child, Neither in length or in breadth.</p>

¹² *Hethenese*: Muslims tend to be lumped in with all non-Christians in romance literature such as heathens or pagans. As with the giant in *Sir Thopas*, Muslims are incorrectly depicted praying to non-Muslim deities such as Termagaunt and Apollo (659, 1380, 1510) or even Mohammad as a god in order to stress their alienness to Christian belief. Saracen pirates also provide a convenient plot device for dispatching heroes, as they do in *Floris and Blancheflour* and *King Horn* as well.

¹³ *Sarasin*: The ancient Saracens lived near Syria and were non-Arabic, but by the time of the Crusades the term had come to mean any "Turk, Arab, or Muslim" (MED). Occasionally *Saracen* ambiguously applies to Vikings and Saxons as well. See also Diane Speed, "The Saracens of *King Horn*," *Speculum* 65:3 (1990): 564-595.

¹⁴ TEAMS notes that other MSS indicate that they land in *Ermony*, Armenia. See also line 701.

540	<p>Ne non, so faire limes hade! Child," a seide, "whar wer thee bore? What is thee name? telle me fore! Yif ich it wiste, hit were me lef." "For Gode," a seide, "ich hatte Bef; Iborne ich was in Ingelonde, At Hamtoun, be the se stronde. Me fader was erl thar a while, Me moder him let sle with gile, And me she solde in to hethenlonde; Wikked beth fele wimmen to fonde!</p>	<p>None had such fair limbs! Child," he said, "where were you born? What is your name? Speak forth. I would be pleased if I knew." "By God," he said, "my name is Bevis. I was born in England, At Southampton, by the sea shore. My father was earl there a while. My mother had him treacherously murdered, And she sold me to heathen lands. Many a woman turns out to be wicked!</p>
550	<p>Ac, sire, yif it ever so betide, That ich mowe an horse ride And armes bere and scheft tobreke, Me fader deth ich schel wel wreke!" The kinges hertte wex wel cold, Whan Beves hadde thus itolde, And seide: "I nave non eir after me dai, Boute Josian, this faire mai; And thow wile thee god forsake And to Apolyn, me lord, take, Hire I schel thee yeve to wive</p>	<p>But, sire, if it ever so happens That I might ride a horse And bear arms and shatter a lance, I will avenge my father's death in full!" The king's heart grew cold When Bevis had spoken so, And he said, "I have no heir after my death Except Josanne, this fair maid. If you will forsake your god And worship my lord Apollyon,¹⁵ I will give her to you to marry Along with all my land after my life!"</p>
560	<p>"For Gode!" queth Beves, "that I nolde For al the selver ne al the golde, That is under hevене light, Ne for thee doughter, that is so bright. I nolde forsake in none manere Jesu, that boughte me so dere. Al mote thai be doum and deve, That on the false godes beleve!" The king him lovede wel the more,</p>	<p>"By God," said Bevis, "That I can never do For all the silver or all the gold That is under Heaven's light, Or for your daughter, who is so bright. I would not forsake in any way Jesus, who bought me so dearly. All those must be deaf and dumb Who believe in the false gods!"¹⁶ The king loved him all the more, For he stood in fear of no man,¹⁷</p>
570	<p>For him ne stod of no man sore, And seide: "Beves, while thow ert swain, Thow schelt be me chaumberlain, And thow schelt, whan thow ert dubbed knight, Me baner bere in to everi fight!" Beves answerde al with skil:</p>	<p>And he said, "Bevis, while you are a servant, You will be my chamberlain. And you will, when you are dubbed a knight, Bear my banner in every fight!" Bevis answered agilely,</p>

¹⁵ *Apolyn*: Ermine does not mean the Greek god *Apollo*, youthful god of music and poetry, but *Apollyon*, the angel of the bottomless pit of hell: "They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon" (Rev. 9:11). In Lovelich's *History of the Holy Grail* (c. 1450) a Saracen explains, "we han foure Goddis... / Mahownd and Termagaunt, goddis so fin / anothir hihte Jubiter and Appolyn" (49:50-52). Henry Lovelich, *History of the Holy Grail*, ed. Frederick James Furnival (London: Early English Text Society, 1905). Apollyon also battles Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

¹⁶ Even for a medieval romance, it stretches credulity for Bevis, a purchased slave, to get away with this blasphemous insult intact. The idea may be that the king is impressed with his noble bearing and spirit and is willing to be patient with his conversion.

¹⁷ A difficult line. MS University Library, Cambridge has "for he wolde not change hys lore." Eugen Kölbing, *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (London: Early English Text Society, 1885), 27.

580	<p>“What ye me hoten, don ich wil!” Beves was ther yer and other, The king him lovede also is brother, And the maide that was so sligh. So dede everi man that him sigh. Be that he was fiftene yer olde, Knight ne swain thar nas so bolde, That him dorste ayenes ride Ne with wrethe him abide. His ferste bataile, for soth te say A dede a Cristes messe day; Ase Beves scholde to water ride And fiftene Sarasins be is side, And Beves rod on Arondel,</p>	<p>“Whatever you command, I will do!” Bevis was there a year and another, And the king loved him as a brother. So did the maid, who was so discreet,¹⁸ And every man who might see him. By the time he was fifteen years old, There was no knight or servant so bold Who might ride against him Or abide with him in hostility. His first battle, to tell the truth, He faced one Christmas Day. As Bevis happened to ride to the water, With fifteen Saracens by his side, He rode on Arondel,</p>
590	<p>That was a stede gode and lel. A Sarasin began to say And askede him, what het that day. Beves seide: “For soth ywis, I not never, what dai it is, For I nas boutte seve winter old, Fro Cristendome ich was isold; Tharfore I ne can telle nought thee, What dai that hit mighte be.” The Sarasin beheld and lough.</p>	<p>Who was a fine and loyal steed. A Saracen began to provoke him And asked him what the day was called. Bevis said, “In truth, I do not know what day it is, For I was only seven years old¹⁹ When I was sold from Christian lands. Because of that I cannot tell you What day it might be.” The Saracen looked and laughed.</p>
600	<p>“This dai,” a saide, “I knowe wel inough. This is the ferste dai of Youl, Thee God was boren withouten doul; For thi men maken ther mor blisse Than men do her in hethenesse. Anoure thee God, so I schel myn, Bothe Mahoun and Apolyn!” Beves to that Sarasin said: “Of Cristendom yit ichave abraid,</p>	<p>“This day,” he said, “even I know well enough. This is the first day of Christmas, When your god was born without pain. For this men make more joy there Than they do here in heathen lands. Honor your God, as I do mine, Both Mohammad and Apollyon!” Bevis replied to the Saracen, “I have known Christianity before. I have seen on this very day Many a noble knight armed Tourneying right on the field With bright helmets and many shields. And if I were as strong in my time As Guy, my father, ever was, I would for the love of my Lord, Who sits high above in Heaven, Fight with each one of you Before I went from here!”²⁰</p>
610	<p>Ichave seie on this dai right Armed mani a gentil knight, Torneande right in the feld With helmes bright and mani scheld; And were ich also stith in plas, Ase ever Gii, me fader was, Ich wolde for me Lordes love, That sit high in hevne above, Fighte with yow everichon, Er than ich wolde hennes gon!”</p>	

¹⁸ *Sligh*: The word here probably does not have the modern nuance of being devious, but rather that Josanne was either prudent or quick-witted. In the Auchinleck *Horn Childe and Maiden Rinnild* the poet says of Acula, the Irish king’s daughter, that “of woundes was sche sleize” (761). See also *Gamelyn* (556).

¹⁹ *Seve winter old*: As with counting days in *nights*, ME also rather pessimistically counts years in winters.

²⁰ Jousting and tourneying were popular games during Christmas celebrations. Here Bevis feels stung into pious fervor when the Saracens know more about Christianity than he does and make him an object of ridicule. Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript*

620	<p>The Sarasin seide to his felawes: “Lo, brethern, hire ye nought this sawes, How the yonge Cristene hounde, A saith, a wolde us fellen te grounde. Wile we aboute him gon And fonde that treitour slon?” Al aboute thai gonne thringe, And hard on him thai gonne dinge And yaf him wondes mani on Thourgh the flesch in to the bon, Depe wondes and sore,</p>	<p>The Saracen said to his fellows, “Well, brothers, do you hear these tales, How the young Christian dog Says that he will fell us to the ground? Will we take him on And see if we can slay the traitor?” They began to press him all around And struck hard on him, Giving him many a wound Through the flesh to the bone, Wounds deep and sore,</p>
630	<p>That he mighte sofre namore; Tho his bodi began to smerte, He gan plokken up is hertte, Ase tid to a Sarasin a wond And breide a swerd out of is honde, And fifti Sarasins, in that stonde Thar with a yaf hem dedli wonde, And sum he strok of the swire, That the heved flegh in to the rivere, And sum he clef evene asonder;</p>	<p>So that he might not suffer any longer. Though his body began to hurt, He plucked up his courage. He turned as quickly to a Saracen And seized the sword from his hand, And he gave fifty Saracens Deadly wounds at that time. With some he struck off their necks So that the head flew into the river, And some he cut down in two, So that they lay under their horse’s feet.</p>
640	<p>Here hors is fet thai laine under; Ne was ther non, that mighte ascape, So Beues slough hem in a rape. The stedes hom to stable ran Withoute kenning of eni man. Beves hom began to ride, His wondes bledde be ech side; The stede he graithed up anon, In to his chaumber he gan gon And leide him deueling on the grounde,</p>	<p>There were none who might escape As Bevis killed them in his haste. The steeds ran home to the stable Without guidance from any man. Bevis turned to ride home, His wounds bleeding from each side. He stabled the horse right away And went into his bedchamber And laid himself flat on the ground To calm his heart in that place. Word came to King Ermine That Bevis had slaughtered his men. The king cursed and gave his ruling That for them he should be quartered. The maiden Josanne stood up And said to her father, “Sire, I know very well in my mind That by Mohammad or Tervagaunt, He did not slay your men Unless it was in self-defense! But father,” she said, “by my opinion, Before you put Bevis to death, I pray, sire, if you love me, Have the boy brought before you. When the youth, who is so daring, Has explained his own story, And you know the truth, indeed,</p>
650	<p>To kolen his hertte in that stounde. Tiding com to King Ermyn That Beves hadde mad is men tyn; The king swor and seide is sawe. For thi a scholde ben to-drawe. Up stod that maide Josian, And to hire fader she seide than: “Sire, ich wot wel in me thought, That thine men ne slough he nought, Be Mahoun ne be Tervagaunt,</p>	<p>That for them he should be quartered. The maiden Josanne stood up And said to her father, “Sire, I know very well in my mind That by Mohammad or Tervagaunt, He did not slay your men Unless it was in self-defense! But father,” she said, “by my opinion, Before you put Bevis to death, I pray, sire, if you love me, Have the boy brought before you. When the youth, who is so daring, Has explained his own story, And you know the truth, indeed,</p>
660	<p>Boute hit were himself defendaunt! Ac, fader,” she saide, “be me red, Er thow do Beves to ded, Ich praie, sire, for love o me, Do bringe that child before thee! Whan the child, that is so bold, His owene tale hath itolde, And thow wite the soth, aflight,</p>	<p>And you know the truth, indeed,</p>

(New York: Routledge, 2005), 56. Josanne is perhaps wrong in calling Bevis’ actions self-defence (660), although for the men to answer his rhetoric with an attack of fifty against one does not seem justified.

670	<p>Who hath the wrong, who hath right, Yef him his dom, that he schel have, Whather thow wilt him slen or save!”</p>	<p>Of who was wrong and who was right, Then give him judgment, what he will have, Whether you will kill or spare him!”</p>
680	<p>King Ermyn seide: “Me doughter fre, Ase thow havest seid, so it schel be!” Josiane tho anon rightes Clepede to hire twei knightes: “To Beves now wende ye And prai him, that he come to me: Er me fader arise fro his des; Ful wel ich schel maken is pes!” Forth the knightes gonne gon,</p>	<p>King Ermine answered, “My noble daughter, It will be as you have said.” Josanne then immediately Called to her two knights: “Go now to Bevis And implore that he come to me Before my father rises from his throne. I will make a full peace!” The knights went forth</p>
690	<p>To Beves chaumber thai come anon And praide, ase he was gentil man, Come speke with Josian. Beves stoutliche in that stounde Haf up is heved fro the grounde; With stepe eighen and rowe bren So lotheliche he gan on hem sen, The twei knightes, thar thai stode, Thai were aferde, hii wer nigh wode. A seide: “Yif ye ner masegers, Ich wolde yow sle, losengers! I nele rise o fot fro the grounde, For speke with an hethene hounde: She is an honde, also be ye, Out of me chaumber swithe ye fle!” The knightes wenten out in rape, Thai were fain so to ascape. To Josian thai wente as tit And seide: “Of him is gret despit: Sertes, a clepede thee hethene hound Thries in a lite stounde We nolde for al Ermonie Eft sones se him with our eie!” “Hardeliche,” she seide, “cometh with me, And ich wile your waraunt be!” Forth thai wente al isame, To Beves chaumber that he came. “Lemman,” she seide, “gent and fre, For Godes love, spek with me!” She keste him bothe moth and chin And yaf him confort gode afin, So him solaste that mai, That al is care wente awai, And seide: “Lemman, thin ore! Icham iwonded swithe sore!” “Lemman,” she seide, “with gode entent I have brought an oyniment,</p>	<p>And soon came to Bevis’ chamber And asked, if he was a gentleman, To come speak with Josanne. At that moment Bevis lifted up his head From the ground with determination. With shining eyes and fiery brows He looked so loathsome to them That the two knights who stood there Were afraid; they nearly panicked. He said, “If you were not messengers, I would slay you, you lying weasels! I will not rise one foot from the ground To speak with a heathen hound. She is as much a dog as you are! Get out of my chamber right now!” The knights scurried out in haste, They were so eager to get away. They went to Josanne as quickly And said, “He is very contemptuous. For sure, he called you a heathen hound Three times in a short while. For all of Armenia, we would not Face him again with our own eyes!” “Be brave,” she said, “and come with me, And I will be your guarantor.”²¹ They went out all together To Bevis’ bedchamber. “Dear heart,” she said, “noble and generous, For God’s love, talk to me.” She kissed him on the mouth and chin And at length comforted him well. The maid gave him such solace That all his anxieties went away, And he said, “Darling, your grace. I am wounded very badly.” “Dearest,” she said, “in good faith, I have brought a medication</p>
700	<p>710</p>	

²¹ A slightly comic moment if the messengers are so meek that they need a young woman’s ‘protection,’ but it also emphasizes Josanne’s authority in the court and her assertiveness.

<p>720</p> <p>730</p> <p>740</p> <p>750</p>	<p>For make thee bothe hol and fere; Wende we to me fader dere!” Forth thai wenten an highing Til Ermyrn, the riche king, And Beves tolde unto him than, How that stour ended and gan, And schewed on him in that stounde Fourti grete, grisli wounde. Thanne seide King Ermin the hore: “I nolde, Beves, that thou ded wore For al the londes, that ichave; Ich praie, doughter, that thou him save And prove to hele, ase thou can, The wondes of that doughti man!” In to chaumber she gan him take And riche bathes she let him make, That withinne a lite stonde He was bothe hol and sonde. Thanne was he ase fresch to fight, So was the faukoun to the flight. His other prowesse who wile lere, Hende, herkneth, and ye mai here! A wilde bor thar was aboute, Ech man of him hadde gret doute. Man and houndes, that he tok, With his toskes he al toschok. Thei him hontede knightes tene, Tharof ne yef he nought a bene, At is mouth fif toskes stoden out, Everich was fif enches about, His sides wer hard and strong, His brostles were gret and long, Himself was fel and kouthe fighte, No man sle him ne mighte. Beves lay in is bedde a night And thoughte, a wolde kethen is might Upon that swin himself one, That no man scholde with him gone. A morwe, whan hit was dai cler, Ariseth knight and squier; Beves let sadlen is ronsi,</p>	<p>To make you both whole and sound. Let’s make our way to my dear father.” They went forth quickly To Ermine, the rich king, And Bevis then explained to him How the conflict began and ended, And showed him at that moment Forty huge, grisly wounds. Then grey-haired King Ermine said, “Bevis, I wouldn’t have you dead For all the lands that I have! I pray, daughter, that you can save him And heal the wounds of this sturdy man If you are able.” She took him into a chamber And made him luxurious baths, So that within a short time He was both whole and sound.²² Then he was as fresh to battle As the falcon is to flight. His other feat of prowess, whoever wishes To know, listen, gentlemen, and you will hear. A wild boar which was charging about Put great fear into every man. Men and hounds, whatever it seized, With its tusks it shook it apart. Ten knights hunted it And it didn’t care a bean about it. From its mouth five tusks stood out; Each was five inches wide. Its sides were hard and strong, And its bristles were great and long. It was fierce and knew how to fight. No man could slay it! Bevis lay in his bed at night And resolved that he would prove his might Alone against that swine, That no man should go with him. In the morning, when the day was clear, The knight and his squire arose. Bevis had his horse saddled,²³</p>
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²² The modern belief that the medieval Europeans disliked or prohibited bathing dies hard. While the church was concerned with the temptations of public nudity, frequent bathing itself for cleanliness or socializing was common until the Renaissance. See Jennifer A. Heise, “A Short History of Bathing Before 1601,” accessed 21 May 2010 at <http://www.gallowglass.org/jadwiga/herbs/baths.html>. The connection between hygiene and infectious wounds may not have been clearly understood, but there is an interesting account in the autobiography (*Kitab al i'tibar*) of Usmah Ibn Munqidh (1095-1188) where he observes a Frankish doctor treating an infected leg with vinegar. Actual Islamic medical techniques were considerably more advanced than European practices.

²³ *Ronsi*: A *rouncey* was a good all-purpose horse, perfectly fitting for a young warrior and less expensive than warhorses such as the *courser*.

760	<p>That bor a thoughte to honti, A gerte him with a gode brond And tok a spere in is hond, A scheld a heng upon is side, Toward the wode he gan ride. Josian, that maide, him beheld, Al hire love to him she feld; To hire self she seide, ther she stod: “Ne kepte I never more gode Ne namore of al this worldes blisse, Thanne Beves with love o time te kisse; In gode time were boren,</p>	<p>Intending to hunt that boar. He armed himself with a good sword And took a spear into his hand. Hanging a shield upon his side, He rode toward the woods. Josanne, the maid, looked on him And felt all her love for him surge. She said to herself where she stood, “I wouldn’t care for any thing, Or any more of the world’s joys, More than to kiss Bevis once with love. She who Bevis chose as his lover Was born in a happy moment!”²⁴ When Bevis came into the woods, He placed his shield about his neck And tied his horse to a high tree, And blew a blast with his horn. He blew three notes in a row So that the boar would hear him. When he found the boar’s den, He saw the bones of dead men The swine had slain in the woods, Eating their flesh and drinking their blood. “Get up,” shouted Bevis, “cursed spirit, And give me battle right now!” As soon as the boar saw him, It hastily reared up its bristles And stared at Bevis with hungry eyes, As if they could swallow him. And when the boar’s mouth gaped wide, Bevis let fly a spear toward it. He struck the boar on the shoulder, And his spear burst to pieces there. The boar stood motionless against the blow; His hide was as hard as any flint. When Bevis’ spear was shattered, He drew his sword to protect himself And fought against the forbidding beast. He hit the boar and was struck in turn. Thus the battle lasted a long while Until the time of sunset, So that Bevis was so tired from fighting That he cared nothing for his life. And when the boar was also weary, It began to move away from Bevis While Bevis made his prayer To God and Mary, His dear mother, Whether he should slay the other.</p>
770	<p>That Beves hadde to lemman koren!” Tho Beves in to the wode cam, His scheld aboute is nekke a nam And tide his hors to an hei thorn And blew a blast with is horn; Thre motes a blew al arowe, That the bor him scholde knowe. Tho he com to the bor is den, A segh ther bones of dede men, The bor hadde slawe in the wode,</p>	
780	<p>Ieten here flesch and dronke her blode. “Aris!” queth Beves, “corsede gast, And yem me bataile wel in hast!” Sone so the bor him sigh, A rerde is brosteles wel an high And starede on Beves with eien holwe, Also a wolde him have aswolwe; And for the bor yenede so wide, A spere Beves let to him glide; On the scholder he smot the bor,</p>	
790	<p>His spere barst to pises thore The bor stod stille ayen the dent, His hyde was harde ase eni flent. Now al to-borste is Beves spere, A drough his swerd, himself to were, And faught ayen the bor so grim, A smot the bor and he to him. Thus the bataile gan leste long Til the time of evesong, That Beves was so weri of foughte,</p>	
800	<p>That of is lif he ne roughte, And tho the bor was also, Awai fro Beves he gan go, Wile Beves made is praier To God and Mari, is moder dere, Whather scholde other slen.</p>	

²⁴ This rendering is a contextual guess, as the poet has created a rather confusing *mélange*. *Bevis* is the most difficult of my texts here, and Kölberg complains that it is the hardest text to establish among medieval romances. He helps clarify lines 766-70 with eight variant MSS readings (*Beves*, 37).

810	<p>With that com the bor ayen And bente is brostles up, saunfaile, Ayen Beves to yeve bataile; Out at is mouth in aither side The foim ful ferli gan out glide; And Beves in that ilche veneu, Thourgh Godes grace and is vertu With swerd out a slinte Twei toskes at the ferste dent; A spanne of the groin befor With is swerd he hath of schoren. Tho the bor so loude cride, Out of the forest wide and side, To the castel thar that lai Ermin,</p>	<p>With that the boar came back And bent its bristles up, without fail, To fight on against Bevis. Out of either side of its mouth The foam spewed out strangely. And at that same place, Through God's grace and His virtue, Bevis sliced off two tusks With his sword at the first stroke. He had cut off a hand's length Of its snout with his blade. Then the boar cried out loudly, Out of the forest far and wide, To the castle where Ermine lay.</p>
820	<p>Men herde the noise of the swin; And, also he made that lotheli cri, His swerd Beves hasteli In at the mouth gan threste tho And karf his hertte evene ato The swerd a breide ayen fot hot And the bor is heved of smot, And on a tronsoun of is spere That heved a stikede for to bere, Thanne a sette horn to mouthe</p>	<p>Men heard the noise of the swine. And as it made that hideous cry, Bevis hastily thrust his sword Into its mouth And carved its heart neatly into two. He brandished the sword again swiftly And struck off the boar's head. And on the handle of his spear He stuck the head to carry it. Then he put the horn to his mouth And blew the well-known signal for victory.</p>
830	<p>And blew the pris ase wel kouthe, So glad he was for is honing. That heved a thoughte Josian bring: And er he com to that maide fre, Him com strokes so gret plenté, That fain he was to weren is hed And save himself fro the ded. A stiward was with King Ermin, That hadde tight to sle that swin; To Beves a bar gret envie,</p>	<p>So pleased he was with his hunting, He decided to bring the head to Josanne. But before he came to the fair maid, He was so resolute to defend his head And save himself from death That he would endure plenty of sword strokes. King Ermine had a steward Who had hoped to slay that swine. He had great jealousy of Bevis For having the victory.</p>
840	<p>For that he hadde the meistrie; He dede arme his knightes stoute, Four and twenti in a route, And ten forsters also he tok And wente to wode, seith the bok. Thar-of ne wiste Beves nought. Helpe him God, that alle thing wrought! In is wei he rit pas for pas. Herkneth now a ferli cas: A wende pasi in grith and pes,</p>	<p>He had his stout knights armed, Twenty four in a row, And took ten foresters as well, And went to the woods, so says the book. Bevis knew nothing of this. May God, who created all things, help him! Along his path he rode step by step And came upon a awful sight As he passed by in amity and peace. The steward cried, "Lay on and kill!"</p>
850	<p>Beves seigh that hii to him ferde, A wolde drawe to is swerde: Thanne had he leved it thor, Thar he hadde slawe the bor. He nadde nothing, himself to were, Boute a tronsoun of a spere. Tho was Beves sore desmeid, The heved fro the tronsoun a braid, And with the bor is heved a faught</p>	<p>Bevis saw them rush to him. He would have drawn his sword, But he had left it back there Where he had slain the boar. He had nothing to defend himself But the handle of a spear. Though Bevis was sorely dismayed, He took the head from the handle And fought with the swine's head.</p>

860	<p>And wan a swerd of miche maught, That Morgelai was cleped, aflight. Beter swerd bar never knight. Tho Beves hadde that swerd an hond, Among the hethene knightes a wond, And sum upon the helm a hitte, In to the sadel he hem slitte, And sum knight Beves so ofraughte, The heved of at the ferste draughte, So harde he gan to lein aboute</p>	<p>He seized a sword of great power; It was called Morgelai, in truth. No knight ever had a better sword. When Bevis had that sword in hand He turned to the heathen knights, And some he hit on the head, Chopping them down to the saddle, And one knight that Bevis reached Had his head cut off at the first stroke. He rushed about so forcefully</p>
870	<p>Among the hethene knightes stoute, That non ne pasede hom, aflight; So thourgh the grace of God almight The kinges stiward a hitte so, That is bodi a clef ato. The dede kors a pulte adoun And lep himself in to the arsun. That strok him thoughte wel iset For he was horsed meche bet. He thoughte make pes doun rightes</p>	<p>Among the strong pagan knights That none returned home, in fact. So through the grace of God almighty, He hit the king's steward so hard That he cleft his body in two. He pulled down the dead corpse And raised himself into the saddle. He thought that stroke was well placed, For he was horsed much better. He hoped to make some type of peace With the foresters as with the knights.</p>
880	<p>Of the forsters ase of the knightes; To hem faste he gan ride; Thai gonne schete be ech a side, So mani arwes to him thai sende, Unnethe a mighte himself defende, So tho is a lite stounde The ten forsters wer feld te grounde, And hew hem alle to pices smale: So hit is fonde in Frensche tale. Josian lai in a castel</p>	<p>He rode quickly to them. From their side they began to shoot So many arrows at him That he could scarcely protect himself. And so then in a little while The ten foresters were all felled to the ground And cut into small pieces; So it is found in the French tale. From the castle where she waited, Josanne saw every bit of that quarrel.</p>
890	<p>And segh that sconfit everich del. "O Mahoun," she seide, "oure drighte, What Beves is man of meche mighte! Al this world yif ich it hedde, Ich him yeve me to wedde; Boute he me love, icham ded. Swete Mahoun, what is thee red? Lovelonging me hath becought, Thar-of wot Beves right nought," Thus that maide made hire mon,</p>	<p>What a man of great might Bevis is! I would give all the world, if I had it, To give myself to marry him. Unless he loves me I am dead. Sweet Mohammed, what should I do? Lovesickness has enraptured me, Even if Bevis knows nothing of it." And so that maid pleaded her complaint Where she stood in the tower alone.</p>
900	<p>Thar she stod in the tour al on, And Beves thar the folk beleved And wente hom with the heved; That heved of that wilde swin He presente to King Ermin. The king thar-of was glad and blithe And thanked him ful mani a sithe, Ac he ne wiste ther of nowight, How is stiward to dethe was dight. Thre yer after that bataile,</p>	<p>And Bevis left the people there And went home with the head. He presented the head of that wild swine To King Ermine. The king was very glad of it And thanked him many times, Though he had no knowledge at all How his steward was brought to death. Three years after that battle, From when Bevis attacked the boar,</p>
910	<p>That Beves the bor gan asaile, A king ther com in to Ermonie And thoughte winne with meistrrie Josiane, that maide bright,</p>	<p>A king came there to Ermine And hoped to win with victory Josanne, that beautiful maid,</p>

	<p>That loved Beves with al hire might. Brademond cride, ase he wer wod, To King Ermin, thar a stod: “King,” a seide swithe blive, “Yem me thee doughter to wive! Yif thow me wernest, withouten faile, 920 I schel winne hire in plein bataile, On fele half I schel thee anughe, And al thee londe I schel destruye And thee sle, so mai betide, And lay hire a night be me side, And after I wile thee doughter yeve To a weine-pain, that is fordrive!” Ermin answerde blive on highe: “Be Mahoun, sire, thow schelt lighe!” Adoun of his tour a went</p>	<p>Who loved Bevis with all her might. Brademond blustered, as if he were mad, To King Ermine, where he stood, “King!” he said very abruptly, “Give me your daughter for my wife! If you refuse me, without fail, I will win her by open battle. I will attack you on many sides. I will destroy all your lands And slay you, if it so happens, And lay with her in the night. And after then I will give your daughter To some worn-out old carter!”²⁵ Ermine answered proudly at once, “By Mohammed, sir, you will be proved a liar!” He went down from his tower</p>
930	<p>And after al is knightes a sent / And tolde hem How Brademond him asailed hadde, And askede hem alle, what hii radde. A word thanne spak that maiden bright: “Be Mahoun, sire! wer Beves a knight, A wolde defende thee wel inough. Me self I segh, whar he slough Your owene stiward, him beset, Al one in the wode with him a met, At wode he hadde his swerd beleved,</p>	<p>And sent for all of his knights, and told them How Brademond had threatened him,²⁶ And asked them all what they advised. Then that bright maiden spoke a word: “By Mohammed, sire, if Bevis were a knight, He would defend you well enough. I saw myself when he defeated Your own steward, who set upon him. Bevis met him alone in the forest. He left his sword behind in the woods Where he had struck off the boar’s head. He had nothing to defend himself with But the handle of his spear. And your steward had many people; He led twenty four knights, All armed to the teeth And all sworn to his death, With ten foresters from the woods Brought there with him, equally ready. They planned to slay him there And take the boar’s head And give the steward the glory. When Bevis saw that foul villainy, He went at them with the boar’s head Until they were knocked down. And on that day he took from the steward His good sword, Morgelai. He destroyed the ten foresters as well And came home when he no longer Had to fear them.”</p>
940	<p>Thar he smot of the bores heved; He nadde nothing, himself to were, Boute a tronsoun of is spere, And your stiward gret peple hadde, Four and twenti knightes a ladde, Al y-armed to the teth, And everi hadde swore is deth, And ten forsters of the forest With him a broughte ase prest, That thoughte him have slawe thore</p>	<p>But the handle of his spear. And your steward had many people; He led twenty four knights, All armed to the teeth And all sworn to his death, With ten foresters from the woods Brought there with him, equally ready. They planned to slay him there And take the boar’s head And give the steward the glory. When Bevis saw that foul villainy, He went at them with the boar’s head Until they were knocked down. And on that day he took from the steward His good sword, Morgelai. He destroyed the ten foresters as well And came home when he no longer Had to fear them.”</p>
950	<p>And take the heved of the bore, And yeve the stiward the renoun. Tho Beves segh that foule tresoun, A leide on with the bor is heved, Til that hii were adoun iweved, And of the stiward a wan that day His gode swerd Morgelay. The ten forsters also a slough And hom a pasede wel inough, That he of hem hadde no lothe.”</p>	<p>King Ermine then swore his oath That Bevis should be made a knight</p>
960	<p>King Ermyne thanne swor is othe, That he scholde be maked knight,</p>	<p>King Ermine then swore his oath That Bevis should be made a knight</p>

²⁵ TEAMS notes that Brademond threatens to deflower Josanne and then pass her on to someone in the lower classes, a humiliating disgrace and the first of many threats to her virginity.

²⁶ 931 is an especially long line and begins here at the tail of 930.

970	<p>His baner to bere in that fight. He clepede Beves at that sake And seide: "Knight ich wile thee make. Thow schelt bere in to bataile Me baner, Brademond to asaile!" Beves answerde with blithe mod: "Blethelich," a seide, "be the Rod!" King Ermin tho anon righte Dobbede Beves unto knighte And yaf him a scheld gode and sur With thre eglen of asur, The champe of gold ful wel idight With fif lables of selver bright; Sithe a gerte him with Morgelay, A gonfanoun wel stout and gay Josian him broughte for to bere. Sent of the scheld, I yow swere! Beves dede on is actoun,</p>	<p>And to bear his banner in the fight. He called Bevis for that reason And said, "I will make you a knight. You will carry my banner Into the battle to attack Brademond!"²⁷ Bevis answered with high spirits: "With joy," he said, "by the Cross!" King Ermine then straightaway Dubbed Bevis a knight And gave him a shield, firm and sure, With three azure eagles, With the front finely ornamented with gold, With five ribbons of bright silver. Then he armed himself with Morgelai, And a banner, sturdy and bright That Josanne brought for him to wear. She was a saint of the shield, I swear to you. Bevis put on his jacket;</p>
980	<p>Hit was worth mani a toun; An hauberk him broughte that mai, So seiden alle that hit isai: Hit was wel iwrought and faire, Non egge tol mighte it nought paire. After that she yaf him a stede, That swithe gode was at nede, For hit was swift and ernede wel. Me clepede hit Arondel. Beves in the sadel lep,</p>	<p>It was worth many a town. The maiden brought him a mail shirt. All who saw it said It was well-crafted and handsome. No edge would sever it. After that she gave him his steed That would be so good in times of need, For it was swift and ran well. Men called it Arondel. Bevis leaped into the saddle.</p>
990	<p>His ost him folwede al to hep With baner bright and scheldes schene, Thretti thosent and fiftene, The ferste scheld trome Beves nam. Brademond aghenes him cam; His baner bar the King Redefoun, That levede on Sire Mahoun. Row he was also a schep, Beves of him nam gode kep.</p>	<p>His host followed him in a group, With bright banners and shining shields, Thirty thousand and fifteen more. Bevis headed the first shield vanguard As Brademond came against him. His banner bore King Redfoun, Who believed in Mohammad. He was as rough as a shepherd; Bevis took careful note of him</p>
1000	<p>He smot Arondel with spures of golde; Thanne thoughte that hors, that he scholde, Aghen Redefoun Beves gan ride And smot him thourgh out bothe side, Hauberk ne scheld ne actoun Ne vailede him nought worth a botoun, That he ne fel ded to the grounde. "Reste thee," queth Beves, "hethen hounde! Thee hadde beter atom than here!" "Lay on faste!" a bad his fere. Tho laide thai on with eger mod</p>	<p>And struck Arondel with golden spurs. The horse knew what it was meant to do. Bevis rode out against Redfoun And struck him on both sides. Neither mailshirt, shield, nor jacket Helped him any more than a button, So that he fell dead to the ground. "Rest yourself," said Bevis, "heathen hound! You were better off at home than here. Lay on fast!" he commanded his army. They attacked with keen vigor</p>
1010	<p>And slowe Sarsins, as hii wer wod,</p>	<p>And killed Saracens as though they were berserk,</p>

²⁷ *Me baner*: As in 574, Ermine is not proposing that Sir Bevis be a mere herald, but to carry a standard with his coat of arms; in effect, to be a commander leading his division.

<p>1020</p> <p>1030</p> <p>1040</p> <p>1050</p>	<p>And Sire Beves, the Cristene knight Slough ase mani in that fight With Morgelay himself alone, Ase thai deden everichone. And ever hii were to fighte prest Til that the sonne set in the west. Beves and is ost withinne a stounde Sexti thosent thai felde to grounde, That were out of Dameske isent, That never on homward ne went; Tho Brademond segh is folk islayn, A flegh awei with mighte and mayn. Ase he com ride be a cost, Twei knightes a fond of Beves ost; Of his stede he gan doun lighte And bond hem bothe anon righte, And thoughte hem lede to his prisoun And have for hem gret raunsoun. Ase he trosede hem on is stede, Beves of hem nam gode hede, And hasteliche in that tide After Brademond he gan ride And seide: "Brademond, olde wreche, Ertow come Josiane to feche? Erst thow schelt pase thourgh min hond And thourgh Morgelay, me gode brond!" Withouten eni wordes mo Beves Brademond hitte so Upon is helm in that stounde, That a felde him flat to grounde. "Merci!" queth Bradmond, "ich me yelde, Recreaunt to thee, in this felde, So harde thee smitest upon me kroun, Ich do me all in the bandoun, Sexti cites with castel tour Thin owen, Beves, to thin onour, With that thow lete me ascape!" Beves answerde tho in rape: "Nay!" a seide, "be sein Martyn! Icham iswore to King Ermin. Al that ich do, it is his dede; Tharfore, sire, so God me spede, Thow schelt swere upon the lay, Thow schelt werre on him night ne day, And omage eche yer him yelde And al the londe of him helde!"</p>	<p>And Sir Bevis, the Christian knight, Slaughtered as many men in that battle, With Morgelai himself alone, As did everyone else. They were continually pressed to the fight Until the sun set in the west. Bevis and his host, within that time Fell sixty thousand to the ground Who were sent from Damascus And who never went home again. When Brademond saw his men dead, He fled away with his army and followers. As he went riding by the coast, He found two knights of Bevis' host. He alighted from his horse And bound them both tightly, Intending to take them to his prison And hold them for great ransom.²⁸ As he trussed them on his steed, Bevis took careful note of them And hastily began to ride After Brademond. He said, "Brademond, you old wretch, Aren't you coming to fetch Josanne? First you will pass through my hand And through Morgelai, my good sword!" Without any more words Bevis bludgeoned Brademond so hard On his helmet in that moment That he threw him flat to the ground. "Mercy!" said Brademond. "I surrender, Defeated by you on this field! You have hit me so hard on the head I yield over to you Sixty cities with castle towers To be your own, Bevis, to your honor, Providing that you let me go." Bevis answered immediately, "No," he replied, "by Saint Martin. I am sworn to King Ermine. All that I do is his accomplishment. Therefore, sir, so help me God, You will swear upon the law To neither by night or day wage war against him, And to yield homage to him And all the lands in his dominion each year."</p>
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²⁸ The capturing of prisoners for ransom was common on medieval European warfields, and Chaucer himself was held in 1360 for £16, about US\$8500 in modern currency according to the UK National Archives (accessed 24 May 2010 at <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>). A knight would have been worth substantially more. Military leaders began to complain about mercenaries more interested in lining their pockets than fighting, and the poet has a scolding tone here for Brademond's opportunism.

1060	Brademond answerde anon righte: “Tharto me treuthe I thee plighte, That I ne schel never don him dere Ne aghen thee, Beves, armes bere!” And whan he hadde swore so, Beves let King Brademond go. Allas, that he nadde him slawe And ibrought of is life dawe! For sithe for al is faire beheste Mani dai a maked him feste, In is prisoun a lai seve yere, Ase ye may now forthward here. Beves rod hom and gan to singe	Brademond answered straightaway, “I pledge my word to you, That I will never do him harm Nor bear arms against you, Bevis.” And when he had sworn in this way, Bevis let King Brademond go. Alas that he did not slay him And bring a close to his life’s days! For later, despite all his fair promises, He made Bevis fast for many a day In his prison, for seven years, As you may hear from here on. Bevis rode home and began to sing
1070	And seide to Ermin the Kinge: “Sire! Brademond, King of Sarasine, A is become one of thine; The man a is to thin heste, While his lif wile leste, Londes and ledes, al that he walt, A saith, sire, of thee hem halt!” Thanne was King Ermin at that sithe In is hertte swithe blithe; A clepede is doughter and saide:	And said to Ermine, the king: “Sire, Brademond, King of the Saracens, Has become one of yours. The man is under your command While his life lasts. Lands and people, all that he has, He says he holds them, my lord, by you.” Then King Ermine at that time Was very glad in his heart. He called his daughter and said,
1080	“Josian, the faire maide, Unarme Beves, he wer at mete, And serve thee self him ther-ate!” Tho nolde that maide never blinne, Til she com to hire inne, Thar she lai hire selve anight: Thar she sette that gentil knight, Hire self yaf him water to hond And sette before him al is sonde. Tho Beves hadde wel i-ete	“Josanne, fair maid. Unarm Bevis before dinner And serve him there yourself.” Then that maid never rested Until she came to her lodging Where she bedded down at night. There she set that noble knight And herself gave him water to his hands And set before him all he requested. When Bevis had eaten his fill And sat on the maiden’s bed, That woman who was so radiant in color ²⁹
1090	Thoughte she wolde hire consaile schewe, And seide: “Beves, lemman, thin ore! I have loved thee ful yore, Sikerli can I no rede, Boute thow me love, icham dede, And boutte thow with me do thee wille.” “For Gode,” queth Beves, “that ich do nelle! Her is,” a seide, “min unliche,	Thought she would reveal her heart. She said, “Bevis, dear, your favor! I have loved you so ardently that I surely know no other course. I am dead unless you love me And unless you do as you wish with me!” “By God,” he vowed, “I cannot do that. You might have someone better, ³⁰

²⁹ *So bright of hiwe*: ME seems to be rich in terms for female beauty related to light reflection, such as *bright in bour*. *Beauty* itself is an import (Old French *biauté*, Latin *bellus*) and OE used *sciene*. As late as 1596 Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* praises Una’s “sunshyny face” (I.12.200). Millward speculates that OE was rich in adjectives for light and weak in ones of hue because of England’s cloudy climate and scarcity of dyes. Celia M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 108.

1100	Brademond King, that is so riche, In al this world nis ther man, Prinse ne king ne soudan, That thee to wive have nolde, And he the hadde ones beholde!"	Brademond the king, who is so rich. In all this world there is no man, Prince, king, or sultan Who wouldn't want you as a wife If he gazed on you once.
E&N -- -- --	And y am a knyght of uncouth londe I have no more than y in stonde, Neither here ne in my herde, But y it wyne with dynt of swerde!	And I am a knight from an unknown land. I have no more than what I stand in, Neither here nor in my keep, Unless I win it with the edge of my sword." ³¹
1105	"Merci," she seide, "yet with than Ichavede thee lever to me lemman, Thee bodi in thee scherte naked, Than al the gold, that Crist hath maked, And thow wost with me do thee wille!"	"Mercy!" she said. "For all that, I would rather have you as my lover, Your body in your shirt naked, Than all the gold that God has made, And you know that you feel the same."
1110	"For Gode," queth Beves, "that I do nelle!" Sche fel adoun and wep right sore: "Thow seidest soth her before: In al this world nis ther man, Prinse ne king ne soudan, That me to wive have nolde, And he me hadde ones beholde, And thow, cherl, me havest forsake; Mahoun thee yeve tene and wrake! Beter become the iliche	"By God," Bevis replied, "I will never do it!" She fell down and wept bitterly: "You just told the truth there. In all this world there is no man, Prince, king, or sultan Who wouldn't have me as wife, If he looked on me once. And you, peasant, reject me. May Mohammed give you pain and suffering! It would be better for the likes of you To clean an old ditch Than to be dubbed a knight To walk beside sunny maidens! You can go to another country; May Mohammed give you trouble and woe!"
1120	For to fowen an olde diche Thanne for to be dobbed knight, Te gon among maidenenes bright. To other contré thow might fare: Mahoun thee yeve tene and care!" "Damesele," a seide, "thow seist unright; Me fader was bothe erl and knight. How mighte ich thanne ben a cherl, Whan me fader was knight and erl? To other contré ich wile te:	"Madam," he said, "you speak unjustly. My father was both earl and knight. How then could I be a peasant When my father was knight and earl? I'll go to another country then. You will never see me again. You gave me a horse—well, bring it here! I want no more of your court games." Sir Bevis went out And took lodging in the town, Sorely annoyed and ashamed, For she had so angered him. When Bevis had gone to town, Then the maiden's woes began.
1130	Scheltow me namore ise! Thow yeve me an hors: lo it her! I nel namore of thee daunger!" Forth him wente Sire Bevoun And tok is in in that toun, Sore aneighed and aschamed, For she hadde him so gamed. Tho Beves was to toun igo, Tho began that maidenenes wo;	

³⁰ *Her is, a seide, min unliche*: "There is someone unlike me." Kölberg has the variant *Thou maiste have one me on-liche* (875) in a printed copy by Richard Pyson (1520) now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. In Kölberg, *Beues*, 52.

³¹ MS of Egerton 2862 and Royal Library, Naples, XIII, B 29. In Kölberg, *Beues*, 52. The sense of these lines is that Sir Bevis is suspicious of Brademond and argues that Josanne will be fickle because of her beauty and because of his poverty. The addition also helps explain Josanne's furious reply.

1140	<p>Thanne was hire wo with alle, Hire thoughte, the tour wolde on hir falle. She clepede hire chamberlein Bonefas And tolde to him al hire cas And bad him to Beves wende: “And sai him, ich wile amende Al togedre of word and dede, Of that ichave him misede!” Forth wente Bonefas in that stounde And Beves in is chaumber a founde And seide, she him theder sende,</p>	<p>She was so despondent in every way, She thought the tower would fall on her. She called her chamberlain, Boniface, And told him all her troubles And asked him to go to Bevis: “And tell him, I will make amends, In word and deed together, All that I spoke falsely about him.” Boniface went out at that moment And found Bevis in his room;</p>
1150	<p>And that she wolde alle amende Al togedres to is wille, Bothe loude and eke stille. Thanne answerde Beves the fer: “Sai, thow might nought speden her! Ac for thow bringest fro hire mesage, I schel thee yeve to the wage A mantel whit so melk: The broider is of Tuli selk, Beten abouten with rede golde,</p>	<p>He said she had sent him there And that she would amend everything In harmony with his will, Both the loud and the quiet. Bevis answered politely, “Say you have nothing to cheer her. But for you, for bringing her message, I will give you for your wage A cloak as white as milk. The embroidery is of Toulouse silk, Shaped about with red gold, Fit for a king to wear if he should.”</p>
1160	<p>Bonefas him thankede yerne, Hom aghen he gan terne; A fond that maide in sorwe and care And tolde hire his answare, That he ne mighte nought spede Aboute hire nede, And seide: “Thow haddest unright, So te misain a noble knight!” “Who yaf thee this ilche wede?”</p>	<p>Boniface thanked him earnestly And he turned back home. He found the maid in sorrow and anxiousness And told her Bevis’ answer, That he had no encouragement For her desires, And added, “You were in the wrong To abuse such a noble knight.” “Who gave you this clothing here?”</p>
1170	<p>“Beves, that hendi knight!” a sede. “Allas!” she seide, “Ich was to blame, Whan ich seide him swiche schame, For hit nas never a cherles dede, To yeve a maseger swiche a wede! Whan he nel nought to me come, The wei to his chaumber I wil neme, And, what ever of me befaller, Ich wile wende in to is halle!” Beves herde that maide ther-oute.</p>	<p>“Bevis, that gracious knight,” he said. “Alas!” she said. “I was to blame When I spoke to him so shamefully. For it was never a peasant’s way To give a messenger such finery.” “If he will not come to me, I will make my way to his chamber, And, whatever happens to me, I will go into his hall.” Bevis heard the maid outside.</p>
1180	<p>Ase yif aslep, he gan to route. “Awake, lemman!” she seide, “Awake! Icham icome, me pes to make. Lemman, for the corteisie, Spek with me a word or tweie!” “Damesele,” queth Beves thanne, “Let me ligge and go the wei henne! Icham weri of-foughte sore, Ich faught for thee, I nel namore.” “Merci,” she seide, “lemman, thin ore!”</p>	<p>As if asleep, he began to snore. “Wake up, darling,” she said, “wake up! I have come to make peace. Sweetheart, for courtesy’s sake, Speak with me a word or two.” “My lady,” Bevis answered, “Go away and let me lie here. I am exhausted from battle. I fought for you, I will not do it anymore.”</p>
1190	<p>She fel adoun and wep wel sore: “Men saith,” she seide, “in olde riote, That wimmannes bolt is sone schote.</p>	<p>She fell down and wept sorely. “Men say,” she cried, “in tavern talk, That a woman’s arrow is rashly shot.</p>

	<p>Forghem me, that ichave misede, And ich wile right now to mede Min false godes al forsake And Cristendom for thee love take!” “In that maner,” queth the knight, “I graunte thee, me swete wight!” And kiste hire at that cordement. 1200 Tharfore he was negh after schent. The twei knightes, that he unbond, That were in Brademondes hond, He made that on is chaumberlain. Him hadde be beter, he hadde hem slein! Thei wente to the king and swor othe: “No wonder, sire, thegh ye be wrothe, No wonder, thegh ye ben agreved, Whan Beves, scherewe misbeleved, The doughter he hath now forlain. 1210 Hit were gode, sire, that he wer slain!” Hii lowe, the scherewes, that him gan wreie. In helle mote thai hongen beie! He dede nothing, boute ones hire kiste, Nought elles bi hem men ne wiste. Tharfore hit is soth isaide And in me rime right wel ilaid. Delivre a thef fro the galwe, He thee hateth after be alle halwe! “Allas!” queth Ermin, the King, 1220 “Wel sore me reweth that tiding! Sethe he com me ferst to, So meche he hath for me ido, I ne mighte for al peynim londe, That men dede him eni schonde! Ac fain ich wolde awreke be, Boute I ne mighte hit nought ise.” Thanne bespak a Sarasin - Have he Cristes kurs and myn - “Sire, she scholle for is sake 1230 A letter swithe anon do make To Brademond, the stronge king, And do him theder the letter bringe; And in the letter thee schelt saie, That he hath Josian forlaie!” Whan the letter was come to th’ende, After Beves the king let sende And seide: “Beves, thow most hanne To Brademond, thin owene manne: Al in solas and in delit</p>	<p>Forgive me that I have misspoken, And I will right now in return Abandon all my false gods and take Christianity for the sake of your love.” “On those terms,” said the knight, “I accept you, my sweet girl!” And kissed her on that accord. For this he was nearly destroyed later. From the two knights that he freed, Who were in Brademond’s hand, He made one his chamberlain. It would have been better had he slain them! They went to the king and swore oaths: “It’s no wonder, sire, if you were angry. It’s no wonder if you were aggrieved, When Bevis, the wicked infidel, Has now deflowered your daughter. It would be good, sire, if he were executed.” They lied, those vermin, in betraying him. May they be hanged in hell! He did nothing more than kiss her once; Neither man knew of anything more. So thus it is truly said, And in my rhyme it’s well placed: Rescue a thief from the gallows, And by all the saints, he will hate you.³² “Alas!” cried Ermine, the king. “How I sorely regret this news. See that he comes before me first. He has done so much for me That I could not have men harm him For all the pagan lands. But I would gladly be avenged If I did not have to see it.” Then a Saracen spoke up; May he have Christ’s curse as well as mine. “Sire, for our purposes³³ We will have a letter made quickly For Brademond, the strong king; And have him deliver the letter there. And in the letter you will say That he has seduced Josanne.” When the letter was finished to its end, The king sent for Bevis And said, “Bevis, you must go at once To Brademond, your own man, In all leisure and enjoyment.</p>
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³² A French proverb: “Save a thief from the gallows and he will help to hang you.” Also see Proverbs 19:19: “A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty; if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”

³³ *She scholle for is sake*: Royal Library, Naples, XIII, B 29 has *we schulle*, which makes more sense. In Kölberg, *Beues*, 58.

1240	Thow most him bere this ilche scriit! Ac yif yow schelt me letter bere, Upon the lai thow schelt me swere, That thow me schelt with no man mele, To schewe the prente of me sele!” “I wile,” queth Beves ase snel, “The leter bere treuliche and wel; Have ich Arondel, me stede, Ich wile fare in to that thede, And Morgelai, me gode bronde,	You must bear this document here. But if you are to carry this letter, You must swear to me upon the law That you will not contrive with any man To show the imprint of my seal.” ³⁴ “I will,” Bevis said just as swiftly, “Bear the letter faithfully and well. I have Arondel, my steed. I will travel to that country, And with Morgelai, my good sword, I will pass into that land.”
1250	Ich wile wende in to that londe! King Ermin seide in is sawe, That ner no mesager is lawe, To ride upon an hevi stede, That swiftli scholde don is nede. “Ac nim a lighter hakenai And lef her the swerd Morgelai, And thow schelt come to Brademonde Sone withinne a lite stounde!” Beves an hakenai bestrit	King Ermine said in his speech That it was never customary for a messenger To ride upon a heavy charger In order to speedily accomplish his needs. “But take a lighter riding horse And leave the sword Morgelai here, And you will come to Brademond Soon within a short while.” Bevis mounted a hackney horse And rode forth on his way Bearing with him his own death, Unless God helps him, who sees all things. Let’s turn again to where we were before, And talk about his uncle Saber. After the time that Bevis was sold, His heart was forever heavy over him. He called his son Terry to him And asked him to go and search In every land, near and far, For where the sailors had brought him. He said, “Son, you are my own blood. You will easily recognize the man. I am asking you, son, to search for him In every way for seven years. I will bring him back if you find him, Even if he is beyond India!” Terry, his son, set forth To search for Bevis everywhere. In all the heathen lands there was no town Where a Christian man could travel In which he did not search for Bevis, But he could not find him. So it happened by chance That Terry arrived near Damascus. And as he traveled near that place, He sat in his armor and ate Under a fair crab-apple tree Which Sir Bevis came to notice.
1260	And in his wei forth a rit And bereth with him is owene deth, Boute God him helpe, that alle thing seth! Terne we aghen, thar we wer er, And speke we of is em Saber! After that Beves was thus sold, For him is hertte was ever cold. A clepede to him his sone Terri And bad him wenden and asprie In to everi londe fer and ner,	
1270	Whider him ladde the maroner, And seide: “Sone, thow ert min owen, Wel thow canst the lord knowen! Ich hote thee, sone, in alle manere, That thow him seche this seve yer. Ich wile feche him, mowe thow him fynde, Though he be biyende Inde!” Terri, is sone, is forth ifare, Beves a soughte everiwhare; In al hethenes nas toun non,	
1280	That Cristene man mighte ther in gon, That he ne hath Beves in isought, Ac he ne kouthe finde him nought. So hit be fel upon a cas, That Terri com beside Damas; And ase he com forth be that stede, A sat and dinede in a wede Under a faire medle tre, That Sire Beves gan of-see.	

³⁴ The king is asking Bevis, who presumably is not literate, to promise not to have the letter read to him. Wax seals were typically used until personal signatures became common in the modern period.

1290	<p>“Sire,” queth Terri, “for Sein Juline! Is it thee wille, come nere and dine!” Beves was of-hongred sore And kouthe him gret thank therfore, For twei dawes he hadde ride Fastande in that ilche wede. The palmer nas nought withouten store, Inough a leide him before, Bred and flesch out of is male And of his flaketes win and ale Whan Beves hadde eten gret foisoun</p>	<p>“Sir,” said Terry, “by Saint Julian,³⁵ If you please, come near and dine!” Bevis was sorely hungry And showed much gratitude to him. For two days he had been riding, Garbed in the same clothes. The pilgrim did not lack for provisions. He laid out before him Plenty from his bag, bread and meat, And wine and ale from his jugs. When Bevis had eaten abundantly, Terry asked Sir Bevis</p>
1300	<p>Terri askede at Sire Bevoun, Yif a herde telle yong or olde Of a child, that theder was solde. His name was ihote Bevoun Ibore a was at South-Hamtoun. Beves beheld Terri and lough, And seide, a knew that child wel inough: “Hit is nought,” a seide, “gon longe, I segh the Sarsins that child anhonge!”</p>	<p>Terri asked Sir Bevis If he had heard anyone, young or old, Speak of a noble youth who had been sold there. His name was Bevis, And he was born in Southampton. Bevis looked at Terry and laughed grimly And said he knew the lad well enough. “It is not,” he said, “so long ago That I saw the Saracens hang that boy.” Terry fell down in a faint And tore at his hair and clothes. When he came to his senses and could speak, He wept bitterly and sighed sorely, And said, “Alas that he was born! Is my lord Bevis really lost?” Bevis lifted him up in that moment And began to console him. “Go back home,” he said, “to your country. Tell your friends what I have told you: Though you sought him these seven years, You were never nearer the man!” Terry looked at Bevis And saw the letter case with a shield. “It seems to me you are a courier Who walks here in this land. I am a scholar and went to school. Sir, let me read the letter, For you might have great fears That you carry around your own death.” Bevis said, so I understand:</p>
1310	<p>Terri fel ther doun and swough, His her, his clothes he al to-drough. Whan he awok and speke mighte, Sore a wep and sore sighte And seide: “Allas, that he was boren! Is me lord Beves forloren!” Beves tok him up at that cas And gan him for to solas: “Wend hom,” a seide, “to thee contré! Sai the frendes so ichave thee. Though thow him seche thes seve yer, Thow worst that child never the ner!”</p>	<p>“He who put this letter into my hand Could not have more love for me Than if I were his own brother.” Bevis thanked him and so they parted. Terry went home and informed</p>
1320	<p>Terri on Beves beheld And segh the boiste with a scheld. “Me thenketh, thow ert a masager, That in this londe walkes her; Icham a clerk and to scole yede: Sire, let me the letter rede, For thow might have gret doute, Thin owene deth to bere aboute!” Beves seide, ich understonde:</p>	
1330	<p>“He, that me tok this letter an honde, He ne wolde love me non other, Than ich were is owene brother.” Beves him thankede and thus hii delde. Terri wente hom and telde</p>	

³⁵ *Sein Juline*: Saint Julian, patron saint of hospitality. The story of Julian was popular although he appears to have been a legendary figure. E. Gordon Whatley, Anne B. Thompson, and Robert K. Upchurch, eds., “*The Life of St. Julian the Hospitaller in the Scottish Legendary* (c. 1400): Introduction,” in *Saints’ Lives in Middle English Collections* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), accessed 25 May 2010 at <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/whjulintro.htm>.

	<p>His fader Saber in the Ilde of Wight, How him tolde a gentil knight, That Sarsins hadde Beves forfare And hangede him, while he was thare. Saber wep and made drem.</p>	<p>His father Saber in the Isle of Wight How he was told by a noble knight, While he was there, that Saracens Had killed Bevis and hanged him. Saber wept and mourned him,</p>
1340	<p>For he was the childes em, And ech yer on a dai certaine Upon th'emperur of Almaine With a wel gret baronage A cleimede his eritage. Let we now ben is em Saber And speke of Beves, the maseger! Forth him wente Sire Bevoun Til a com to Dames toun; Aboute the time of middai</p>	<p>For he was the boy's uncle. And each year upon a certain day He asserted his heritage Against the emperor of Germany With a large baronage. Let us now leave his uncle Saber And speak of Bevis, the messenger. Sir Bevis went forth Until he came to the town of Damascus.</p>
1350	<p>Out of a mameri a sai Sarasins come gret foisoun, That hadde anoured here Mahoun, Beves of is palfrei alighte And ran to her mameri ful righte And slough here prest, that ther was in, And threw here godes in the fen And lough hem alle ther to scorn. On ascapede and at-orn In at the castel ghete,</p>	<p>About the time of mid-day He saw a large crowd of Saracens Coming out of a mosque Who had been honoring Mohammad. Bevis dismounted from his horse And ran immediately to their temple And slaughtered their priest, who was inside, And threw their gods into the ditch And laughed at them all scornfully. One escaped and ran away Passing by the castle gate</p>
1360	<p>As the king sat at the mete. "Sire," seide this man at the frome, "Her is icome a corsede gome, That throweth our godes in the fen And sleth aloure men; Unnethe I scapede among that thring, For to bringe thee tiding!" Brademond quakede at the bord And seide: "That is Beves, me lord!" Beves wente in at the castel ghate,</p>	<p>As the king was sitting at dinner. "Sire," the said man urgently, "A cursed man has come here Who is throwing our gods in the mud And slaying all our men. I hardly escaped from the crowd To bring you the news!" Brademond trembled at the table And said, "It is Bevis, my lord!" Bevis came in past the castle gate, Leaving his horse there,</p>
1370	<p>His hors he lefte ther-ate And wente forth in to the halle And grete hem in this maner alle: "God, that made this world al ronde, Thee save, Sire King Brademond, And ek alle thine fere, That I se now here, And yif that ilche blessing Liketh thee right nothing, Mahoun, that is god thin,</p>	<p>And came forth into the hall. He greeted them all in this manner: "God, who made the world all round, Save you, Sir King Brademond, As well as your companions That I see now here. And if that same blessing Is not at all to your liking, May Mohammad, your god, Termagant and Apollyon, Bless and preserve you With all of their might!</p>
1380	<p>Tervagaunt and Apolin, Thee blessi and dighte Be alle here mighte! Lo her, the King Ermin The sente this letter in parchemin, And ase the letter thee telleth to, A bad, thow scholdest swithe do!" Beves kneueled and nolde nought stonde And yaf up is deth with is owene honde.</p>	<p>Look then, King Ermine Sends you this letter in parchment And asks that you should quickly do As the letter instructs you." Bevis knelt and would not stand And sealed his death with his own hand.</p>

1390	<p>Brademond quakede al for drede, He undede the letter and gan to rede And fond iwriten in that felle, How that he scholde Beves aquelle. Thanne seide Brademond to twenti king, That were that dai at is gistning, A spak with tresoun and with gile: “Ariseth up,” he sede “a while, Everich of yow fro the bord, And wolcometh your kende lord!”</p>	<p>Brademond quaked with fear. He undid the letter and began to read, And found written on that hide How he should execute Bevis. Then Brademond addressed the twenty kings Who were at his banquet that day; He spoke with treason and with guile: “‘All rise,” he said, “for a moment, Every one of you from the table, And welcome your gracious lord!”</p>
1400	<p>Alle hii gonnen up right stonde, And Brademond tok Beves be the honde And held him faste at that sake, That he ne scholde is swerd out take, And cride, also he hadde be wod, To hem alle, aboute him stod: “‘Ase ye me loven at this stounde, Bringeth this man swithe to grounde!” So faste hii gonne aboute him scheve, Ase don ben aboute the heve. So withinne a lite stounde</p>	<p>All of them stood up. Brademond took Bevis by the hand And held him tight so that He would not be able to draw his sword, And shouted out as if he were mad To all of them who stood around him: “‘If you love me, at this instant, Bring this man to the ground at once!” They began to press around him as quickly As bees around the hive, So that within a short moment Bevis was brought to the ground.</p>
1410	<p>Beves was ibrought to grounde. Brademond seide him anon right: “‘Yif thow me naddest wonne with fight, I nolde for nothing hit beleve, That thow schost be hanged er eve. Ac ase evel thee schel betide, In me prisoun thow schelt abide Under th’erthe twenti teise, Thar thow schelt have meche miseise. Ne scheltow have, til thow be ded,</p>	<p>Brademond said to him at once, “‘Had you not defeated me in battle, I would not hesitate for anything To have you hanged before nightfall, Or else decree as evil an end. You will languish in my prison Twenty fathoms under the earth. There you will have no comfort. You will not get, until you are dead, More than a quarter loaf of bread a day. If you want a drink, it will not be sweet. You will drink from under your feet!”</p>
1420	<p>Boute ech a dai quarter of a lof bred; Yif thow wilt drinke, thegh it be nought swet, Thee schelt hit take under the fet!” A dede Beves binde to a ston gret, That wegh seve quarters of whet, And het him caste in to prisoun, That twenti teise was dep adoun. At the prisoun dore Beves fond A tronsoun, that he tok in is hond. Tharwith a thoughte were him there</p>	<p>He had Bevis bound to a great millstone That weighed sixty bushels of wheat, And had him thrown into the prison, Which went down twenty fathoms deep. At the cell door Bevis found A club, which he took in his hand. He realized it was there For the snakes that were in the cell. Now Bevis is at the pit’s bottom. God bring him up safe and sound! Now we will speak of Josanne, the maid, Who came to her father and said, “‘Sire,” she asked, “where is Bevis, That I might not see him for so long a time?”</p>
1430	<p>Fram wormes, that in prisoun were. Now is Beves at this petes grounde. God bringe him up hol and sonde! Now speke we of Josian, the maide, That com to hire fader and seide: “‘Sire,” she seide, “whar Beves be, That me mighte him nought fern ise?” “‘Doughter,” a seide, “a is ifare In to his londe and woneth thare, In to is owene eritage,</p>	<p>“‘Daughter,” he said, “he has journeyed Back to his land and is living there, Into his own inheritance, And has a wife of high parentage, The king of England’s daughter, As men have me understand.”</p>
1440	<p>And hath a wif of gret parage, The kinges doughter of Ingelonde, Ase men doth me to understonde.”</p>	

1450	<p>Thanne was that maide wo ynough, In hire chaumber hire her she drogh And wep and seide ever mo, That sum tresoun thar was ydo. “That me ne telde ord and ende, What dai awai whanne a wolde wende.” Of Mombraunt the King Yvor, A riche king of gret tresore, Whan he owhar to werre wolde, Fiftene kinges him sewe scholde: Comen a is Josian to wedde; Aghen hire fader so a spedde, That he hire grauntede to is wive And al is londe after is live. Tho Josian wiste, she scholde be quen, Hit was nought be hire wille; I wen Hire were lever have had lasse</p>	<p>Then that maid had despair enough. In her chamber, she tore out her hair And wept and continually cried out That some treachery had been done.³⁶ “He didn’t tell me at the start or end The day when he would go away.” There was a rich king of lavish wealth, King Ivor of Mombrant.³⁷ When he went anywhere to make war, Fifteen kings would follow him. He came, hoping to marry Josanne. He fared so well with her father That he granted her as his wife And all his land after his passing. When Josanne learned she would be queen, It was not by her will, I am sure. She would have preferred a lower rank And to be Bevis’ countess.</p>
1460	<p>Natheles, now it is so, Hire fader wil she moste do, Ac ever she seide: “Bevoun, Hende knight of South Hamtoun, Naddestow me never forsake, Yif sum tresoun hit nadde make: Ac for the love, that was so gode, That I lovede ase min hertte blode, I have,” she seide, “a ring on,</p>	<p>Nonetheless, now it was so, And she had to do her father’s will. But she continually cried, “Bevis, Noble knight of Southhampton, You would never have forsaken me If some treason had not happened. But for your love, which was so good, Which I felt like my heart’s own blood, I will put,” she said, “a ring on my hand.</p>
1470	<p>That of swiche vertu is the ston: While ichave on that ilche ring, To me schel no man have welling, And Beves!” she seide, “be God above, I schel it weren for thee love!” Whan hit to that time spedde, That Yvor scholde that maide wedde, He let sende withouten ensoine After the Soudan of Babiloine And after the fiftene kinge,</p>	<p>The stone is of such a quality That while I have that ring on, No man will have his way with me. And Bevis,” she vowed, “by God above, I will wear it for your love!” When the time pressed near That Ivor should wed that maid, He sent word, without delay, To the sultan of Babylon, And to the fifteen kings,</p>
1480	<p>That him scholde omage bringe, And bad hem come lest and meste, To onoure that meri feste. Of that feste nel ich namor telle, For to highe with our spelle.</p>	<p>That they should pay respect to him, And called for them to come, high and low, To honor that merry feast. About that feast I will say no more, In order to hasten with our story.</p>

³⁶ I am grateful for Seaman’s interpretation, who points out that Josanne does not scorn Bevis but immediately suspects foul play. Myra Seaman, “Engendering Genre in Middle English Romance: Performing the Feminine in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*,” *Studies in Philology* 98:1 (2001): 62.

³⁷ *Mombraunt*: Supposedly this is also in Armenia, but Bevis’ comrade tells him not to go to Armenia but north (2040). Again, I cannot find this place if it exists, although it (and King Ivoryn) turns up in legends. See Alfred J. Church, *Stories of Charlemagne* (London: Seeley & Co., 1902), 363. There are numerous medieval surnames and placenames in France such as *Monbran*, *Mombrant*, and *Montbran* (near Pléboulle, near Brest). As it is evidently a Saracen kingdom it may be in lands nearing Muslim Spain, and there are two additional variations on the placename near Toulouse.

1490	<p>Whan al the feste to-yede, Ech knight wente to is stede, Men graithede cartes and somers, Knightes to horse and squiers, And Josian with meche care Theder was brought in hire chare. King Ermin nom Arondel And let him sadlen faire and wel, A wente to Beves chaumber, ther he lay, And nom his swerd Morgelay; With Arondel agan it lede To King Yvor, and thus a sede: “Sone,” a sede, “have this stede, The beste fole, that man mai fede, And this swerd of stel broun,</p>	<p>When all the celebrations had finished, Each knight went to his home, Men prepared carts and packhorses, Knights went with horses and squires, And Josanne, with great ceremony, Was brought forth in her chariot. King Ermine took Arondel And had him saddled splendidly. He went to Bevis’ room where he had slept And took his sword, Morgelai. With Arondel again he went To King Ivor, and he said thus: “Son,” he said, “take this steed, The best foal that a man may feed, And this sword of shining steel, Which belonged to Bevis of Hampton. He would not have parted with it, Were it in his hand, for all the pagan lands!” “Nor will I,” said King Ivor, “For all the gold or the treasure That you could guard within the city.” “Son,” said Ermine, “may it serve you well.” Ivor began to ride homeward And led Arondel by his side. When he was out of Mombrant, He swore an oath by Tervagant That he would ride into his own city Upon Arondel in front of his bride. He mounted on Arondel. That horse very soon knew That Bevis was not upon its back. The king soon paid for it painfully. It ran over ditch and thorns, Through woods and thick grain fields. Not for water, not for land, Would that steed stop anywhere. Finally it threw Ivor down And nearly broke the king’s head, So that all of his subjects could barely Save it from being put to death there. And before they could catch that horse, They had to trap it with clever tricks. You might now hear a wondrous thing. After all that, for seven years It stood bound in chains. No food or drink was laid before it, No hay or oats or clear water, Except by a rope from a balcony. No man dared come near Where that horse stood in fetters. Now Josanne was a queen, And Bevis sat in prison with great hardship, As the romance says; there he lay Until the hair on his head grew to his feet.</p>
1500	<p>That was Beves of Hamtoun. A nolde hit yeve, wer it in is honde, Nought for al painim londe!” “Ne ich,” queth the King Yvor, “For al the gold ne the tresor, That thow might in the cité belouke!” “Sone,” queth Ermin, “wel mot thee it brouke!” Yver gan homward te ride And dede lede Arondel be is side. Whan he com withoute Mombraunt,</p>	<p>He would not have parted with it, Were it in his hand, for all the pagan lands!” “Nor will I,” said King Ivor, “For all the gold or the treasure That you could guard within the city.” “Son,” said Ermine, “may it serve you well.” Ivor began to ride homeward And led Arondel by his side. When he was out of Mombrant, He swore an oath by Tervagant That he would ride into his own city Upon Arondel in front of his bride. He mounted on Arondel. That horse very soon knew That Bevis was not upon its back. The king soon paid for it painfully. It ran over ditch and thorns, Through woods and thick grain fields. Not for water, not for land, Would that steed stop anywhere. Finally it threw Ivor down And nearly broke the king’s head, So that all of his subjects could barely Save it from being put to death there. And before they could catch that horse, They had to trap it with clever tricks. You might now hear a wondrous thing. After all that, for seven years It stood bound in chains. No food or drink was laid before it, No hay or oats or clear water, Except by a rope from a balcony. No man dared come near Where that horse stood in fetters. Now Josanne was a queen, And Bevis sat in prison with great hardship, As the romance says; there he lay Until the hair on his head grew to his feet.</p>
1510	<p>A swor is oth be Tervagaunt, That he wolde in to his cité ride Upon Arondel before is bride. Arondel thar he bestrit; That hors wel sone underyit, That Beves nas nought upon is rigge The king wel sore scholde hit abegge. He ran over dich and thorn, Thourgh wode and thourgh thekke korn; For no water ne for no londe,</p>	<p>He mounted on Arondel. That horse very soon knew That Bevis was not upon its back. The king soon paid for it painfully. It ran over ditch and thorns, Through woods and thick grain fields. Not for water, not for land, Would that steed stop anywhere. Finally it threw Ivor down And nearly broke the king’s head, So that all of his subjects could barely Save it from being put to death there. And before they could catch that horse, They had to trap it with clever tricks. You might now hear a wondrous thing. After all that, for seven years It stood bound in chains. No food or drink was laid before it, No hay or oats or clear water, Except by a rope from a balcony. No man dared come near Where that horse stood in fetters. Now Josanne was a queen, And Bevis sat in prison with great hardship, As the romance says; there he lay Until the hair on his head grew to his feet.</p>
1520	<p>Nowhar nolde that stede astonde; At the laste a threw Yvor down And al to-brak the kinges kroun, That al is kingdom wel unnethe Arerede him ther fro the dethe; And er hii mighte that hors winne, Thai laughte him with queinte ginne. A wonderthing now ye may here. After al that seve yere To rakenteis a stod iteide,</p>	<p>Finally it threw Ivor down And nearly broke the king’s head, So that all of his subjects could barely Save it from being put to death there. And before they could catch that horse, They had to trap it with clever tricks. You might now hear a wondrous thing. After all that, for seven years It stood bound in chains. No food or drink was laid before it, No hay or oats or clear water, Except by a rope from a balcony. No man dared come near Where that horse stood in fetters. Now Josanne was a queen, And Bevis sat in prison with great hardship, As the romance says; there he lay Until the hair on his head grew to his feet.</p>
1530	<p>Nas mete ne drinke before him leid, Hey ne oten ne water clere, Boute be a kord of a solere. No man dorste come him hende, Thar that hors stod in bende. Now is Josian a quene; Beves in prisoun hath gret tene. The romounce telleth, ther a set, Til the her on is heved grew to is fet;</p>	<p>Now Josanne was a queen, And Bevis sat in prison with great hardship, As the romance says; there he lay Until the hair on his head grew to his feet.</p>

1540	Snakes and euetes and oades fale, How mani, can I nought telle in tale, That in the prisoun were with him, That provede ever with her venim To sle Beves, that gentil knight, Oc, thourgh the grace of God Almighty, With the tronsoun, that he to prisoun tok, A slough hem alle, so saith the bok. A fleande nadder was in an hole, For elde blak ase eni cole; Unto Beves she gan flinge	There were snakes and lizards and toads, How many, I cannot count, That were in the prison with him, That tried to poison Bevis, That noble knight, with their venom. But through the grace of God Almighty, With the club that he had in the prison He killed them all, so says the book. A flying adder was in a crevice, As black as any coal from age. Toward Bevis she flung herself, ³⁸
1550	And in the forehed thoughte him stinge. Beves was redi with is tronsoun And smot hire, that she fel adoun. Upon aghen the nadder rowe And breide awei his right browe; Tho was Beves sore agreved And smot the nadder on the heved; So harde dent he hire yaf, The brein clevede on is staf. Doun fel the nadder, withouten faile,	Thinking to sting him in the forehead. Bevis was ready with the bat And struck her so that she fell down. The adder reared up again And tore away his right eyebrow. Then Bevis was sorely angered And cracked the adder on the head. He gave her such a hard blow That the brains stuck to the stick. Down went the adder, without a doubt,
1560	And smot so Beves with the taile, That negh a les ther contenaunse, Almest is lif was in balaunse. Whan he awakede of that swough, The tronsoun eft to him a drough And bet hire al to pises smale, As hit is fonde in Frensche tale. Tho he hadde slawe the foule fendes, Be that hadde Beves lein in bendes Seve yer in peines grete,	And struck at Bevis with its tail So that he nearly lost his wits; His life was almost in the balance. When he came to from that swoon, He drew the club back to him And beat the adder into little pieces, As it is told in the French tale. Though he had killed the foul fiends, Bevis laid there in bonds For seven years in great pain, ³⁹
1570	Lite idronke and lasse iete; His browe stank for defaut of yeme, That it set after ase a seme, Wharthourgh that maide ne kneu him nought, Whan hii were eft togedre brought. On a dai, ase he was mad and feint, To Jesu Crist he made is pleint And to his moder, seinte Marie, Reuliche he gan to hem crie: “Lord,” a seide, “Hevene King,	Drinking little and eating less. His brow smelled for lack of care, When it became infected and scarred, So that the maid did not know him When they were brought together later. One day, when he was mad and faint, He made his plea to Jesus Christ And to His mother, sainted Mary, Mournfully crying to them: “Lord,” he said, “Heaven’s king,
1580	Schepere of erthe and alle thing: What have ich so meche misgilt, That thow sext and tholen wilt, That Thee wetherwines and Thee fo Schel Thee servaunt do this wo?	Shaper of Earth and all things, What great sin have I committed That You see and allow Your enemies and Your foes To do such woe to Your servant?

³⁸ *She gan flinge*: I have rendered Bevis’ encounter with the swine with *it* to avoid pronoun confusion, but ME often uses gendered pronouns for animals.

³⁹ *Seve yer*: As with Biblical sevens and forties, these are poetic and indeterminate lengths of time. Medieval prisons were simply holding cells until punishment was administered, and long sentences were a nineteenth-century development.

1590	<p>Ich bedde Thee, Lord, for Thee pité, That Thow have merci on me And yeve grace, hennes to gange Or sone be drawn other anhange! Me roughte never, what deth to me come, With that ich were hennes nome! The gailers, that him scholde yeme, Whan hii herde him thus reme, “Thef! cherl!” seide that on tho: “Now beth thee lif dawes ydo, For king ne kaiser ne for no sore Ne scheltow leve no lenger more.” Anon rightes with that word A laumpe he let down be a cord, A swerd a tok be his side,</p>	<p>I beseech You, Lord, for Your pity, That You will have mercy on me And give me grace to go from here, Or else be quartered or hung! I do not care what death comes to me So long as I am delivered from here.” The jailors, who were supposed to guard him, Cried out when they heard him. “Thief! Fool!” shouted one of them. “Enough, your life’s days are now over. No matter what king, emperor, or trouble comes, You shall not live any longer!” Straightaway with those words, He dropped down a lamp on a rope. He took a sword on his side</p>
1600	<p>And be the cord he gan doun glide And smot him with that other hond, And Beves to the grounde a wond. “Allas,” queth Beves, “that ilche stounde! Wo is the man, that lith ybounde Medel bothe fet and honde! Tho ich com ferst in to this londe, Hadde ich had me swerd Morgelay And Arondel, me gode palfray, For Dames, nadde be tresoun,</p>	<p>And slid down on the rope And stabbed him with the other hand, And Bevis tumbled to the ground. “Alas!” said Bevis that very moment. “Woe is the man who lies in bondage, By the waist and both hand and foot! When I first came into this land, I had my sword Morgelai, And Arondel, my fine horse. Were it not for this treason I would not Have given a button for Damascus. And now the lowest trash of all Lays me down with a sword stroke. May I never pray to Jesus Before I can be avenged for it!” He struck the jailor with his fist, So that his neck was broken. In the jailor’s voice he cried to his partner,⁴⁰ “Hurry down, friend,” said Bevis, “Hurry!” “If you need help,” he answered,</p>
1610	<p>I nolde have yeve a botoun, And now the meste wreche of alle With a strok me doth adoun falle, Bidde ich never with Jesu speke, Boute ich ther-of may ben awreke!” A smot the gailer with is fest, That is nekke him to-berst. His felawe above gan to crie: “Highe hider, felawe,” queth Beves, “highe!” “Yif thow most have help,” a sede,</p>	<p>“I’ll come down to you at top speed!” “Yis!” queth Beves, al for gile, And knette the rop thar while Ase high ase a mighte reche. Tho queth Beves with reuful speche: “For the love of Sein Mahoun, Be the rop glid blive adoun And help, that this thef wer ded!” Whan he hadde thus ised, That other gailer no leng abod,</p>
1630	<p>Boute by the rop adoun he glod. Whan the rop failede in is hond, Beves held up that gode bronde And felde to gronde that sori wight,</p>	<p>“Yes!” answered Bevis, all in deceit, And meanwhile he knotted the rope there As high as he could reach. Then Bevis pleased, with a mournful tone: “For the love of Saint Mohammad, Slide down the rope fast And help, so that this thief will be dead!” When he had spoken so, The other jailor no longer lingered, But glided down on the rope. When his hand let go of the line, Bevis held up that good blade And dropped to the ground that sorry creature,</p>

⁴⁰ *His felawe above gan to crie*: The Chetham Library, no. 8009, Manchester MS has *to his*. *Al for gile* (1621) suggests that Bevis is mimicking the first jailor’s voice to trick the second. In Kölberg, *Beues*, 84.

<p>1640</p>	<p>Thourhout is bodi that swerd he pight. Now er thai ded, the geilers tweie, And Beves lith to the rakenteie, His lif him thoughte al to long, Thre daies after he ne et ne drong, Tofore that, for soth to sai A was woned, ech other dai Of berelof to have a quarter To his mete and to his diner; And, for is meisters wer bothe ded, Thre daies after he ne et no bred. To Jesu Crist he bed a bone, And He him grauntede wel sone; So yerne he gan to Jesu speke, That his vetres gonne breke And of his medel the grete ston.</p>	<p>Putting the sword through his body. Now the two jailors were dead, And Bevis lay there in fetters. His life seemed all too long to him. For three days after he did not eat or drink. Before then, to tell the truth, He was used to having A quarter of a barley-loaf Each other day for his food and dinner. And now, as his masters were both dead, For three days after he did not eat bread. He prayed a plea to Jesus Christ, And He very soon granted it to him. So fervently did he call on Jesus That his fetters began to crack Along with the boulder by his waist. He immediately thanked Jesus Christ And went quickly out of the prison On the rope the jailor came down on, And went straight into the castle. But it was about midnight. He looked around near and far; He saw no man awake there. Further on, he noticed a light From a chamber under a watchtower. Inside it he saw torches lit. Bevis went directly there And found twelve knights asleep Who were there to guard the castle. He found the chamber door unlocked And secretly stole in And clothed himself in iron armor, The best that he could find in his need, And fitted himself with a good sword And took a firm spear in his hand. He threw a shield around his neck And went out of the chamber in haste. Further on he heard in a stable A group of pages, without a lie, As they sat in their noisy debauchery. Bevis sprang in through the door, And so that they could not betray him, With his hand he made them fight. And when the Saracens were killed, He led forth the best steed And saddled it and dressed it well. He went forth at once And began to cry in a loud voice, Calling the porter's name. "Wake up," he shouted, "proud fellow! You ought to be hung and quartered. Hurry! The gates are unlocked, Bevis has escaped out of prison, And I am sent now on his account</p>
<p>1660</p>	<p>Jesu Crist he thankede anon; A wente quik out of prisoun Be the rop the gailer com adoun, And wente in to the castel right, Ac it was aboute the midnight; He lokede aboute fer and ner, No man wakande ne segh he ther; He beheld forther a lite To a chaunber under a garite, Thar-inne he segh torges ilight; Beves wente theder ful right; Twelf knightes a fond ther aslepe, That hadde the castel for to kepe; The chaunber dore a fond unsteke, And priveliche he gan in reke And armede him in yrene wede, The beste, that he fond at nede, And gerte him with a gode bronde And tok a gode spere in is honde; A scheld aboute is nekke he cast</p>	<p>1660</p>
<p>1670</p>	<p>And wente out of the chaunber in hast. Forther a herde in a stable Pages fele, withoute fable, Ase thai sete in here raging; In at the dore Beves gan spring, And for thai scholde him nought wrain, Under his hond he made him plai. And whan the Sarasins wer islawe, The beste stede he let forth drawe And sadelede hit and wel adight. And wente him forth anon right And gan to crie with loude steven And the porter he gan nevenen: "Awake!" a seide, "proude felawe, Thow were worthi ben hanged and drawe! Highe, the gates wer unsteke, Beves is out of prisoun reke, And icham sent now for is sake,</p>	<p>1670</p>

1690	<p>The treitour yif ich mighte of-take!" The porter was al bewaped: "Allas!" queth he, "is Beves ascaped?"</p>	<p>To see if I might catch the traitor!" The porter was all befuddled; "Alas!" he said, "Has Bevis escaped?"</p>
	<p>Up he caste the gates wide, And Beves bi him gan out ride And tok is wei ful hastelie Toward the londe of Ermonie. He nadde ride in is wei Boute seve mile of that contrei, He wex asleped wondersore, He mighte ride no forthermore; He reinede his hors to a chesteine</p>	<p>He threw the gates open wide, And Bevis rode by him And took his way in great haste Toward the land of Armenia. He had ridden on his way no more Than seven miles from that country When he grew exceedingly sleepy. He could not ride any further. He tied his horse to a chestnut tree</p>
1700	<p>And felle aslepe upon the pleine; And also a slep, in is swevene Him thoughte, Brademond and kinges seven Stod over him with swerdes drawe, Al slepande him wolde han slawe. Of that sweven he was of-drad; He lep to hors ase he wer mad, Towarde Damas agein, aplight! Now reste we her a lite wight, And speke we scholle of Brademond.</p>	<p>And fell asleep upon the plain. And as he slept, in his dream, It seemed that Brademond and seven kings Stood over him with swords drawn, Ready to slay him as he was sleeping. He woke up in dread from that nightmare. He leaped on his horse as if he were mad, Toward Damascus again, in fact. Now let's pause here a little while, And we will speak of Brademond.</p>
1710	<p>Amorwe, whan he it hadde ifonde, That Beves was ascaped so, In is hertte him was ful wo. That time be comin acent Thar was comin parlement, Erles, barouns, lasse and more, And fiftene kinges were samned thore. To hem Brademond tolde thare, That Beves was fro him ifare, And bad help with might and main,</p>	<p>In the morning, after he found out That Bevis had escaped so, He was very troubled at heart. At that time, by common assent, There was to be an open parliament. Earls, barons, high and low, And fifteen kings were summoned there. Brademond told them there That Bevis had escaped from him And asked their help, with strength and force, To fetch Bevis back again.</p>
1720	<p>For to feche Beves again. A king thar was swithe fer, His nam was hote Grander. An hors he hadde of gret pris, That was icleped Trinchefis: For him a yaf selver wight, Er he that hors have might. He armede him in yrene wede, Seve knightes he gan with him lede And prikede forth on Trenchefis</p>	<p>One king there was very ruthless; His name was Grander. He had a horse of great worth Which was named Trinchefis. He paid its weight in silver for it Before he could have that horse. He clothed himself in iron armor. He led out seven knights alongside him And spurred forth on Trinchefis, And thought to win great honor.</p>
1730	<p>And wende wenne meche pris; And Beves sone he gan se, Ase he rod toward the cité. "Ayilt thee," a seide, "thow fox welp, Thee god schel thee nothing help, For her thourgh min hondes one, For sothe, thow schelt thee lif forgon!"</p>	<p>He soon spotted Bevis As he rode toward the city. "Yield yourself," he cried, "you fox cub."⁴¹ Your god will give you no help now! For here with my own hands alone, In truth, you will lose your life."</p>

⁴¹ *Fox welp*: Being called a fox's cub does not sound very insulting in PDE, but in ME culture animal comparisons were usually negative, and foxes were constant nuisances for livestock farmers.

1740	<p>“So helpe me God!” queth Beves tho, “Hit were no meistri, me to slo, For this is the ferthe dai agon, Mete ne drinke ne bot i non: Ac nathes, God it wot, Yif ich alle nedes mot, Yit ich wile asaie, A lite box thee to paie!”</p>	<p>“So help me God!” Bevis protested then, “There would be no honor in slaying me, For this is the fourth day passed That I have had no food or drink. But nonetheless, God knows, If it must be so, I will take you on, And pay you with a strike or two!”⁴²</p>
1750	<p>King Grander was of herte grim And rod to Beves and he to him; And ase thei bothe togedre mete, With here launces thei gonne mete, That hit gonnen al to-drive And teborsten on pises five. Here swerdes drowe knightes stoute And fighteth faste, it is no doute; The medwe squaughte of her dentes, The fur flegth out, so spark o flintes; Thus thai leide on in bothe side Betwene midmorwe and undertide.</p>	<p>King Grander was grim at heart And rode toward Bevis, and he to him. And as they both crashed together, Their lances met So that they were overtaxed And burst into five pieces. The sturdy knights drew their swords And fought closely, there is no doubt. The meadow was torn by their strokes; The fire flew out, like sparks from flint. In this way they battled on both sides Between mid-morning and noon.</p>
1760	<p>King Grander was agremed strong, That Sire Beves him stod so long, And with is swerd a hitte is scheld, A quarter fel in to the feld, Hauberk, plate and aktoun, In to Beves forther arsoun Half a fot he karf down right. Tho Beves segh that strok of might, A seide: “That dent was wel iset, Fasten I wile another bet!”</p>	<p>King Grander was fiercely angered That Sir Bevis had withstood him so long, And with his sword he hit his shield So that a quarter fell onto the field. Through mail, armor, and jacket, Into Bevis’ farthest saddlebow, He carved down a good half a foot. When Bevis saw that mighty stroke, He said, “That blow was well set. I will do another one better!”</p>
1770	<p>With that word Beves smot down Grander is scheld with is fachoun, And is left honde be the wrest, Hit flegth awei thourgh help of Crist. Tho Grander hadde his scheld ilore, He faught ase he wer wode therfore; A yaf Beves strokes that tide, Non ne moste other abide. Beves ther-of was agreved And smot of King Grander is heved, The dede kors in that throwe Fel out over the sadel bowe.</p>	<p>With those words Bevis struck down Grander’s shield with its ornamented blade, And his left hand by the wrist Flew away through the help of Christ. Though Grander had lost his shield, He fought as if he were mad because of it. At that moment he gave Bevis blows That no one else would have endured. Bevis was enraged because of it And struck off King Grander’s head. With that blow the dead corpse Fell out over the saddlebow.</p>
1780	<p>Tho King Grander was islawe, The seve knightes of hethen lawe Beves slough that ilche stounde, So hit is in Frensch yfounde. For nought Beves nolde belave, The beter hors a wolde have; Beves Trenchefis bestrit,</p>	<p>When King Grander was slain, Bevis killed the seven knights Of heathen lands at that moment; So it is found in the French. Bevis would not hesitate for anything; He wanted to have the better horse. Bevis mounted Trenchefis,</p>

⁴² *Lite box*: Two other MSS have *strok or twoo* (Egerton 2862 and Royal Library, Naples, XIII, B 29). In Kölberg, *Bevis*, 89.

1790	<p>And in is weie forth a rit, And Brademond with al is ost Com after with meche bost; So longe hii han Beves drive, That hii come to the clive, Ther the wilde se was. Harkneth now a wondercas! In to the se a moste, iwis, Other fighte aghenes al hethenes. To Jesu Crist he bad a bone, And He him grauntede wel sone: “Lord,” a sede, “hevene king, Schepere of erthe and alle thing, Thow madest fisch ase wel also man,</p>	<p>And rode forth on his way, And Brademond, with all his men, Came following with wild boasts. They drove Bevis for so long Until they came to the cliffs Where the wild sea was. Now hear about a miraculous thing! He had to go into the sea, surely, Or else fight against all the heathens. He made a plea to Jesus Christ, And He soon granted it to him: “Lord,” he said, “Heaven’s king, Shaper of Earth and all things, You made the fish as well as men, Who know nothing about sin.</p>
1800	<p>That nothing of senne ne can, Ne nought of fisches kenne Never yet ne dede senne, Of this hethene hounde, That beste Thee and bounde And bete Thee body to the dethe, Tharfore ich may also ethe To water fle in this stede, To fisch, that never senne dede, Than her daien in londe</p>	<p>Nor have any kin of fish Ever yet committed any crimes, Unlike these heathen hounds Who overcame and bound You And beat Your body to death. Therefore I might as easily Flee into the water on this steed, Among the fish, who never sin, Rather than dying here on land By the hands of all these Saracens!”</p>
1810	<p>In al this Sarasines honde! Beves smot is hors, that it lep In to the se, that was wel dep. Whan he in to the se cam, Over the se, I wot, a swam; In a dai and in a night A bar over that gentil knight. Whan he com of that wilde brok, His gode stede him resede and schok, And Beves, for hunger in that stounde</p>	<p>Bevis struck his horse so that it leaped Into the sea, which was very deep. When it plunged into the water, It swam, I swear, over the waves. For a day and a night It carried that noble knight. When it came from that wild water, His good steed raised itself and shook, And because of its hunger at that moment, The horse threw Bevis down to the ground.</p>
1820	<p>The hors threw him doun to the grounde. “Allas!” queth Beves, whan he doun cam, “Whilom ichadde an erldam And an hors gode and snel, That men clepede Arondel; Now ich wolde yeve hit kof For a schiver of a lof!” A restede him ther a lite tide, His gode stede he gan bestride And rod over dale and doun,</p>	<p>“Alas!” said Bevis when he came down, “Once I had an earldom And a horse, fine and swift, That men called Arondel. Now I would give it all away at once For a slice of a loaf!” He rested himself there a little while. Then he mounted his good steed And rode over hill and dale Until he came to a great town.</p>
1830	<p>Til he com to a gret toun; The levedi thar-of over the castel lai, And Beves hire sone of-say And wende ben al out of care And thoughte wel to spede thare. Beves to the castel gate rit And spak to hire, above him sit: “Dame,” a seide, “that sit above, For that ilche lordes love, On wham thin herte is on iset:</p>	<p>The lady of the castle sat there, And Bevis soon spotted her And perceived that she was troubled, And thought it best to hurry there. Bevis rode to the castle gate And spoke to her who sat above him: “Lady,” he said, “who dwells above, For the love of the same lord That your heart is set on,</p>

1840	<p>Yeve me today a meles met!” The levedi answerde him tho: “Boute thow fro the gate go, Thee wer beter elleswhar than her; Go, or the tit an evel diner! Me lord,” she seide, “is a geaunt And leveth on Mahoun and Tervagaunt And felleth Cristene men to grounde, For he hateth hem ase hounde!” “Be God!” queth Beves, “I swere an othe:</p>	<p>Grant me today a meal’s portion!” The lady then answered him, “Unless you go away from the gate, You would be better off elsewhere. Go, before you get a foul dinner! My lord,” she continued, “is a giant And he follows Mohammad and Tervagant. He drops Christian men to the ground, For he hates them like dogs!” “By God,” vowed Bevis, “I swear an oath. Whether he is he fair or foul, I will have some food here For love or hate, whatever comes to me!” The lady was very offended with all that And went down into the hall And told her lord at once How a man had sworn That he would not go from the gate Before he had some food. The giant was amazingly strong And thirty feet long in length. He took a club into his hand And made his way forth to the gate. He took good notice of Bevis, For he knew his steed very well. “You are caught, thief, that is a fact. Where did you steal Trenchefis, The steed you ride on here? It was my brother Grander’s!” “I gave Grander a hood,” said Bevis, “and gave him a tonsure.”⁴³ When he was pressed under me, I know well, I made him a priest, And I will make you an archdeacon Before I ever go from you.” Then the giant said, “Sir, If you killed my brother Grander, I would not let you live For all the gold in this castle!” “Nor I you,” said Bevis, “I promise!” And so the hostilities were inflamed. The giant, whom I spoke of before, Had a staff which he took to the fight That was twenty feet in length. It was massive and in no way light. He struck Bevis with it, A harsh blow with no mercy, But he failed in his aim</p>
1850	<p>Be him lef and be him lothe, Her ich wile have the mete With love or eighe, whather I mai gete!” The levedi swithe wroth with alle Wente hire forth in to the halle And tolde hire lord anon fore, How a man hadde iswore, That he nolde fro the ghete, Er he hadde ther the mete. The geaunt was wonderstrong,</p>	
1860	<p>Rome thretti fote long; He tok a levour in is hond, And forth to the gate he wond. Of Beves he nam gode hede, Ful wel a knew Beves is stede: “Thow ert nome thef, ywis: Whar stele thow stede Trenchefis, That thow ridest upon here? Hit was me brotheres Grandere!” “Grander,” queth Beves, “I yaf hod And made him a kroune brod; Tho he was next under me fest, Wel I wot, ich made him prest, And high dekne ich wile make thee, Er ich ever fro thee te!” Thanne seide the geaunt: “Meister sire, Slough thow me brother Grandere, For al this castel ful of golde A live lete thee ich nolde!” “Ne ich thee,” queth Beves, “I trowe!”</p>	
1870	<p>Thus beginneth grim to growe. The geaunt, that ich spak of er, The staf, that he to fighte ber, Was twenti fote in lengthe be tale, Tharto gret and nothing smale: To Sire Beves a smot therwith A sterne strok withouten grith, Ac a failede of his divis</p>	
1880		

⁴³ *And made him a kroune brod*: Sir Bevis here begins a series of dark jokes on ordaining Grander as a priest by giving his head an extra-close shave, i.e. cutting it off. For more clerical puns and jokes, see *Gamelyn* 512, 529.

1890	<p>And in the heved smot Trenchefis, That ded to grounde fel the stede. "O," queth Beves, "so God me spede, Thow havest don gret vileinie, Whan thow sparde me bodi And for me gilt min hors aqueld, Thow witest him, that mai nought weld. Be God, I swere thee an oth: Thow schelt nought, whan we tegoth, Laughande me wende fram, Now thow havest mad me gram!"</p>	<p>And hit Trenchefis in the head, And the steed fell dead to the ground. "Oh!" exclaimed Bevis, "so God help me, You have done a villainous crime When you spare my body And kill this horse for my actions! You blame it when it has no control. By God, I swear you an oath. You will not, when we meet together, Walk away from me laughing. Now you have made me fierce!"</p>
1900	<p>Beves is swerd anon up swapte, He and the geaunt togedre rapte And delde strokes mani and fale: The nombre can I nought telle in tale. The geaunt up is clobbe haf And smot to Beves with is staf, That his scheld flegh from him thore Thre akres brede and sumdel more. Tho was Beves in strong erur And karf ato the grete levour And on the geauntes brest a wonde, That negh a felde him to the grounde.</p>	<p>Bevis swept up his sword at once, As he and the giant rushed together, And dealt out strokes, many and fast. I cannot count the number of them. The giant heaved up his club And struck at Bevis with his staff So that his shield was thrown from him, Three acres away and somewhat more. Then Bevis was in a hot temper And cut the great club in two And wounded the giant on his breast, Which nearly brought him to the ground.</p>
1910	<p>The geaunt thoughte this bataile hard, Anon he drough to him a dart, Thourgh Beves scholder he hit schet, The blod ran down to Beves fet, Tho Beves segh is owene blod, Out of is wit he wex negh wod, Unto the geaunt ful swithe he ran And kedde that he was doughti man, And smot ato his nekke bon:</p>	<p>The giant thought this battle a hard one. He quickly drew a spear to himself And hurled it through Bevis' shoulder. The blood ran down to Bevis' feet. When Bevis saw his own blood, He nearly became enraged out of his wits. He ran in a rush to the giant And proved that he was a stout warrior, Cutting his neck bone in two. The giant fell to the ground at once.</p>
1920	<p>The geaunt fel to grounde anon. Beves wente in at castel gate, The levedi a mette ther-ate. "Dame!" a seide, "go, yeve me mete, That ever have thow Cristes hete!" The levedi, sore adrad with alle, Ladde Beves in to the halle, And of everiche sonde, That him com to honde,</p>	<p>Bevis went in past the castle gate And he met the lady there. "Madam," he said, "go, bring me food, Or you will have Christ's hate forever!" The lady, badly frightened by all this, Brought Bevis into the hall And from every dish That came to his hand, He had her eat of it first So that she would do him no injury, And drink of the wine first So that no poison would be in it.</p>
1930	<p>A dede hire ete al ther ferst, That she ne dede him no berst, And drinke ferst of the win, That no poisoun was ther-in. Whan Beves hadde ete inough, A keverchef to him a drough In that ilche stounde, To stope mide is wonde. "Dame, dame," Beves sede, "Let sadele me a gode stede, For hennes ich wile ride,</p>	<p>When Bevis had eaten enough, He drew a handkerchief to him At that same moment To stop up his wound. "Lady, lady," Bevis said, "Have a good horse saddled for me, For I will leave and ride away. I will no longer linger here." The lady said that she would gladly.</p>
1940	<p>I nel lo lenger her abide!" The levedi seide, she wolde fawe;</p>	

1950	<p>A gode stede she let forth drawe And sadeled hit and wel adight, And Beves, that hendi knight, Into the sadel a lippte, That no stirop he ne dripte. Forth him wente Sire Bevoun, Til he com withoute the toun In to a grene mede. “Now, loverd Crist,” a sede, “Yeve it, Brademond the king, He and al is ofspring, Wer right her upon this grene: Now ich wolde of me tene Swithe wel ben awreke, Scholde he never go ne speke: Now min hunger is me aset, Ne liste me never fighten bet!”</p>	<p>She had a fine steed brought forth And had it saddled and well equipped, And Bevis, that fearless knight, Leaped into the saddle, So that he touched no stirrups. Sir Bevis went forth Until he came outside the town Into a green meadow. “Now, Lord Jesus,” he said, “If you granted it that King Brademond, Him and all his offspring, Were right here upon this green, I would be be very well avenged For my pain. He would never leave or speak with his mouth. Now that my hunger is eased I was never more ready to fight!”</p>
1960	<p>Forth a wente be the strem, Til a come to Jurisalem; To the patriark a wente cof, And al his lif he him schrof And tolde him how hit was bego, Of is wele and of is wo. The patriark hadde reuthe Of him and ek of is treuthe And forbed him upon his lif, That he never toke wif, Boute she were clene maide.</p>	<p>He went forth along the stream Until he came to Jerusalem. He went straight to the patriarch And took confession for his past life; And he told him how it had begun, Of his successes and his failures.⁴⁴ The patriarch had pity On him and his vows as well, And forbade him, upon his life, That he never take a wife Unless she were a virgin maid.</p>
1970	<p>“Nai, for sothe!” Sire Beves saide. On a dai aghenes the eve Of the patriarke he tok is leve; Erliche amorwe, whan it was dai, Forth a wente in is wai; And also a rod himself alone: “Lord,” a thoughte, “whar mai I gone? Whar ich in to Ingelonde fare? Nai,” a thoughte, “what sholde I thare, Boute yif ichadde ost to gader,</p>	<p>“I will not, for certain!” Sir Bevis said. On that day toward evening, He made his goodbye to the patriarch. Early in the morning, when it was day, He went forth on his way. And as he rode alone by himself,⁴⁵ “Lord,” he thought, “what should I do? Where should I go in England? No!” he decided. “What would I do there Unless I had an army to gather To slay my stepfather?”</p>
1980	<p>For to sle me stifader?” He thoughte, that he wolde an hie In to the londe of Ermonie, To Ermonie, that was is bane, To his lemman Josiane. And also a wente theder right, A mette with a gentil knight, That in the londe of Ermonie Hadde bore him gode companie;</p>	<p>He resolved that he would hurry on Into the land of Armenia— To Armenia, which had been his curse— To his darling Josanne. And as he went straight there, He met with a noble knight Who had given him good companionship In the land of Armenia.</p>

⁴⁴ A sentimental scene for the audience, as Bevis has not been in a Christian church since at least his childhood.

⁴⁵ *Also a rod himself alone*: As with double negatives, ME poetic style sometimes piles on redundant synonyms for being together (possibly influenced by the lost OE dual case) or being alone.

1990	<p>Thai kiste hem anon with that And ather askede of otheres stat. Thanne seide Beves and lough: “Ich ave fare hard enough, Sofred bothe hunger and chele And other peines mani and fele Thourgh King Ermines gile: Yet ich thenke to yelde is while, For he me sente to Brademond, To have slawe me that stonde: God be thanked, a dede nought so,</p>	<p>They kissed each other upon meeting And asked about each other’s condition. Then Bevis laughed and said, “I have fared hard enough, Suffered both hunger and cold, And other pains, many and strong, Through King Ermine’s guile. For that I intend to repay him.⁴⁶ He sent me to Brademond To have me killed at that time. May God be thanked that he did not do so; But I have spent these seven years In his prison with great suffering, And now I have escaped far from him Through God’s grace and my own cunning. But I blame it all on King Ermine. And if it were not for his daughter Josanne, For certain, I would be his mortal enemy!”</p>
2000	<p>Ac in is prisoun with meche wo Ihave leie this seven yare, Ac now icham from him ifare Thourgh Godes grace and min engyn, Ac al ich wite it King Ermyn, And, ne wer is doughter Josiane, Sertes, ich wolde ben is bane!” “Josiane,” queth the knight, “is a wif Aghen hire wille with meche strif. Seve yer hit is gon and more,</p>	<p>“Josanne,” replied the knight, “is now a wife, Against her will and with great coercion. Seven years has passed and more Since the rich king Yvor has married her And brought her to Mombraunt, Both for his table and for his bed. And he has the sword Morgelai And Arondel, that fine horse. But since the time that I was born, I never before had such amusement As I had in that moment When I saw King Yvor ride Toward Mombrant on Arondel! The horse was not pleased at all. He bolted away with the king, Through fields and woods, without a lie, And threw him down in the mud, Almost killing him in its haste. Before they could catch the steed, They had to lay traps in the countryside. But since then, without a lie, That horse was so sorely angered that day That he has never come out of the stable. Since then, no man dares to ride him.”</p>
2010	<p>That the riche King Yvore To Mombraunt hath hire wedde Bothe to bord and to bedde, And hath the swerd Morgelai And Arondel, the gode palfrai: Ac sithe the time, that I was bore, Swiche game hadde ich never before, Ase ich hadde that ilche tide, Whan I segh King Yvor ride Toward Mombraunt on Arondel;</p>	<p>And Arondel, that fine horse. But since the time that I was born, I never before had such amusement As I had in that moment When I saw King Yvor ride Toward Mombrant on Arondel! The horse was not pleased at all. He bolted away with the king, Through fields and woods, without a lie, And threw him down in the mud, Almost killing him in its haste. Before they could catch the steed, They had to lay traps in the countryside. But since then, without a lie, That horse was so sorely angered that day That he has never come out of the stable. Since then, no man dares to ride him.”</p>
2020	<p>The hors was nought ipaied wel: He arnede awai with the king Thourgh felde and wode, withouten lesing, And in a mure don him cast, Almest he hadde deied in hast. Ac er hii wonne the stede, Ropes in the contré thai leide; Ac never sithe, withoute fable, Ne com the stede out of the stable, So sore he was aneied that tide;</p>	<p>At this news Bevis was delighted; He could not put his joy in words. “If Josanne were as faithful,” he thought, “As my steed Arondel is, I would still yet come out of woe!” And then he asked the knight,</p>
2030	<p>Sithe dorste no man on him ride!” For this tiding Beves was blithe, His joie kouthe he no man kithe. “Wer Josiane,” a thoughte, “ase lele, Else is me stede Arondel, Yet scholde ich come out of wo!” And at the knight he askede tho:</p>	<p>And then he asked the knight,</p>

⁴⁶ *Ich thenke to yelde is while*: TEAMS suggests something close to “I think to yield would be a good idea,” but the context does not suggest it. Some MSS have *hope*, i.e. intend, for *thenke*. *Quiten hir while* can also be a ME idiom for “repay one’s efforts.”

2040	<p>“Whiderwardes is Mombraunt?” “Sere,” a sede, “be Tervagaunt, Thow might nought thus wende forth, Thow most terne al aghen north!” Beves ternede his stede And rod north, Gode spede; Ever a was pasaunt, Til a com to Mombraunt. Mombraunt is a riche cité; In al the londe of Sarsine Nis ther non therto iliche Ne be fele parti so riche.</p>	<p>“Where is Mombrant from here?” “Sir,” he said, “by Tervagant, You must not travel this way; You must go completely north.” Bevis turned his steed And rode north, God speed him! He was moving constantly Until he came to Mombrant. Mombrant is a rich city. In all the lands of the Saracens There is none like it That is even partly so grand.</p>
2050	<p>And whan that hende knight Bevoun Come withouten the toun, Tharwith a palmer he mette, And swithe faire he him grette: “Palmer,” a sede, “whar is the king?” “Sire,” a seide, “an honting With kinges fiftene.” “And whar,” a seide, “is the quene?” “Sire,” a seide, “in hire bour.” “Palmer,” a seide, “paramour, Yem me thine wede</p>	<p>And when the noble knight Bevis Came near the town, He met up with a pilgrim And greeted him courteously. “Pilgrim,” Bevis said, “where is the king?” “Sir,” he answered, “he is hunting With fifteen kings.” “And where,” Bevis said, “is the queen?” “Sir,” he answered, “in her chamber.” “Pilgrim,” Bevis said, “for kindness’ sake, Trade me your clothes For mine and for my horse.”</p>
2060	<p>For min and for me stede!” “God yeve it,” queth the palmare, “We hadde drive that chefare!” Beves of is palfrei alighte And schrede the palmer as a knighte And yaf him is hors, that he rod in, For is bordon and is sklavin. The palmer rod forth ase a king, And Beves went also a bretheling. Whan he com to the castel gate,</p>	<p>“God grant it,” said the pilgrim, “That we drive that bargain!” Bevis dismounted from his palfrey And clothed the pilgrim as a knight And gave him his horse that he rode on, For his staff and his cloak. The pilgrim rode forth like a king, And Bevis walked as a beggar. When he came to the castle gate, He immediately found Many pilgrims standing there From many kinds of lands, And he asked them at that moment What they were all doing there.</p>
2070	<p>Anon he fond thar-ate Mani palmer thar stonde Of fele kene londe, And he askede hem in that stede, What hii alle thar dede. Thanne seide on, that thar stod: “We beth icome to have gode, And so thow ert also!” “Who,” queth Beves, “schel it us do?” “The quene, God hire schilde fro care!”</p>	<p>When he came to the castle gate, He immediately found Many pilgrims standing there From many kinds of lands, And he asked them at that moment What they were all doing there. One of them who stood there said, “We are here to receive charity, And so you will as well.” Bevis said, “Who will give it to us?” “The quene, may God protect her from worries! She loves pilgrims very much. All that she finds here, Every day of the year, She feeds them generously And gives them fine clothes, All for a knight’s love—Bevis, Who was born in Southampton. She would make a rich man of anyone Who could tell news of him!”</p>
2080	<p>Meche she loveth palmare; Al that she mai finden here, Everiche dai in the yere, Faire she wile hem fede And yeve hem riche wede For a knightes love, Bevoun, That was iboren at Southamtoun; To a riche man she wolde him bringe, That kouthe telle of him tiding!”</p>	<p>Bevis asked, “When will this happen?” He said, “Between mid-morning and noon.”</p>
2090	<p>“Whanne,” queth Beves, “schel this be don?” A seide: “Betwene middai and noun.”</p>	<p>Bevis asked, “When will this happen?” He said, “Between mid-morning and noon.”</p>

	<p>Beves, hit ful wel he sai, Hit nas boute yong dai; A thoughte that he wolde er than Wende aboute the barbican, For to loke and for to se, How it mighte best be, Yif he the castel wolde breke, Whar a mighte best in reke; And also a com be a touret, 2100 That was in the castel iset, A herde wepe and crie; Thederward he gan him hie. “O allas,” she seide, “Bevoun, Hende knight of Southhamtoun, Now ichave bide that day, That to the treste I ne may: That ilche God, that thow of speke, He is fals and thow ert eke!” In al the sevene yer eche dai</p>	<p>Bevis saw full well That it was still early in the day. He decided that before then he would Walk around the tower In order to look and to find out How it might best be done If he could break into the castle, And where he might best sneak in. And as he passed by a turret That was set into the castle wall, He heard a woman weeping and crying. He hastened in that direction. “Oh, alas!” she said, “Bevis, Handsome knight of Southampton, Now I have lived to see the day That I cannot trust in you. The same god that you spoke of Is false, and you are also!” In all those seven years, each day, Josanne, that fair maid, Was accustomed to making such grief, All for Sir Bevis’ sake. The lady began to go to the gate To see the pilgrims there. And Bevis, after a while, Walked toward the gate. The pilgrims all pushed in; Bevis waited and was the last. And when the maid saw him there, She had no idea at all it was Bevis. “<i>You seem,</i>” she said, “to be a man of honor. You will be first this day And preside at the master’s table.⁴⁷ You seem gracious and courteous.” They had food and drink throughout, Both beer and mixed wine in plenty.⁴⁸ They dined very well. Then the queen said to each pilgrim, “Have you ever heard stories From any people, or any mention, In any field or in town Of a knight, Bevis of Southampton?” “No,” replied all that were there. “<i>What about you, newcomer?</i>” she said. Then Bevis laughed and said, “<i>I know that knight well enough!</i> He is at home,” he said, “in his country.</p>
	<p>Josiane, that faire mai, Was woned swich del to make, Al for Sire Beves sake. The levedi gan to the gate te, The palmeres thar to se; And Beves, after anon To the gate he gan gon. The palmers gonne al in threste, Beves abod and was the laste; And whan the maide segh him thar, 2110 Of Beves she nas nothing war; “<i>Thee semest,</i>” queth she, “man of anour, Thow schelt this dai be priour And beginne oure deis: <i>Thee semest hende and corteis.</i>” Metē and drinke thai hadde afyn, Bothe piment and plentē a wyn, Swithe wel thai hadde ifare; Thanne seide the quene to eche palmare: “Herde ever eni of yow telle</p>	<p>2110 In eni lede or eni spelle, Or in feld other in toun, Of a knight, Beves of Hamtoun?” “<i>Nai!</i>” queth al that thar ware. “<i>What thow?</i>” she seide, “<i>niwe palmare?</i>” Thanne seide Beves and lough: “<i>That knight ich knowe wel inough!</i> Atom,” a seide, “<i>in is contré</i></p>
	<p>2120 Of Beves she nas nothing war; “<i>Thee semest,</i>” queth she, “man of anour, Thow schelt this dai be priour And beginne oure deis: <i>Thee semest hende and corteis.</i>” Metē and drinke thai hadde afyn, Bothe piment and plentē a wyn, Swithe wel thai hadde ifare; Thanne seide the quene to eche palmare: “Herde ever eni of yow telle</p>	<p>2120 In eni lede or eni spelle, Or in feld other in toun, Of a knight, Bevis of Hamtoun?” “<i>Nai!</i>” queth al that thar ware. “<i>What thow?</i>” she seide, “<i>niwe palmare?</i>” Thanne seide Beves and lough: “<i>That knight ich knowe wel inough!</i> Atom,” a seide, “<i>in is contré</i></p>
	<p>2130 In eni lede or eni spelle, Or in feld other in toun, Of a knight, Beves of Hamtoun?” “<i>Nai!</i>” queth al that thar ware. “<i>What thow?</i>” she seide, “<i>niwe palmare?</i>” Thanne seide Beves and lough: “<i>That knight ich knowe wel inough!</i> Atom,” a seide, “<i>in is contré</i></p>	<p>2130 In eni lede or eni spelle, Or in feld other in toun, Of a knight, Bevis of Hamtoun?” “<i>Nai!</i>” queth al that thar ware. “<i>What thow?</i>” she seide, “<i>niwe palmare?</i>” Thanne seide Beves and lough: “<i>That knight ich knowe wel inough!</i> Atom,” a seide, “<i>in is contré</i></p>

⁴⁷ *Deis*: The dais in a medieval hall was a raised platform where the lord and nobility would dine, separate from servants and commoners. The practice survives in wedding receptions.

⁴⁸ *Piment*: Piment is a variety of mead (honey beer) fermented with grape juice. It was often spiced with cinnamon or nutmeg, or served warm with fruit.

2140	<p>Icham an erl and also is he; At Rome he made me a spel Of an hors, men clepede Arondel: Wide whar ichave iwent And me warisoun ispent I sought hit bothe fer and ner, Men telleth me, that it is her; Yif ever lovedestow wel that knight, Let me of that hors have a sight!” What helpeth hit, to make fable? She ladde Beves to the stable:</p>	<p>I am an earl and he is too. He told me a story in Rome About a horse that men call Arondel. In all the wide lands I have travelled, And have spent my possessions, I looked for it both near and far. Men tell me that it is here. If you ever loved that knight well, Allow me a sight of that horse.” What good would it do to lie? She brought Bevis to the stable.</p>
2150	<p>Josian beheld him before, She segh his browe to-tore; After Bonifas she gan grede, At stable dore to him she sede; “Be the moder, that me hath bore, Ner this mannes browe to-tore, Me wolde thenke be his fasoun, That hit were Beves of Hamtoun!” Whan that hors herde nevene His kende lordes stevene, His rakenteis he al terof</p>	<p>Josanne gazed at him before her; She saw his scarred brow. She called for Boniface. At the stable door she said to him, “By the mother who bore me, If this man’s brow were not all torn, I would think by his manners That it was Bevis of Southampton!” When that horse heard the sound Of his rightful lord’s voice, He broke away from his fetters And galloped quickly into the court And neighed and made a great display With great joy on each side.</p>
2160	<p>And wente in to the kourt wel kof And neide and made miche pride With gret joie be ech a side. “Allas!” tho queth Josiane, “Wel mani a man is bane To dai he worth ilaught, Er than this stede ben icaught!” Thanne seide Beves and lough: “Ich can take hit wel inough: Wolde ye,” a sede, “yeve me leve, Hit ne scholde no man greve!” “Take hit thanne,” she sede, “And in to stable thow it lede And teie it thar it stod, And thow schelt have mede gode!” Beves to the hors tegh; Tho the hors him knew and segh. He ne wawede no fot, Til Beves hadde the stirrop;</p>	<p>“Alas!” Josanne then said, “Many a man is fated To be laughed at today Before this horse is caught.” Then Bevis chuckled and said, “I can catch him well enough. If you,” he said, “give me permission, No man will be grieved by him.” “Catch him, then,” she said, “And lead him into the stable And tie him where he stood, And you will have a good reward.” Bevis walked to the horse. When the horse saw him and knew him, He did not move a foot Until Bevis had the stirrup on And threw himself into the saddle. With that the maid knew him well. Then Josanne cried out at once, “Oh, Bevis, dear heart, Deal with me⁴⁹</p>
2170	<p>Beves in to the sadel him threw, Tharbi that maide him wel knew. Anon seide Josian with than: “O Beves, gode lemman, Let me with thee reke In that maner, we han ispeke, And thenk, thow me to wive tok, Whan ich me false godes forsok: Now thow hast thin hors Arondel,</p>	<p>In the way we spoke about long ago! And remember how you took me as your wife When I abandoned my false gods. Now that you have your horse Arondel</p>
2180	<p>Now thow hast thin hors Arondel,</p>	<p>Now that you have your horse Arondel</p>

⁴⁹ *Reke*: *Reckon* or *deal*. But *ride* (away) in the Chetham Library, No. 8009, Manchester MS.

2190	<p>Thee swerd ich thee fette schel, And let me wende with thee sithe Hom in to thin owene kithe!” Queth Beves: “Be Godes name, I have for thee sofred meche schame, Lain in prisoun swithe strong: Yif ich thee lovede, hit were wrong! The patriark me het upon me lif, That I ne tok never wif, Boute she were maide clene; And thow havest seve year ben a quene, And everi night a king be thee: 2200 How mightow thanne maide be?” “Merci,” she seide, “lemman fre, Led me hom to thee contré, And boutte thee finde me maide wimman, Be that eni man saie can, Send me aghen to me fon Al naked in me smok alon!” Beves seide: “So I schel, In that forward I graunte wel!” Bonifas to Sire Beves sede: 2210 “Sire, thee is beter do be rede! The king cometh sone fro honting And with him mani a riche king, Fiftene told al in tale, Dukes and erles mani and fale. Whan hii fonde us alle agon, Thai wolde after us everichon With wondergret chevalrie, And do us schame and vileinie; Ac formeste, sire, withouten fable, 2220 Led Arondel in to the stable, And ate the gate thow him abide, Til the king cometh bi the ride; A wile thee asken at the frome, Whider thow schelt and whannes thow come; Sai, that thow havest wide iwent, And thow come be Dabilent, That is hennes four jurné: Sai, men wile ther the king sle, Boute him come help of sum other; 2230 And King Yvor is his brother, And whan he hereth that tiding,</p>	<p>I will fetch you your sword. Let me go with you after then, Home to your own country!” Bevis exclaimed, “For God’s sake, I have suffered great shame for you And lay in a strong prison. If I loved you, it was wrong! The patriarch ordered me on my life That I never take a wife Unless she were a virgin maid. If you have been a queen for seven years With a king beside you every night, How might you then be a maiden?” “Have mercy,” she said, “gentle heart. Take me home to your country. And if you do not find me a pure woman, And if any man can say otherwise, Send me back to my enemies Alone and naked except for my smock.” Bevis said, “So I will. I readily agree to that contract!” Boniface said to Sir Bevis, “Sir, it would be best for you to do as I advise. The king will soon return from hunting, And with many a rich king with him, Fifteen in count, Dukes and earls, many and various. When they find us all gone, They will go after us, every one, With expert horsemanship, And shame us and do us harm. But first, sir, without lie, Lead Arondel into the stable, And wait at the gate Until the king comes riding by you. He will ask you right away Who you are and where you come from. Say that you have traveled widely And you have come from Abilent,⁵⁰ Which is a four-day journey from here. Say that men there will slay the king Unless someone goes there to help him. King Yvor is his brother, And when he hears that news,</p>
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⁵⁰ *Dabilent*: This begins another wild goose chase, with some sources suggesting an Abilent tower near Jerusalem, as well as a contention that d’Abilent is a corruption of Babylon. There is a tradition of a lost medieval Abillant in Normandy, and R.P. Haviland, in researching the genealogy of his surname, suggests its location near present-day Valognes. No horse could possibly travel there from southern France, 1000 km away, in four days (2227). Either we have the wrong locations or the placenames are somewhat fanciful. R.P. Haviland, e-mail post, “Haviland-L Archives,” *Rootsweb*, accessed 29 May 2010 at <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/HAVILAND/2005-10/1128642591>

	Theder a wile an highing With al is power and is ost: Thanne mai we with lite bost Forth in oure wei go!” Beves seide: “It schel be so!” And Arondel to stable lad, Ase Bonifas him bad; And to the gate Beves yode	He will go there in haste With all his power and his host. Then we can set forth On our way with little trouble.” Bevis said, “It will be so!” And he led Arondel to the stable As Boniface told him. And Bevis walked to the gate
2240	With other beggers, that ther stode, And pyk and skrippe be is side, In a sklavin row and wide; His berd was yelw, to is brest wax And to his gerdel heng is fax. Al thai seide, that hii ne sighe So faire palmer never with eighe, Ne com ther non in that contré: Thus wondred on him that him gan se; And so stod Beves in that thring,	With the other beggars that stood there, With a staff and purse by his side, In a cloak that was rough and loose. His beard was yellow and grown to his chest, And his hair hung to his waist. All of them said that they never saw So stately a pilgrim with their own eyes Who ever came to that country. Thus those who saw him wondered, And so Bevis stood in that group, Until noon bells began to ring.
2250	Til noun belle began to ring. Fram honting com the King Yvore, And fiftene kinges him before, Dukes and erles, barouns how fale I can nought telle the righte tale. Mervaile thai hadde of Beves alle. Yvor gan Beves to him calle And seide: “Palmer, thow comst fro ferre: Whar is pes and whar is werre? Trewes tales thow canst me sain.”	King Yvor returned from hunting With fifteen kings before him, And dukes and earls and barons; How many, I cannot give the right number. They all wondered at Bevis. Yvor called Bevis to him And said, “Pilgrim, you come from far away. Where is there peace and where is there war? You can give me good information.”
2260	Thanne answerde Beves again: “Sire, ich come fro Jurisalem Fro Nazareth and fro Bedlem, Emauns castel and Synaie; Ynde, Erop, and Asie, Egippte, Grese, and Babiloine, Tars, Sesile and Sesaoine, In Fris, in Sodeine and in Tire, In Aufrik and in mani empire, Ac al is pes thar ichave went,	Then Bevis answered in return, “Sire, I come from Jerusalem, From Nazareth, and from Bethlehem, Emmaus’ castle, and Sinai; India, Europe, and Asia; Egypt, Greece, and Babylon, Tarsus, Sicily, and Saxony; I was in Friesland, Sidon, and Tyre, In Africa and in many empires. All is peaceful wherever I went, Except in the land of Abilent.
2270	Save in the lond of Dabilent. In pes mai no man come thare, Thar is werre, sorwe and care.	No man may find peace there; There is war, sorrow, and trouble.
E --	The kyng of that londe, verament, By this tyme y trow be shent	The king of that land, in truth, Must be overthrown by now, I believe. ⁵¹
2273	Thre kinges and dukes five His chevalrie adoun ginneth drive, And meche other peple ischent, Cites itake and tounes ibrent; Him to a castel thai han idrive,	Three other kings and five dukes Have driven down his cavalry, And many other people are killed, Cities taken and towns burned. They have driven him to a castle

⁵¹ Extra lines from Egerton 2862. In Kölberg, *Beues*, 110.

2280	<p>That stant be the se upon a clive, And al the ost lith him aboute, Be this to daie a is in doute,” King Yvor seide: “Allas, allas, Lordinges, this is a sori cas! That is me brother, ye witen wel, That lith beseged in that castel: To hors and armes, lasse and more, In haste swithe, that we wer thore!” Thai armede hem anon bedene, Yvor and his kinges fiftene, And to the Cité of Diablent</p>	<p>That stands by the sea upon a cliff, And all their host surrounds him. By today his life must be in doubt.” King Yvor said, “Alas, alas! Lordings, this is a sorry situation. That is my brother, you know well, Who lies besieged in that castle. To horse, to arms, high and low, At great speed so that we will be there!” They immediately armed themselves, Yvor and his fifteen kings, And they went forth together</p>
2290	<p>Alle samen forth they went. But an old king, that hight Garcy, At home he lefte to kepe the lady. Thoo seid Beves: “Make yow yare, Yif that ye wille with me fare!” Sir Bonefas answered thoo: “Yif ye wil by my consaile do: Here is an olde king Garcy, That muche can of nygremancy; He may see in his goldryng,</p>	<p>To the city of Abilent. But he left an old king whose name Was Garcy at home to guard the lady. Bevis then said, “Get yourselves ready If you wish to go with me.” Sir Boniface answered, “If you will do as I counsel. The old king Garcy is here, Who knows a great deal about sorcery. He can see in his gold ring</p>
2300	<p>What any man dooth in alle thing. I know an erbe in the forest. Now wille I sende thereafter prest And let brochen Reynessh wyne And do that yerbe anoon thereynne, And what he be, that ther-of doth drynke, He shal lerne for to wynke And slepe anon after ryght Al a day and al a nyght.” Sir Bonefas dide al this thing;</p>	<p>What any man is doing in all matters. I know an herb in the forest; I will send for it quickly now And open a cask of Rhenish wine And put that herb in it at once. And whoever drinks from it Will be induced to nod off And will sleep right away afterward For all day and all night.” Sir Boniface did all these things.</p>
2310	<p>They resen up in the dawningyng; Inowgh they toke what they wolde, Both of silver and of golde, And other tresoure they toke also, And in hur way they gunne goo. And when they were went away, Garcy awaked a morow day And had wonder swith stronge, That he hadde slept so longe.</p>	<p>They rose up at dawn; They took enough of what they wished, Both silver and gold, And took other treasures as well, And set off on their way. And when they had gone away, Garcy woke up the next morning And was full of great puzzlement That he had slept for so long.</p>
2320	<p>His ryng he gan to him tee, For to loke and for to see; And in his ryng say he thare, The queene away with the palmer was fare. To his men he grad ryght: “As armes, lordinges, for to fyght!” And tolde his folke, verament, How the queene was away went. They armed hem in ryche wede And every knyght lep on his stede, And after went al that route</p>	<p>He reached for his ring To look and to see And in his ring he saw The queen traveling with the pilgrim. He cried out to his men at once, “To arms, gentlemen, to battle!” And he told his people, truly, How the queen had gone away. They clothed themselves in fine armor, And every knight leaped on his steed And then all the company went out</p>
2330	<p>And besette hem al aboute. Thenne seide Beves to Bonefas:</p>	<p>And beset the queen and Bevis all around. Then Bevis said to Boniface,</p>

	<p>“Kepe wel Josian at this cas, And I wil wynde to bataile, Garcy and his ost assaile. I wil fonde, what I do may, I have rested me moony a day. Fyght, I will now my fylle And hem overcom by Goddes wille!” Tho Bonefas to him saide:</p>	<p>“Protect Josanne well in this moment, And I will set out to battle Andtake on Garcy and his men. I will attempt to do what I can; I have rested for many a day. I will have my fill of fighting now And will overcome them by God’s will!” Then Boniface said to him,</p>
2340	<p>“Sir, yow is better do by my reed: Ye shal be in the lasse dout, For I know the contré al about; I can bryng yow in to a cave, There a sheparde with a stave, Theyghe men hadden his deth sworn, He myght him kepe wel therfor!” Into the cave he hath hem brought; Garcy, the Kyng, hem couth fynde nought, Therfore him was swith woo;</p>	<p>“Sir, it would be better for you to do as I advise; You will be in less danger, For I know the country all around. I can bring you into a cave To be like a shepherd with a staff. Even if men had sworn your death, You could hide yourself there forever.”⁵² He brought them into the cave. Garcy, the king, could not find them And was very angered because of it. He and his host decided among themselves To turn back home again and to send The giant, Ascopart, to destroy them.⁵³</p>
2350	<p>He and his ost bethought hem thoo, Hoom agheyn for to wende And sende Ascopart hem to shende. In the cave they were al nyght Withoute mete or drynke, aplyght. Two dayes it was goon, That mete ne drynke had they noon. Josian was afyngered soore And told anoon Beves therfore. Beves seid, “How darst thou of me meete crave? Wel thou wotest, that noon I have.”</p>	<p>They spent all night in the cave Without food or drink, in truth. Two days had passed Without them having any food or drink. Josanne was sorely hungry And told Bevis about it directly. Bevis said, “How can you nag me for food? You know very well that I have none.” Josanne soon after pleaded again And asked Sir Bevis to go into the woods: “I have heard about savages, When young men were in the wilderness, That they catch stags and does And other animals that they might find. They kill them and prepare them in their hides. This is what men do who live in the woods. Sir, you can easily catch our dinner, For I will make you a good sauce.”</p>
2360	<p>Josian answered sone anoon And bade Sir Beves to wood goon: I have herde of savagenes, Whenne yonge men were in wyldernes, That they toke hert and hinde And other bestes, that they myght fynde; They slown hem and soden hem in her hide; Thus doon men that in wood abyde. Sir, thou myghtest bestes lyghtly take, For sause good I wyl thee make!”</p>	<p>Bevis said to Boniface then, “I ask you to protect Josanne well While I go into the forest To catch some wild animal.” Bevis went forth into the forest; He was ready to shoot some game.</p>
2370	<p>Beves seide to Bonefas than: “I pray thee kepe wel Josian, The while I wynde into the forest, For to take sum wylde beast!” Forth went Beves in that forest, Beestes to sheete he was ful prest.</p>	

⁵² MS University Library, Cambridge Ff. 2.38 has *owre* instead of *his* (2345) and *ye might be there for evyrmore* (2346). In Kölberg, *Bevis*, 113. The shepherd reference is likely meant as a simile.

⁵³ Giants in ancient and medieval literature are almost always evil or animalistic. As with Goliath and Grendel, they usually descend from Cain. An exception is St. Christopher, a third century martyr who is claimed to have ferried Christ as a child across a river. Ascopard is unusual in being alternatively altruistic and selfish.

2380	<p>Als sone as he was forth yfare, Two lyouns ther com yn thare, Grennand and rampand with her feet. Sir Bonefas then als skeet His hors to him thoo he drowgh And armyd him wel ynowgh And yave the lyouns bataile to fyght; Al to lytel was his myght.</p>	<p>As soon as he had set out, Two lions came inside there, Snarling and raised up on their hind legs. Just as quickly Sir Boniface Took to his horse And armed himself sufficiently And offered battle to the lions. His might was all too little.</p>
2390	<p>The twoo lyouns sone had sloon That oon his hors, that other the man. Josian into the cave gan shete, And the twoo lyouns at hur feete, Grennand on hur with muche grame, But they ne myght do hur no shame, For the kind of lyouns, ywis, A kynges doughter, that maide is, Kinges doughter, quene and maide both, The lyouns myght do hur noo wroth.</p>	<p>Soon the two lions had slain them, One his horse, the other the man. Josanne shut herself in the cave, And the two lions were at her heels, Snarling at her with great savagery. But they could not do her any wrong, For it is the nature of lions, in truth. The maiden was a king's daughter, And a princess, queen, and virgin also, And so the lions could do her no harm.⁵⁴</p>
2400	<p>Beves com sone fro huntynge With three hertes, without lesyng, And fonde an hors gnawe to the boon, And Josian away was goon. He sowned soone for sorow and thought, Fro cave to cave he her sought, To wete how that cas myght be, And in a cave he gan to see, Where Josain sate in grete doute And twoo lions hur about. Too Sir Beves gan she speke: "Sir, thyn help, me to awreke Of these two liouns, that thy chamberleyn, Ryght now han him slayn!"</p>	<p>Bevis soon returned from hunting With three deer, without a lie, And found a horse gnawed to the bone And Josianne gone away. He was overcome with sorrow and worry.⁵⁵ He searched for her from cave to cave To find out what had happened. And in one cave he saw Where Josanne cowered in great fear With two lions about her. To Sir Bevis she began to cry, "Sir, help me to have vengeance On these two lions who have just now Slain your steward!"</p>
2410	<p>She seide, she wolde that oon hoolde, While that he that other quelde. Aboute the nekke she hent that oon, And Beves bade let him goon, And seide: "Dame, forsoth, ywys, I myght yelp of lytel prys, There I had a lyon quelde, The while a woman another helde! Thow shalt never umbraide me, When thou comest hoom to my contré:</p>	<p>She said she would hold the one While he killed the other. She grasped the one about the neck, But Bevis told her to let him go And said, "Lady, in truth, without a lie, I would have little to be proud of If I killed a lion here While a woman held the other. You will never have reason to belittle me When you come home to my country.</p>
2420	<p>But thou let hem goo both twoo, Have good day, fro thee I goo!" She let hem skip up and doun,</p>	<p>If you will not let both of them go, Goodbye and I will go from you!" She let them jump up and down</p>

⁵⁴ "A commonplace of medieval lore was that virginity could confer invulnerability" (TEAMS). Spenser's *Faerie Queene* also has the heroine Una, who is escorted by a lion that protects her chastity. Here the lions menace Josian but are unable to touch her.

⁵⁵ *He sowned soone*: Swooning conjures up images of Victorian women fainting theatrically, but in ME it can also simply mean being overcome by emotion. Although in *Floris and Blancheflour* the constant swooning tests a modern reader's patience, it would normally not have been seen as effeminate.

	<p>And Beves assailed the lyoun. Strenger bataile ne strenger fyght Herde ye never of no knyght Byfore this in romaunce telle, Than Beves had of beestes felle. Al that herkeneth word and ende, To hevyn mot her sowles wende! That oon was a lionesse,</p>	<p>And Bevis attacked the lion. You have never before heard a tale Of a stronger battle or fiercer fight Faced by any knight in a romance Than Bevis had with the cruel beasts. May all who hear every word to the end, Have their souls ascend to Heaven! The other was a lioness</p>
2430	<p>That Sir Bevis dide grete distresse; At the first begynnyng To Beves hondes she gan spryng And al to peces rent hem there, Or Beves myght ther-of be werre. That other lyon, that Josian gan holde, To fight with Beves was ful bold; He ran to him with grete randon And with his pawes he rent adoun His armour almost to ground,</p>	<p>Who gave Sir Bevis great distress. At the first instant She sprung on Bevis' hands And ripped them to pieces Before Bevis could be wary of it. The other lion, which Josanne held, Was very keen to fight with Bevis. He leaped at him with great passion And with his paws he tore down His armor, almost to the ground,</p>
2440	<p>And in his thyghe a wel grete wound. Tho was Beves in hert grame, For the lioun had do him shame; As he were wood, he gan to fyght; The lionesse seyge that sight And raught to Beves, without faile, Both at oones they gan him assaile. Thoo was Beves, in strong tempestes, So strong and egre were these beestes, That nyghe they hadde him there queld;</p>	<p>And gave him a savage wound in his thigh. Then Bevis was steeled at heart, For the lion had shamed him. He began to fight as if he were mad. The lioness saw that sight And rushed at Bevis without fail. Both at once they attacked him. Then Bevis was in great danger; These beasts were so strong and eager That they nearly killed him there.</p>
2450	<p>Unnethe he kept him with his shelde. With Morgelay, that wel wold byte, To the lioun he gan smyte; His ryght foot he shore asonder, Sir Beves shilde the Lyoun ranne under And with his teeth with sory happe He kitte a pece of his lappe, And Beves that ilke stounde For anguyse fel to the grounde, And hastely Beves than up stert,</p>	<p>He barely protected himself with his shield. He began to strike at the lion With Morgelai, which had a strong bite. He sheared off his right foot. The lion ran under Sir Bevis' shield, And with its teeth, with sorry luck, It caught a piece of his shirt, And Bevis, in that same instant, Was pulled to the ground in anguish.</p>
2460	<p>For he was grevyd in his hert; He kyd wel tho, he was agrevyd, And clef a twoo the lyon is hevyyd, And to his hert the poynt thrast; Thus the lioun died at the last. Stoutliche the liouesse than Asailede Beves, that doughti man, And with hire mouth is scheld tok So sterneliche, saith the bok, That doun it fel of is left hond.</p>	<p>But Bevis started up hastily, For he was enraged in his heart. Then he knew what to do. He was angered And split the lion's head in two And thrust the point to its heart. Thus the lion died in the end. Then the lioness pounced on Bevis, That hardy man, with determination, Clomping his shield with her mouth So firmly, so the book says, That it was pulled down off his left hand.</p>
2470	<p>Tho Josian gan understonde, That hire lord scholde ben slawe; Helpe him she wolde fawe. Anon she hente that lioun: Beves bad hire go sitte adoun, And swor be God in Trinite,</p>	<p>Josanne then believed That her lord was about to be slain. She would gladly help him. At once she seized the lioness. Bevis ordered her to go sit down And swore by God in Trinity</p>

2480	<p>Boute she lete that lioun be, A wolde hire sle in that destresse Ase fain ase the liounesse. Tho she ne moste him nought helpe fighte, His scheld she broughte him anon righte And yede hire sitte adoun, saun faile, And let him worthe in that bataile. The liounesse was stout and sterne, Aghen to Beves she gan erne And be the right leg she him grep, Ase the wolf doth the schep, That negh she braide out is sparlire; Tho was Beves in gret yre, And in that ilche selve veneu</p>	<p>That unless she left that lioness alone, He would slay her in that crisis As readily as the lioness! When she could not help him fight, Straightaway she brought him his shield And sat herself down, without fail, And let him prove himself in that battle. The lioness was stout and determined. Again she pounced on Bevis, And she gripped him by the right leg, As the wolf does to the sheep, So that she nearly tore out his calf. Then Bevis was in a great rage, And in that very same spot,</p>
2490	<p>Though Godes grace and is vertu The liounesse so harde he smot With Morgelai, that biter bot Evene upon the regge an high, That Morgelai in therthe fligh. Tho was Josian ful fain, Tho that hii were bothe slain, And Beves was glad and blithe, His joie ne kouthe he no man kithe, And ofte he thankede the king in glori</p>	<p>Through God's grace and His virtue, He struck at the lioness so hard With Morgelai that it cut bitterly Evenly down the back in haste, So that Morgelai flew into the earth. Then Josanne was jubilant When the lions were both slain, And Bevis was pleased and glad. He could hide his joy from no man, And he continually thanked the King of Glory For His grace and his victory.</p>
2500	<p>Of his grace and is viktori; Ac wo him was for Bonefas, And tho he segh, non other it nas, A sette Josian upon a mule And ride forth a lite while, And metten with a geaunt With a lotheliche semlaunt. He was wonderliche strong, Rome thretti fote long;</p>	<p>But he was sorry for Boniface. And when he saw there was no alternative, He set Josanne upon a mule And rode forth a little while. They met with a giant Who had a loathsome appearance. He was amazingly strong And thirty feet tall in height. His beard was both great and shaggy. There was a foot's space between his brows.</p>
2510	<p>His berd was bothe gret and rowe; A space of fot betwene is browe; His clob was, to yeve a strok, A lite bodi of an ok. Beves hadde of him wonder gret And askede him, what a het, And yef men of his contré Were ase meche ase was he. "Me name," a sede, "is Ascopard: Garci me sente hiderward, For to bringe this quene aghen</p>	<p>His club, to give a hard blow with, Was a small trunk of an oak. Bevis was greatly amazed by him And asked him what he was called, And if the men of his country Were as large as he was. "My name," he said, "is Ascopard. Garcy sent me out here In order to bring the queen back And to slay you here, Bevis.</p>
2520	<p>And thee, Beves, her of-slen. Icham Garci is chaumpioun And was idrive out of me toun; Al for that ich was so lite, Everi man me wolde smite; Ich was so lite and so merugh, Everi man me clepede dwerugh, And now icham in this londe, Iwoxe mor, ich understonde, And strengere than other tene,</p>	<p>I am Garcy's champion, And I was driven out of my town Because I was so little That every man would hit me. I was so small and so delicate That every man called me a dwarf. And now that I am in this land, I have grown more, I can see, And am stronger than ten others.</p>

2530	<p>And that schel on us be sene; I schel thee sle her, yif I mai!" "Thourgh Godes help," queth Beves, "nai!" Beves prikede Arondel a side, Aghen Ascopard he gan ride And smot him on the scholder an high, That his spere al to-fligh, And Ascopard with a retret Smot after Beves a dent gret, And with is o fot a slintte</p>	<p>And that will be clear to see; I will slay you here, if I can." "Through God's help, no!" said Bevis. Bevis spurred Arondel's flanks; He charged against Ascopard And struck him on the shoulder in haste So that his spear was splintered. And Ascopard, with a step back, Struck Bevis with a great blow, And with his own foot he slipped And fell from his own force.</p>
2540	<p>And fel with is owene dentte. Beves of is palfrai alighte And drough his swerd anon righte And wolde have smiten of is heved; Josian besoughte him, it were beleved: "Sire," she seide, "so God thee save, Let him liven and ben our knave!" "Dame, a wile us betrai!" "Sire, ich wil ben is bourgh, nai!" Thar a dede Beves omage</p>	<p>Bevis came down from his palfrey And drew his sword at once And would have cut off his head. Josanne begged him to desist. "Sir," she pleaded, "so God save you, Let him live and be our servant!" "Lady, he will betray us." "No, sir, I will be his guarantor." So Ascopard did Bevis homage there And became his page.⁵⁶</p>
2550	<p>And becom is owene page. Forth thai wenten alle thre, Til that hii come to the se; A dromond hii fonde ther stonde, That wolde in to hethene londe, With Sarasines stout and fer, Boute thai nadde no maroner. Tho hii sighe Ascopard come, Hii thoughten wel, alle and some, He wolde hem surliche hem lede,</p>	<p>All three of them went forth Until they came to the sea. They found a fast galley standing there That was bound for heathen lands, With Saracens that were stout and fierce. But they had no mariner. When they saw Ascopard coming, They thought well, all and some, That he would surely pilot them, For he was a fine mariner in need.</p>
2560	<p>For he was maroner god at nede. Whan he in to the schipe cam, His gode bat an honde he nam, A drof hem out and dede hem harm, Arondel a bar to schip in is arm, And after in a lite while Josian and hire mule, And drowen up saile al so snel And sailede forth faire and wel, That hii come withouten ensoine</p>	<p>When he boarded the ship, He took his good stick into his hand, And he drove them out and did them harm. He carried Arondel to the ship in his arm, And after a little while, Josanne and her mule. And he drew up the sail just as fast And sailed forth expertly and well, So that they arrived without delay At the harbor of Cologne.</p>
2570	<p>To the haven of Coloine. Whan he to londe kem, Men tolde, the bischop was is em, A noble man wis afin And highte Saber Florentin. Beves grete him at that cas And tolde him what he was. The beschop was glad afin And seide: "Wolkome, leve cosin!"</p>	<p>When they came to the shore Men told him of his uncle the bishop, A noble man, wise in every way, Who was called Saber Florentine. Bevis greeted him at that opportunity And told him who he was. The bishop was very pleased to hear this And said, "Welcome, dear nephew!"</p>

⁵⁶ The scene seems to approve of Josanne's act of mercy, but later Bevis is proven right and her wrong. In a late episode in the story omitted here Ascopard does betray the two and is killed by Saber.

2580	<p>Gladder I nas, sethe ich was bore, Ich wende, thow haddest be forlore. Who is this levedi schene?” “Sire, of hethenesse a quene, And she wile, for me sake, Cristendome at thee take.” “Who is this with the grete visage?” “Sire,” a sede, “hit is me page And wile ben icristnede also, And ich bidde, that ye hit do!” The nexste dai after than</p>	<p>I was never so glad, since I was born. I thought that you had been lost. And who is this beautiful lady?” “Sir, a queen from heathen lands, And she will, for my sake, Receive baptism from you.” “And who is this with the massive features?” “Sir,” he said, “it is my page, And he will be christened also, And I ask that you will do it.” The next day after then,</p>
2590	<p>The beschop cristnede Josian. For Ascopard was mad a kove; Whan the beschop him scholde in schove, A lep anon upon the benche And seide: “Prest, wiltow me drenche? The devel yeve thee helle pine, Icham to meche te be cristine!” After Josian is cristing Beves dede a gret fighting, Swich bataile dede never non</p>	<p>The bishop christened Josanne. For Ascopard a baptismal font was made; But when the bishop tried to immerse him, He leaped at once upon the bench And said, “Bishop, you want to drown me? May the devil give you Hell’s pains! I am too big to be christened.” After Josanne’s baptism, Bevis performed a great feat of fighting. Such battle was never faced</p>
2600	<p>Cristene man of flesh ne bon, Of a dragoun ther be side, That Beves slough ther in that tide, Save Sire Launcelet de Lake, He faught with a fur drake And Wade dede also, And never knightes bouthe thai to, And Gy a Warwik, ich understonde, Slough a dragoun in NorthHumberlonde. How that ilche dragoun com ther,</p>	<p>By any Christian man of flesh or blood Against a dragon beside him, like the one That Bevis killed there on that day, Except for Sir Lancelot de Lac. He fought with a firebreathing dragon, And Wade did also, And no knight ever, except those two, And Guy of Warwick, as I understand, Killed a dragon in Northumberland. How that dragon came there,</p>
2610	<p>Ich wile yow telle, in what maner. Thar was a king in Poyle land And another in Calabre, ich understonde; This twe kinge foughte ifere More than foure and twenti yere, That hii never pes nolde, Naither for selver ne for golde, And al the contré, saundoute, Thai distruede hit al aboute; Thai hadde mani mannes cours,</p>	<p>And in what way, I will tell you. There was a king in the land of Apulia,⁵⁷ And another in Calabria, as I am told. These two kings fought together More than twenty-four years, And they never settled for peace, Neither for silver or for gold. And as for the country, without a doubt, They ruined it all around; They had the curse of many a man, For causing them to fare the worse.</p>
2620	<p>Wharthrough hii ferden wel the wors; Tharfore hii deide in dedli sinne And helle pine thai gan hem winne. After in a lite while Thai become dragouns vile, And so thai foughte dragouns ifere Mor than foure and thretti yere. An ermite was in that londe,</p>	<p>Therefore they died in deadly sin And won for themselves Hell’s pains. After a little while They became vile dragons, And so they fought together as dragons More than thirty-four years. A hermit was in that land</p>

⁵⁷ *Apulia*: In Southeastern Italy, near Taranto. *Calabre* is likely Reggio di Calabria, in the southwestern tip near Sicily.

2630	<p>That was feld of Godes sonde; To Jesu Crist a bed a bone, That he dilivre the dragouns sone Out of that ilche stede, That hii namore harm ne dede. And Jesu Crist, that sit in hevене, Wel herde that ermites stevene And grauntede him is priere. Anon the dragouns bothe ifere Toke here flight and flowe awai, Thar never eft man hem ne sai. That on flegh anon with than,</p>	<p>Who received merciful grace from God; He prayed to Jesus Christ That He would soon drive the dragons Out of that very place, So that they would do no more harm. And Jesus Christ, who sits in Heaven, Heard that hermit's voice clearly And granted him his prayer. At once both of the dragons Took flight together and flew away, So that men never saw them after.</p>
2640	<p>Til a com to Toscan. That other dragoun is flight nome To Seinte Peter is brige of Rome; Thar he schel leggen ay, Til hit come Domes Dai. And everi seve yer ones, Whan the dragoun moweth is bones, Than cometh a roke and a stink Out of the water under the brink, That men ther-of taketh the fevere,</p>	<p>They quickly flew from there Until they came to Tuscany. The second dragon took flight To Saint Peter's Bridge in Rome. There he will lay forever Until Judgment Day comes. And once every seven years, When the dragon shifts his bones, A vapor and a stink Comes out of the water from under the brink,</p>
2650	<p>That never after mai he kevere; And who that nel nought leve me, Wite at pilgrimes that ther hath be, For thai can telle yow, iwis, Of that dragoun how it is. That other thanne flegh an highe Thourgh Toskan and Lombardie, Thourgh Province, withouten ensoine, Into the londe of Coloyne;</p>	<p>Causing men to become feverish, From which they never recover. And whoever does not believe me Can ask pilgrims who have been there For they can tell you, truly, How it is with that dragon. The other then flew on high Through Tuscany and Lombardy, Through Provence without delay, Into the land of Cologne.</p>
2660	<p>Thar the dragoun gan arive At Coloyne under a clive. His eren were rowe and ek long, His frount before hard and strong; Eighte toskes at is mouth stod out, The leste was seventene ench about, The her, the cholle under the chin, He was bothe leith and grim; A was imaned ase a stede; The heved a bar with meche pride, Betwene the scholder and the taile</p>	<p>There the dragon arrived In Cologne under a cliff. His ears were rough and long as well; His forehead was hard and strong. Eight tusks stuck out from his mouth; The smallest was seventeen inches around. His hair and the scales under his jowls Were both loathsome and grim. He was maned like a steed And bore his head with great pride; Between the shoulder and the tail</p>
2670	<p>Foure and twenti fot, saunfaile. His taile was of gret stringethe, Sextene fot a was a lingthe; His bodi ase a wintonne. Whan hit schon the brighte sonne, His wingges schon so the glas. His sides wer hard ase eni bras. His brest was hard ase eni ston; A foulere thing nas never non. Ye, that wile a stounde dwelle, Of his stringethe I mai yow telle.</p>	<p>It was twenty-four feet, without a doubt. His tail was of great strength; It was sixteen feet in length. His skin was like a wine barrel. When the bright sun shone, His wings glinted like glass. His sides were as hard as any brass; His breast was as hard as any stone. A fouler thing was never known. If you will stay for a while, I will tell you about Bevis' might.</p>
2680	<p>Beves yede to bedde a night</p>	<p>Bevis went to bed that night</p>

<p>2690</p>	<p>With torges and with candel light. Whan he was in bedde ibrought, On Jesu Crist was al is thought. Him thoughte, a king, that was wod, Hadde wonded him ther a stod; He hadde wonded him biter and sore, A wende a mighte leve namore, And yet him thoughte a virgine Him broughte out of al is pine. Whan he of is slep abraid, Of is swevene he was afraid. Thanne a herde a reuli cri, And besoughte Jesu merci: “For the venim is on me throwe, Her I legge al to-blowe, And rotheth me flesch fro the bon, Bote ne tit me never non!” And in is cri a seide: “Allas, That ever yet I maked was!”</p>	<p>With torches and with candlelight. When he had gone to bed, All of his thoughts were on Jesus Christ. He dreamed of a king who was mad And wounded him where he stood. He injured him bitterly and painfully; He thought he would live no longer. And yet he dreamed that a virgin Delivered him from all of his suffering. When he started from his sleep, He was frightened by his vision. Then he dreamed he heard a doleful cry And a plea for Jesus’ mercy: “From the venom thrown on me I lie here all swollen, And my flesh rots from the bone. I have no remedy at hand at all.” And in his lament he said, “Alas That I was ever created!”</p>
<p>2700</p>	<p>Anon whan hit was dai light, Beves awakede and askede right, What al that cri mighte ben. His men him answerde aghen And seide, that he was a knight, In bataile he was holden wight; Also a wente him to plaie Aboute her in this contrai, In this contré aviroun</p>	<p>Soon when it was daylight, Bevis awoke and straightaway asked What all those cries might mean. His men answered him back And said it was the voice of a knight. In combat he was held to be manly. As he went out to do battle Around there in that country, Thereabout in that area</p>
<p>2710</p>	<p>A mette with a vile dragoun, And venim he hath on him throwe: Thar a lith al to-blowe! “Lord Crist,” queth Beves tho, “Mai eni man the dragoun slo!” His men answerde, withouten lesing: “Thar nis neither emperur ne king, That come thar the dragoun wore, An hondred thosend men and more, That he nolde slen hem everichon, Ne scholde hii never thannes gon.”</p>	<p>He met with a foul dragon, And he spewed venom on him. He lies there all swollen. “Christ the Lord!” Bevis then cried, “This dragon can slay any man.” His men answered without a lie, “There is no emperor or king Who came near where the dragon was, A hundred thousand men and more, That he would not kill every one; None of them would ever get away.”</p>
<p>2720</p>	<p>“Ascopard,” a seide, “whar ertow?” “Icham her; what wile now?” “Wile we to the dragoun gon? Thourgh Godes help we scholle him slo!” “Ya, sire, so mot I the, Bletheliche wile I wende with thee!” Beves armede him ful wel, Bothe in yrene and in stel, And gerte him with a gode bronde</p>	<p>“Ascopard,” he called, “where are you?” “I am here. What would you like?” “Will we go to the dragon? Through God’s help we will slay him!” “Yes, sir, as I live and breathe, I will gladly go with you.” Bevis armed himself carefully, Both in iron and in steel, And equipped himself with a good sword And took a spear into his hand.</p>
<p>2730</p>	<p>Out ate gate he gan ride, And Ascopard be his side. Also hii wente in here pleghing, Hii speke of mani selkouth thing. That dragoun lai in is den</p>	<p>Beyond the gate he rode out, With Ascopard by his side. As they went, to pass time, They talked about many wondrous things. That dragon lay in his den</p>

<p>2740</p>	<p>And segh come the twei men; A made a cri and a wonder, Ase hit were a dent of thonder. Ascopard was adrad so sore, Forther dorste he go namore; A seide to Beves, that was is fere: “A wonderthing ye mai here!” Beves saide: “Have thow no doute, The dragoun lith her aboute; Hadde we the dragoun wonne, We hadde the feireste pris under sonne!” Ascopard swor, be Sein Jon, A fot ne dorste he forther gon. Beves answerde and seide tho;</p>	<p>And saw the two men coming. He made a cry and a show, As if it were a clap of thunder. Ascopard was so terrified That he did not dare go further. He said to Bevis, his brother in arms, “You can hear an astounding thing!” Bevis said, “Have no doubt of it, The dragon lies nearby. If we defeated the dragon, we would Have the fairest prize under the sun!” Ascopard swore by Saint John That he would not go one foot further. Bevis answered and said then, “Ascopard, why do you say so? Why should you be afraid Of something that you have not seen?” He swore that he must leave then; He could not hear or see the dragon. “I am weary, I must have rest. Go forth now and do your best!” Then Bevis said these noble words, “It is shameful to turn back.” He spurred his steed on the sides And rode against the dragon. The dragon saw him so that he came Roaring against him at once, Yawning and gaping on him As if he would swallow him. When Bevis saw that sight, The dragon of such great might, If the earth had immediately opened itself He would have jumped into it for fright. He sent a spear flying at him And struck the dragon on the side. The spear recoiled off at once, Like the hail off a stone, And burst apart into five pieces. He drew out his sword as quickly, And they fought, as I tell you, Until it was high noon in the daytime. The dragon was greatly irritated That one man should withstand him so long. The dragon attacked him savagely And lashed his horse with his tail Right alongside the head So that he fell to the earth dead. Now Bevis was brought to the ground. May God, who made all things, help him! Bevis was hardy and stout-hearted. At once he faced the dragon And fought him fiercely And he responded with strong hostility. So between them the fight lasted</p>
<p>2750</p>	<p>“Ascopard, whi seistow so? Whi schelt thow afered be Of thing that thow might nought sen?” A swor, also he moste then, He nolde him neither hire ne sen: “Icham weri, ich mot have reste: Go now forth and do the beste!” Thanne seide Beves this wordes fre: “Schame hit is, to terne aghe. A smot his stede be the side,</p>	<p>“Ascopard, why do you say so? Why should you be afraid Of something that you have not seen?” He swore that he must leave then; He could not hear or see the dragon. “I am weary, I must have rest. Go forth now and do your best!” Then Bevis said these noble words, “It is shameful to turn back.” He spurred his steed on the sides And rode against the dragon. The dragon saw him so that he came Roaring against him at once, Yawning and gaping on him As if he would swallow him. When Bevis saw that sight, The dragon of such great might, If the earth had immediately opened itself He would have jumped into it for fright. He sent a spear flying at him And struck the dragon on the side. The spear recoiled off at once, Like the hail off a stone, And burst apart into five pieces. He drew out his sword as quickly, And they fought, as I tell you, Until it was high noon in the daytime. The dragon was greatly irritated That one man should withstand him so long. The dragon attacked him savagely And lashed his horse with his tail Right alongside the head So that he fell to the earth dead. Now Bevis was brought to the ground. May God, who made all things, help him! Bevis was hardy and stout-hearted. At once he faced the dragon And fought him fiercely And he responded with strong hostility. So between them the fight lasted</p>
<p>2760</p>	<p>Aghen the dragoun he gan ride, The dragoun segh, that he cam Yenande aghenes him anan, Yenande and gapande on him so, Ase he wolde him swolwe tho. Whan Beves segh that ilche sight, The dragoun of so meche might, Hadde therthe opnede anon, For drede a wolde ther in han gon; A spere he let to him glide</p>	<p>When Bevis saw that sight, The dragon of such great might, If the earth had immediately opened itself He would have jumped into it for fright. He sent a spear flying at him And struck the dragon on the side. The spear recoiled off at once, Like the hail off a stone, And burst apart into five pieces. He drew out his sword as quickly, And they fought, as I tell you, Until it was high noon in the daytime. The dragon was greatly irritated That one man should withstand him so long. The dragon attacked him savagely And lashed his horse with his tail Right alongside the head So that he fell to the earth dead. Now Bevis was brought to the ground. May God, who made all things, help him! Bevis was hardy and stout-hearted. At once he faced the dragon And fought him fiercely And he responded with strong hostility. So between them the fight lasted</p>
<p>2770</p>	<p>And smot the dragoun on the side; The spere sterte aghen anon, So the hail upon the ston, And to-barst on pices five. His swerd he drough also blive; Tho thai foughthe, also I yow sai, Til it was high noun of the dai. The dragoun was atened stronge, That o man him scholde stonde so longe;</p>	<p>And struck the dragon on the side. The spear recoiled off at once, Like the hail off a stone, And burst apart into five pieces. He drew out his sword as quickly, And they fought, as I tell you, Until it was high noon in the daytime. The dragon was greatly irritated That one man should withstand him so long. The dragon attacked him savagely And lashed his horse with his tail Right alongside the head So that he fell to the earth dead. Now Bevis was brought to the ground. May God, who made all things, help him! Bevis was hardy and stout-hearted. At once he faced the dragon And fought him fiercely And he responded with strong hostility. So between them the fight lasted</p>
<p>2780</p>	<p>The dragoun harde him gan asaile And smot his hors with the taile Right amideward the hed, That he fel to grounde ded. Now is Beves to grounde brought, Helpe him God, that alle thing wrought! Beves was hardi and of gode hert, Aghen the dragoun anon a stert And harde him a gan asaile, And he aghen with strong bataile; So betwene hem leste that fight</p>	<p>And he responded with strong hostility. So between them the fight lasted</p>

2790	<p>Til it was the therke night. Beves hadde thanne swich thrast, Him thoughte his herte to-brast; Thanne segh he a water him beside, So hit mighte wel betide, Fain a wolde theder flen, He ne dorste fro the dragoun ten; The dragoun asailede him fot hot, With is taile on his scheld a smot, That hit clevede hevene ato,</p>	<p>Until it was dark night. At the time Bevis had such thirst That he thought his heart would burst. Then he saw some water nearby, As it might well happen. He wished to run toward it, But he did not dare turn from the dragon. The dragon attacked him in a rush; With his tail he lashed his shield, So that it was cut evenly in two, Along with his left shoulder.</p>
2800	<p>His left scholder dede also. Beves was hardi and of gode hert, Into the welle anon a stert. Lordinges, herkneth to me now: The welle was of swich vertu: A virgine wonede in that londe, Hadde bathede in, ich understonde; That water was so holi, That the dragoun, sikerli, Ne dorste neghe the welle aboute</p>	<p>Bevis was hardy and stout-hearted; At once he started into the well. Lordinges, listen to me now: The well was of great virtue. A virgin who lived in that land Had bathed in it, as I understand. That water was so holy That the dragon, for sure, Did not dare to come near the well Within forty feet, without a doubt.</p>
2810	<p>Be fourti fote, saundoute. Whan Beves parsevede this, Wel glad a was in hertte, iwis; A dede of is helm of stel And coled him ther in fraiche wel, And of is helm a drank thore A large galon other more. A nemenede Sein Gorge, our levedi knight, And sete on his helm, that was bright; And Beves with eger mode</p>	<p>When Bevis realized this, He was very relieved at heart, indeed. He took off his helmet of steel And cooled himself in the fresh water. And from his helmet he drank there A good gallon or more. He called on Saint George, our beloved knight, And set his shining helmet on. And Bevis, with a renewed spirit, Soon rose out of the well.</p>
2820	<p>Out of the welle sone a yode; The dragoun harde him asaile gan, He him defendeth ase a man. So betwene hem leste the fight, Til hit sprong the dai light, Whan Beves mighte aboute sen, Blithe he gan thanne ben; Beves on the dragoun hew, The dragoun on him venim threw; Al ferde Beves bodi there</p>	<p>The dragon again hit him hard; He defended himself as a man. So between them the fight lasted Until daylight sprang. When Bevis could see about him, He began to be gladdened then. As Bevis hacked at the dragon, The dragon spewed venom on him. Bevis's body was all transformed As if he were the foulest leper.</p>
2830	<p>A foule mesel else yif a were; Thar the venim on him felle, His flesh gan ranclen and tebelle, Thar the venim was icast, His armes gan al to-brast; Al to-brosten is ventaile, And of his hauberk a thosend maile. Thanne Beves, sone an highe Wel loude he gan to Jesu criye: “Lord, that rerede the Lazaroun, Dilivre me fro this fend dragoun!”</p>	<p>Where the venom landed on him, His flesh began to fester and swell. Where the poison was thrown, His arms began to burst apart. All his neck armor was destroyed, And a thousand links had fallen from his mail. Then Bevis in great urgency Began to cry loudly to Jesus: “Lord, who raised up Lazarus, Deliver me from this fiendish dragon!”</p>
2840	<p>Tho he segh his hauberk toren, “Lord!” a seide, “That I was boren!” That seide Beves, thar a stod,</p>	<p>When he saw his chain mail torn, “Lord,” he said, “alas that I was ever born!” That said, Bevis, where he stood,</p>

	<p>And leide on, ase he wer wod; The dragoun harde him gan asaile And smot on the helm with is taile, That his helm clevede ato, And his bacinet dede also. Tweies a ros and tweis a fel, 2850 The thredde tim overthrew in the wel; Thar-inne a lai up right; A neste, whather hit was dai other night. Whan overgon was his smerte And rekevred was of is hertte, Beves sette him up anon; The venim was awei igon; He was ase hol a man Ase he was whan he theder cam. On is knes he gan to falle, 2860 To Jesu Crist he gan to calle: “Help,” a seide, “Godes sone, That this dragoun wer overcome! Boute ich mowe the dragoun slon Er than ich hennes gon, Schel hit never aslawe be For no man in Cristenté!” To God he made his praiere And to Marie, his moder dere; That herde the dragoun, ther a stod, 2870 And flegh awei, ase he wer wod. Beves ran after, withouten faile, And the dragoun he gan asaile; With is swerd, that he out braide, On the dragoun wel hard a laide, And so harde a hew him than, A karf ato his heved pan, And hondred dentes a smot that stonde, Er he mighte kerven a wonder, A hitte him so on the cholle 2880 And karf ato the throte bolle. The dragoun lai on is side, On him a yenede swithe wide. Beves thanne with strokes smerte Smot the dragoun to the herte, An hondred dentes a smot in on, Er the heved wolde fro the bodi gon, And the gode knight Bevoun The tonge karf of the dragoun; Upon the tronsoun of is spere 2890 The tonge a stikede for to bere.</p>	<p>Laid on as if he were berserk. The dragon fought him ruthlessly And struck at his head with his tail, So that his helmet was split in two, With his underhelmet as well. Twice he rose and twice he fell. The third time he was thrown into the well He lay inside it facing upward, Not knowing whether it was day or night. When the pain had diminished And his courage was renewed, Bevis raised himself up at once. The venom had faded away; He was as whole a man As he was when he came there. He fell on his knees And began to call on Jesus Christ. “Help me,” he said, “Son of God, So that this dragon will be overcome. Unless I can slay the dragon Before I go from here, It will never be slain By any man in Christendom!” He made his prayer to God And to Mary, His dear mother. The dragon heard that where he stood And flew away as if he were in a panic. Bevis ran after, without fail, And continued to attack the dragon With his sword that he drew out. He laid on the dragon furiously, And he hacked at him so hard That he split his skull in two. He struck a hundred blows in that place. Before he could cut another wound,⁵⁸ He hit him so hard on the chest That he carved his throat in two.⁵⁹ The dragon lay on his side, Gaping its mouth widely at Bevis. Then Bevis, with painful strokes, Pierced the dragon in his heart. He struck a hundred blows Before he could remove the head from the body, And the good knight Bevis Carved the tongue from the dragon. Upon the handle of his spear, He stuck the tongue to carry it.</p>
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⁵⁸ *Wonder*: Kölberg’s transcription of Auchinleck has *wonde*.

⁵⁹ TEAMS explains that “The *cholle* is that part of a dragon’s anatomy which extends from the chin to the throat and from ear to ear” (note to line 2665). Bevis strikes the dragon on his *throte bolle*, evidently his Adam’s apple.

2900	<p>A wented tho withouten ensoine Toward the toun of Coloine. Thanne herde he belles ringe, Prestes, clerkes loude singe; A man ther he hath imet, And swithe faire he hath him gret, And asked that ilche man tho, Whi thai ronge and songe so. “Sire,” a seide, “withouten faile,</p>	<p>He marched then without delay Toward the town of Cologne. Then he heard bells ringing And priests and clerics singing sadly. He met a man there, And greeted him very courteously, And then asked the man Why they were ringing and lamenting.</p>
2910	<p>Beves is ded in bataile; Tharfore, for sothe I saie thee: Hit is Beves dirige!” “Nai,” queth Beves, “be Sein Martin!” And wente to Bischof Florentin. Tho the bischof hadde of him a sight, A thankede Jesu ful of might And broughte Beves in to the toun With a faire prosesiou; Thanne al the folk that thar was,</p>	<p>“Sir,” he said, “without a doubt, Bevis is dead in battle. Because of that, in truth I tell you, It is Bevis’ dirge.” “It is not so, by Saint Martin!” Bevis said. And he went to Bishop Florentine. When the bishop had a sight of him, He thanked Jesus, full of might, And brought Bevis into the town With a stately procession. Then all the people who were there Thanked Jesus for that act of grace.</p>
2920	<p>On a dai Sire Beves sede: “Leve em, what is to rede Of me stifader Devoun That holdeth me londes at Hamtoun?” The beschop seide anon right: “Kosin, Saber, thin em, is in Wight, And everi yer on a dai certaine Upon th’emperur of Almaine He ginneth gret bataile take,</p>	<p>Upon one day, Sir Bevis said, “Dear uncle, what is to be done About my stepfather Devon, Who holds my lands in Southampton?” The bishop replied straightaway, “Nephew, your uncle Saber is in Wight, And every year on a certain day, He undertakes a great battle Against the emperor of Germany, Bevis, all for your sake.</p>
2930	<p>Beves, al for thine sake; He weneth wel, that thow be ded; Tharfore, kosin, be me red, An hondred men ich yeve thee wighte, Aghen th’emperur to fighte, Stalworde men and fer, And thow schelt wende te Saber: Sai, ich grette him wel ilome! Yif ye han nede, sendeth to me, Ich wile yow helpe with al me might,</p>	<p>He fully suspects that you are dead. Therefore, nephew, do as I advise; I will give you a hundred strong warriors To fight against the emperor, Loyal men, and fierce, And you will go to Saber and say That I greet him many times. If you have need, send word to me; I will help you with all my might To fight against the emperor. And while you are in this campaign The lady will stay with me, And your page, Ascopard, Will both direct and guard her.”</p>
2940	<p>Aghen th’emperur to fight. While thow dost this ilche tourne, The levedi schel with me sojurne, And the page Ascopard Schel hire bothe wite and ward.” Forth wente Beves with than To his lemman Josian: “Lemman,” a seide, “ich wile go And avenge me of me fo, Yif ich mighte with eni ginne Me kende eritage to winne!” “Swete lemman,” Josian sede, “Who schel me thanne wisse and rede?” Beves sede “Lemman min, Min em, the Bischof Florentin,</p>	<p>With that Bevis went forth To his darling Josanne: “My dear,” he said, “I am going To avenge myself on my foe, If I can by any means Win my rightful heritage.” “Sweet darling,” said Josanne, “Who will guide and protect me then?” Bevis said, “My dear one, My uncle, Bishop Florentine,</p>

2950	<p>And Ascopard, me gode page, Schel thee warde fro damage.” “Ye, have ich Ascopard,” she sede, Of no man ne stant me drede; Ich take thee God and seinte Marie: Sone so thow might, to me thow highe!”</p>	<p>And Ascopard, my good page, Will protect you from harm.” “Yes, I have Ascopard,” she said, “I have no fear of any man. I entrust you to God and Saint Mary. As soon as you can, return to me!”</p>
2960	<p>Beves wente forth anon With is men everichon, That the bischop him hadde yeve. So longe thai hadde here wei idrive, That hii come upon a done, A mile out of South Hamtone. “Lordinges,” to his men a sede, “Ye scholle do be mine rede! Have ich eni so hardi on,</p>	<p>Bevis at once set forth With every one of his men That the bishop had given him. They had driven on for a long while When they came upon a hill A mile out of Southampton. “Lordinges,” he said to his men, “You will act by my directions. Do I have anyone so brave</p>
2970	<p>That dorre to Hamtoun gon, To th’emperur of Almaine, And sai: her cometh a vintaine, Al prest an hondred knighte That fore his love wilen fighte Both with spere and with launce, Al fresch icode out of Fraunce! Ac ever, an erneste and a rage, Ever speketh Frensche laungage, And sai, ich hatte Gerard, And fighte ich wile be forward, And of the meistri icham sure, Yif he wile yilde min hure?” Forth ther com on redi reke, That renabliche kouthe Frensch speke; “Sire,” a seide, “ich wile gon, The mesage for to don anon!” Forth a wente to the castel gate The porter a mette ther-ate, To th’emperur he hath him lad,</p>	<p>That dares to go to Southampton, To the emperor of Germany, And say that a division has come, All ready with a hundred knights, All freshly arrived from France, Who for my love will fight, Both with spear and with lance? But always, in seriousness and play, Always speak the French language, And say that I am called Gerard, And I will fight as a mercenary; And I am sure of victory If he will pay my wages.” One man readily came forth Who could speak French elegantly. “Sir,” he said, “I will go To deliver your message at once.” He went forth to the castle gate Where he met the porter, Who brought him to the emperor. He said everything as Bevis ordered him. The emperor and Bevis sat together That same night at supper. The emperor asked him what his name was. “Gerard,” he answered as quickly. “Gerard!” he mused. “In truth indeed, My lady had, long before now, An earl as her lord before I married her. They had a son between them, A proud and childish wretch, And in truth, a little good-for-nothing. He was like his father, with a defiant spirit, And descended from some foul blood. His son—that was an arrogant boy— Men called him Bevis. As soon as he was of age, He sold me his inheritance And frittered his money in shame and disgrace, And later fled out of England.</p>
2980	<p>Al a seide, ase Beves him bad. Th’emperur and Beves sete ifere That ilche night at the sopere; Th’emperur askede him, what a het; “Gerard!” a seide also sket “Gerard!” a seide, “for soth iwis, This levedi hadde her er this An erl to lord, er ich hire wedde, A sone betwene hem to thai hadde, A proud wreche and a ying, And for sothe a lite gadling; So was is fader of proud mode, Icomen of sum lether blode; His sone, that was a proud garsoun, Men him clepede Bevoun; Sone he was of age, A solde me his eritage And spente his panes in scham and schonde, And sithe flegh out of Ingelonde.</p>	<p>Who could speak French elegantly. “Sir,” he said, “I will go To deliver your message at once.” He went forth to the castle gate Where he met the porter, Who brought him to the emperor. He said everything as Bevis ordered him. The emperor and Bevis sat together That same night at supper. The emperor asked him what his name was. “Gerard,” he answered as quickly. “Gerard!” he mused. “In truth indeed, My lady had, long before now, An earl as her lord before I married her. They had a son between them, A proud and childish wretch, And in truth, a little good-for-nothing. He was like his father, with a defiant spirit, And descended from some foul blood. His son—that was an arrogant boy— Men called him Bevis. As soon as he was of age, He sold me his inheritance And frittered his money in shame and disgrace, And later fled out of England.</p>
2990	<p>Al a seide, ase Beves him bad. Th’emperur and Beves sete ifere That ilche night at the sopere; Th’emperur askede him, what a het; “Gerard!” a seide also sket “Gerard!” a seide, “for soth iwis, This levedi hadde her er this An erl to lord, er ich hire wedde, A sone betwene hem to thai hadde, A proud wreche and a ying, And for sothe a lite gadling; So was is fader of proud mode, Icomen of sum lether blode; His sone, that was a proud garsoun, Men him clepede Bevoun; Sone he was of age, A solde me his eritage And spente his panes in scham and schonde, And sithe flegh out of Ingelonde.</p>	<p>Who could speak French elegantly. “Sir,” he said, “I will go To deliver your message at once.” He went forth to the castle gate Where he met the porter, Who brought him to the emperor. He said everything as Bevis ordered him. The emperor and Bevis sat together That same night at supper. The emperor asked him what his name was. “Gerard,” he answered as quickly. “Gerard!” he mused. “In truth indeed, My lady had, long before now, An earl as her lord before I married her. They had a son between them, A proud and childish wretch, And in truth, a little good-for-nothing. He was like his father, with a defiant spirit, And descended from some foul blood. His son—that was an arrogant boy— Men called him Bevis. As soon as he was of age, He sold me his inheritance And frittered his money in shame and disgrace, And later fled out of England.</p>

3000	<p>Now hath he her an em in Wight, Sire Saber, a wel strong knight, And cometh with gret barnage And cleimeth his eritage, And ofte me doth her gret gile, And thow might yilden is while, Him to sle with swerd in felde, Wel ich wolde thin here yelde!” “Sire,” queth Beves anon right, “Ihave knightes of meche might, That beth unarmed her of wede,</p>	<p>Now he has an uncle in Wight, Sir Saber, a formidable knight, Who comes with a great baronage And claims back his legacy, And often does great mischief to me here. If you could pay back his efforts And slay him with a sword in the field, I would pay your army well!” “Sire,” Bevis replied at once, “I have knights of formidable might Who are here unclothed in armor,</p>
3010	<p>For we ne mighte non out lede Over the se withouten aneighe; Tharfore, sire, swithe an highe Let arme me knightes echon, And yef hem gode hors forth enon, An hondred men sent thow thee self, Ase mani ichave be min helf, Dight me the schip and thin men bothe, And I schel swere thee an othe, That I schel yeve swiche asaut</p>	<p>For we could not muster out Over the sea without great difficulty. Therefore, sire, you might quickly Have each of my knights armed And give them good horses speedily enough. Send a hundred men yourself, As many as I have on my half. Fit out my ship and your men as well, And I will swear you an oath, That I will give such an assault</p>
3020	<p>On that ilche Sabaaut, That withinne a lite while Thow schelt here of a queinte gile!” Al thus th’emperur hath him dight Bothe hors, armes, and knight, Tharto schipes with gode vitaile; Forth thai wente and drowe saile. In the schipe the knightes seten, ywis, On of here, another of his.</p>	<p>On that same Saber That within a little while You will hear word of a cunning plot!”⁶⁰ All this the emperor supplied him with, Both horses, arms, and knights, Fitted on the ship with good provisions. They went forth and drew their sails. On the ship the knights sat paired, for sure, One of Bevis’, another of the emperor’s.</p>
3030	<p>Whan thai come amidde the forde, Ech threw is felawe over the bord; Of th’emperures knightes everichon Withinne bord ne levede non. Saber hem ful wel ysay, Ase he upon his toure lay, Mani baner he segh arered. Tho was Saber sumdel afered, That th’emperur with is ost come, Biker he made wel ylome. Beves wiste wel and sede,</p>	<p>When they came into the ford, Each threw his fellow overboard. Out of all the emperor’s knights, None were left on the ship. Saber saw them full well As he sat in his tower; He saw many banners raised. Then Saber was somewhat anxious That the emperor, with whom he had warred Enough times, had come with his host. Bevis knew that well and warned That Saber would be panicked by him.</p>
3040	<p>That Saber him wolde drede; Upon the higheste mast is top there He let sette up a stremere Of his fader armure, Saber the rather to make sure, For mani a time thar beforen He hadde hit in to bataile boren.</p>	<p>Upon the highest mast’s top, He had a streamer set there With his father’s colors To reassure Saber sooner. For many a time before then He had carried it into battle.</p>

⁶⁰ *Thow schelt here of a queinte gile*: Bevis seems fond of making ironic jokes, as here the ‘cunning trick’ will be on the emperor and not Saber. Similarly, Bevis tells Terry that “You were never nearer the child” (1320), which is true in a sense Terry does not realize.

3050	<p>Tho the schip to londe drough, Saber hit knew wel inough And thoughte and gan to understonde, That Beves was come inte Ingelonde. “Lord,” a sede, “hered Thow be, That ich mai me kende lord se: That he wer ded, ich was ofdrad, Meche sorwe ichave for him had.” A wente with is knightes blive, Thar the schipes scholde arive; Either other gan to kisse, And made meche joie and blisse, And Beves tolde him in a while, He hadde do th’emperur a gile.</p>	<p>When the ship drew to shore, Saber recognized it well enough And thought and began to understand That Bevis had come into England. “Lord!” he said, “may You be praised, That I may see my lawful lord. I was afraid that he was dead; I have had much sorrow over him.” He went with his knights excitedly Where the ship would arrive. Each began to kiss the other And made great joy and celebration.</p>
3060	<p>Th’emperur he gan thus gret: “Sire emperur, I thee bringe A swithe sertaine tiding: Wel the grete that ilche knight, That sopede with thee yerstene night; A saith a hatte nought Gerard, That made with thee the forward; A saith, that he hatte Bevoun And cleymeth the seinori of Hamtoun, And is icome with thee to speke, Of his fader deth to ben awreke, Thee te sle with schame and schonde And for to winne is owene londe.” Th’emperur herde of him that word, His sone stod before the bord; He thoughte with is longe knif Bereve that mesageres lif;</p>	<p>He had played a trick on the emperor. Then with that Bevis said, “Do I have any man so fearless That dares to go to Hampton, Over the water soon from now, And tell the emperor directly That I am no French knight, Nor am I named Gerard, Who made the pact with him. And tell him my name is Bevis, And I claim the lordship of Hampton, And his wife is my mother. That will turn them both to rage. Now, against them both together, I will endeavor to avenge my father!” One hardy man started up: “Sir,” he said, “I will go. The message condemns them both, And will make them sorry and wrathful.” He went forth at once Over the water in a boat. He marched on as quickly Past the castle gate. At supper as he sat, He greeted the emperor in this way: “Sir Emperor, I bring you A certain reliable report. You received well that knight Who dined with you last night. He says he is not called Gerard, Who made an agreement with you. He says that his name is Bevis, And he claims the lordship of Hampton, And is coming to speak with you To be avenged of his father’s death, To slay you with shame and disgrace, And to win back his own land.” As the emperor heard these words from him, His son stood before the table. He thought with his long knife To take away that messenger’s life.</p>
3070	<p>Th’emperur he gan thus gret: “Sire emperur, I thee bringe A swithe sertaine tiding: Wel the grete that ilche knight, That sopede with thee yerstene night; A saith a hatte nought Gerard, That made with thee the forward; A saith, that he hatte Bevoun And cleymeth the seinori of Hamtoun, And is icome with thee to speke, Of his fader deth to ben awreke, Thee te sle with schame and schonde And for to winne is owene londe.” Th’emperur herde of him that word, His sone stod before the bord; He thoughte with is longe knif Bereve that mesageres lif;</p>	<p>“Do I have any man so fearless That dares to go to Hampton, Over the water soon from now, And tell the emperor directly That I am no French knight, Nor am I named Gerard, Who made the pact with him. And tell him my name is Bevis, And I claim the lordship of Hampton, And his wife is my mother. That will turn them both to rage. Now, against them both together, I will endeavor to avenge my father!” One hardy man started up: “Sir,” he said, “I will go. The message condemns them both, And will make them sorry and wrathful.” He went forth at once Over the water in a boat. He marched on as quickly Past the castle gate. At supper as he sat, He greeted the emperor in this way: “Sir Emperor, I bring you A certain reliable report. You received well that knight Who dined with you last night. He says he is not called Gerard, Who made an agreement with you. He says that his name is Bevis, And he claims the lordship of Hampton, And is coming to speak with you To be avenged of his father’s death, To slay you with shame and disgrace, And to win back his own land.” As the emperor heard these words from him, His son stood before the table. He thought with his long knife To take away that messenger’s life.</p>
3080	<p>Th’emperur he gan thus gret: “Sire emperur, I thee bringe A swithe sertaine tiding: Wel the grete that ilche knight, That sopede with thee yerstene night; A saith a hatte nought Gerard, That made with thee the forward; A saith, that he hatte Bevoun And cleymeth the seinori of Hamtoun, And is icome with thee to speke, Of his fader deth to ben awreke, Thee te sle with schame and schonde And for to winne is owene londe.” Th’emperur herde of him that word, His sone stod before the bord; He thoughte with is longe knif Bereve that mesageres lif;</p>	<p>“Do I have any man so fearless That dares to go to Hampton, Over the water soon from now, And tell the emperor directly That I am no French knight, Nor am I named Gerard, Who made the pact with him. And tell him my name is Bevis, And I claim the lordship of Hampton, And his wife is my mother. That will turn them both to rage. Now, against them both together, I will endeavor to avenge my father!” One hardy man started up: “Sir,” he said, “I will go. The message condemns them both, And will make them sorry and wrathful.” He went forth at once Over the water in a boat. He marched on as quickly Past the castle gate. At supper as he sat, He greeted the emperor in this way: “Sir Emperor, I bring you A certain reliable report. You received well that knight Who dined with you last night. He says he is not called Gerard, Who made an agreement with you. He says that his name is Bevis, And he claims the lordship of Hampton, And is coming to speak with you To be avenged of his father’s death, To slay you with shame and disgrace, And to win back his own land.” As the emperor heard these words from him, His son stood before the table. He thought with his long knife To take away that messenger’s life.</p>
3090	<p>Th’emperur he gan thus gret: “Sire emperur, I thee bringe A swithe sertaine tiding: Wel the grete that ilche knight, That sopede with thee yerstene night; A saith a hatte nought Gerard, That made with thee the forward; A saith, that he hatte Bevoun And cleymeth the seinori of Hamtoun, And is icome with thee to speke, Of his fader deth to ben awreke, Thee te sle with schame and schonde And for to winne is owene londe.” Th’emperur herde of him that word, His sone stod before the bord; He thoughte with is longe knif Bereve that mesageres lif;</p>	<p>“Do I have any man so fearless That dares to go to Hampton, Over the water soon from now, And tell the emperor directly That I am no French knight, Nor am I named Gerard, Who made the pact with him. And tell him my name is Bevis, And I claim the lordship of Hampton, And his wife is my mother. That will turn them both to rage. Now, against them both together, I will endeavor to avenge my father!” One hardy man started up: “Sir,” he said, “I will go. The message condemns them both, And will make them sorry and wrathful.” He went forth at once Over the water in a boat. He marched on as quickly Past the castle gate. At supper as he sat, He greeted the emperor in this way: “Sir Emperor, I bring you A certain reliable report. You received well that knight Who dined with you last night. He says he is not called Gerard, Who made an agreement with you. He says that his name is Bevis, And he claims the lordship of Hampton, And is coming to speak with you To be avenged of his father’s death, To slay you with shame and disgrace, And to win back his own land.” As the emperor heard these words from him, His son stood before the table. He thought with his long knife To take away that messenger’s life.</p>
3100	<p>Th’emperur he gan thus gret: “Sire emperur, I thee bringe A swithe sertaine tiding: Wel the grete that ilche knight, That sopede with thee yerstene night; A saith a hatte nought Gerard, That made with thee the forward; A saith, that he hatte Bevoun And cleymeth the seinori of Hamtoun, And is icome with thee to speke, Of his fader deth to ben awreke, Thee te sle with schame and schonde And for to winne is owene londe.” Th’emperur herde of him that word, His sone stod before the bord; He thoughte with is longe knif Bereve that mesageres lif;</p>	<p>“Do I have any man so fearless That dares to go to Hampton, Over the water soon from now, And tell the emperor directly That I am no French knight, Nor am I named Gerard, Who made the pact with him. And tell him my name is Bevis, And I claim the lordship of Hampton, And his wife is my mother. That will turn them both to rage. Now, against them both together, I will endeavor to avenge my father!” One hardy man started up: “Sir,” he said, “I will go. The message condemns them both, And will make them sorry and wrathful.” He went forth at once Over the water in a boat. He marched on as quickly Past the castle gate. At supper as he sat, He greeted the emperor in this way: “Sir Emperor, I bring you A certain reliable report. You received well that knight Who dined with you last night. He says he is not called Gerard, Who made an agreement with you. He says that his name is Bevis, And he claims the lordship of Hampton, And is coming to speak with you To be avenged of his father’s death, To slay you with shame and disgrace, And to win back his own land.” As the emperor heard these words from him, His son stood before the table. He thought with his long knife To take away that messenger’s life.</p>

3110	<p>A threw is knif and kouthe nought redi And smot his sone thourgh the bodi. The mesager spak a gainli word Before th'emperur is bord: "Thow gropedest the wif anight to lowe, Thow might nought sen aright to throwe; Thow havest so swonke on hire to night, Thow havest negh forlore the sight: Her thow havest lither haunsel, A worse thee betide schel!" And smot is hors with the spore And arnde out at halle dore; Wel and faire he hath him dight And com aghen to Beves in Wight And tolde a slough is sone for grame; Beves lough and hadde gode game. Lete we with Sire Beves thanne And speke of Josiane,</p>	<p>He threw his knife and could not aim it And struck his son through his body. The messenger spoke some fitting words Before the emperor's table: "You've fondled your wife too vulgarly at night, And you can't see straight to throw. You have rutted on her at night so much That you have nearly lost your sight!⁶¹ You've had a lean reward here; A worse one will be waiting for you!" And he struck his horse with his spurs And sped out of the hall's doors. He conducted himself well and expertly And came back to Bevis in Wight And reported he killed his son in his temper. Bevis laughed and had good amusement. We will pause with Sir Bevis then And speak about Josanne</p>
3120	<p>That in Coloine was with Beves em, Til that he aghen theder kem. In that londe that ilche while Thar wonede an erl, that highte Mile: To Josian he hadde his love cast And gan hire to wowen fast, Faire a spak to terne hire thought, And she seide a was aboute nought. That erl was wroth in is manere, For Josian him nolde here, And spak to hire with loude gret:</p>	<p>Who was in Cologne with Bevis' uncle Until he might return again. In that land at the same time There lived an earl who was called Miles. He had his heart set on Josanne And he began to woo her aggressively. He spoke amorously to change her thoughts, And she said it was all for nothing. The earl was hostile in his manner, For Josanne would not listen to him, And he spoke to her with a loud complaint:</p>
3130	<p>"For wham," a seide, "scholde ich it lete, Boute ich mai have of thee me wille? Ich wile," a seide, "who that nille!" She seide: "While ichave Ascopard, Of thee nam ich nothing afard, For thee wrethe ne for thin ost, Ne for thee ne for thine bost!" And tho thoughte that Erl Mile To do Josian a gile: A leter he let for to write,</p>	<p>"Why should I stop," he thundered, Until I have from you what I want? I will go on, regardless of whoever says no!" She said, "While I have Ascopard, I am not afraid of you, Not of your wrath, not of your host, Not of you for all your threats!" And then Earl Miles thought Of a trick to trap Josanne. He had a letter written,</p>
3140	<p>In this maner he dede adite, That Ascopard come scholde To Beves, thar the letter him tolde, In to a castel in an yle, The brede of the water thre mile; To Ascopard thai come snel; Thai seide, Beves him grette wel And besoughte, for is love</p>	<p>And in this manner he had it composed, That Ascopard should go To Bevis, where the letter directed him, Into a castle on an island, Where the water's breadth was three miles. They came quickly to Ascopard And said that Bevis greeted him well And pleaded, for his love,</p>

⁶¹ Early print versions omit such fun lines, but in the MS we have this supreme insult. It was a medieval belief that sexual excess caused men to lose vigor and have poor vision, and thus the emperor's feeble aim. Kölberg gives the example of a comic German poem from the fourteenth century, *Der Pfarrer vom Kalenberge*, where a bishop asks a parson for advice for his bad eyes. In Kölberg, *Bevis*, 321.

3150	In haste a scholde to him come. Forth wente Ascopard ase hot Over the water in a bot; Whan he was over the water come, Hii unlek the ghate at the frome; And whan he was comen withinne, Thai sperede him faste with ginne. Aghen to Josiane Miles gan terne: “For wham,” a seide, “schel ich it werne?” She thoughte for to kepe hire, aflight, She sente a masager to Wight, To Beves, be letter and tolde fore	That he should come in haste to him. Ascopard set forth as rapidly, Over the water in a boat. When he had come over the water, He unlocked the gate as soon as he arrived. And when he had come inside, They imprisoned him by locking him up. Again Miles returned to Josanne: “For who,” he said, “should I be denied?” She thought to protect herself, certainly. She sent a message to the Isle of Wight To Bevis in a letter, and she told him Everything at once, less and more.
3160	Al togedre lasse and more.
Köl	On a day the erl to her cam	One day the earl came to her
Köl	And in his armes he her nam	And seized her in his arms. ⁶²
3161	Miles wolde have is wille And she bed him holde stille: “Nought, thegh I scholde lese me lif, Boute ich were thee weddede wif; Yif eni man me scholde wedde, Thanne mot ich go with him to bedde. I trow, he is nought now here, That schel be me weddefere!” “I schel thee wedde aghenes thee wille, Tomorwe I schel hit fulfille!”	Miles wanted to have his will, And she begged him to be still. “I will not, even if I should lose my life, Unless I were your wedded wife! If any man should marry me, Then I must go with him to bed. I swear, he is not here now, The man who will be my husband.” “Then I will marry you against your will. Tomorrow I will see it done.”
3170	And kiste hire anon right And sente after baroun and knight And bed hem come leste and meste, To anoure that meri feste. The night is gon, that dai comen is, The spusaille don hit is With merthe in that toun And joie of erl and baroun. And whan hit drough toward the night,	And he kissed her right after that And sent for barons and knights And ordered them to come, lowest and highest, To honor that merry feast. The night passed, so that day came, And the marriage was performed With festivity in that town And joy in earl and baron. And when it drew near the night, Their supper was made ready.
3180	Here soper was ther redi dight, And thegh thai richelich weren ifed, That erl wolde ben abed. Josian he het lede to bour, To have hire under covertour; Upon hire bedde ther she sat, That erl com to hire with that, With knightes gret compainie With pyment and with spisorie, With al the gamen that hii hedde,	The earl wanted to go to bed. He ordered Josanne brought to the bower, To have her under the covers. She sat there upon her bed. With that the earl came to her With a great procession of knights With spiced wine and dainties, And with all the tricks that they had To make her drunk in her bed. But her thoughts were elsewhere; That gaiety did not amuse her at all.
3190	For to make hire dronke a bedde; Ac al another was hire thought, Ne gamnede hire that gle right nought.	

⁶² Extra lines in Egerton, Naples, Cambridge, and Chetham, but not in Auchinleck (Kölberg, *Bevis*, 146). The missing sense is that Miles intends to ravish Josanne with or without marriage.

3200	<p>“Sire,” she seide to that erl sone, “Ich bidde thow graunte me a bone, And boutte thow graunte me this one, I ne schel thee never bedde none. Ich bidde thee at the ferste frome, That man ne wimman her in come; Belok hem thar-oute for love o me, That no man se our privité! Wimmen beth schamfast in dede And namliche maidenés,” sche sede. That erl seide a wolde faine. A drof out bothe knight and swaine, Levedies, maidenés, and grome, That non ne moste ther-in come, And schette the dore with the keie. Litel a wende have be so veie. Josian he com aghen to:</p>	<p>“Sir,” she soon said to the earl, I ask that you grant me a favor. And unless you grant me this one, I will never ask anything again. I ask you from the start That neither man nor woman come in here. Lock them outside for love of me So that no man invades our privacy. Women are modest in our deeds And particularly maidens,” she said. That earl said he gladly would. He shooed out both knight and servant, Ladies, maidens, and young men, So that no one could come in there, And he shut the door with the key. He little suspected to be doomed. He came back to Josanne.</p>
3210	<p>“Lemman,” a seide, “ichave ido, Thee bone ichave do with lawe, Me schon I mot me self of drawe, As I never yet ne dede.” Adoun a set him in that stede; Thanne was before his bed itight, Ase fele han of this gentil knight, A covertine on raile tre, For no man scholde on bed ise. Josian bethoughte on highing,</p>	<p>“Darling,” he said, “I have done it, I have done your request in good faith. I will take my own shoes off, As I have never done before.”⁶³ He set himself down in that place. In front of his bed there was A bedcurtain on a metal rail, As many noble knights had, So that no one might see them in bed. Josanne thought to herself in haste; With a towel she made a noose. She threw it about his neck And drew it on the crossbeam.</p>
3220	<p>On a towaile she made knotte riding, Aboute his nekke she hit threw And on the raile tre she drew; Be the nekke she hath him up tight And let him so ride al the night. Josian lai in hire bed. No wonder, though she wer adred. Dai is come in alle wise, A morwe the barouns gonne arise Sum to honten and sum to cherche, And werkmen gonne for to werche.</p>	<p>She threw it about his neck And drew it on the crossbeam. By the neck she choked him tight And let him hang in this way all the night. Josanne laid in her bed; It was no wonder that she was terrified. Day came in all its glory. In the morning the barons began to arise, Some to hunt and some to go to church, And workmen went to go to work. The sun shone; it grew late. The barons were puzzled That the earl lay so long in bed; They had great curiosity over it. Some said, “Let him be! With Josanne he has all his will.”</p>
3230	<p>The sonne schon, hit drough to under, The barouns thar-of hadde wonder; That th’erl lai so longe a bed, Gret wonder thar-of he hedde. Queth sum: “Let him lie stille! Of Josian he hath al is wille.” Middai com, hit drough te noune, The barouns speke ther eft soune: Queth the boldeste: “How mai this be?”</p>	<p>Mid-morning came, it drew to noon; The barons soon after spoke again. The boldest said, “How can this be? I will go up and see!” That baron dared to speak out,</p>
3240	<p>Wende ich wile up and ise!” That baroun dorste wel speke,</p>	

⁶³ Kölberg gives the explanation that the earl would have had a chamberlain to take his shoes off, and Miles is complaining that he must do it himself (*Beuis*, 323).

3250	<p>To the chaumber he gan reke And smot the dore with is honde, That al wide opun it wonde. “Awake,” a seide, “Sire Erl Mile, Thow havest sleped so longe while, Thin heved oweth to ake wel: Dame, let make him a caudel!” “Nai,” queth Josian at that sake, “Never eft ne schel his heved ake! I have so tyled him for that sore, Schel hit never eft ake more, Yerstendai he me wedded with wrong And tonight ichave him honge. Doth be me al youre wille, Schel he never eft wimman spille!” Al hii made meche sorwe; Anon rightes in that morwe Sum hire demte thanne</p>	<p>And he went quickly to the chamber And struck the door with his hand, So that it swung wide open. “Wake up,” he said, “Sir Earl Miles! You have slept for so long a while That your head will ache. Lady, have a cordial made for him!”⁶⁴ “No,” said Josanne to that cause. “Never again will his head ache. I have treated him for those pains So that it will never ache again. Yesterday he wedded me with injustice And last night I hanged him. Do with me as you will! He will never defile another woman!” All of them made great sorrow. Right away on that morning Some condemned her</p>
3260	<p>In a tonne for to branne. Withoute the toun hii pighte a stake, Thar the fur was imake, The tonne thai hadde ther iset, Thai fette wode and elet. Ascopard withinne the castel lay, The tonne and al the folk he say; Ful wel him thoughte that while, That him trokede a gret gile, For he was in the castel beloke, The castel wal he hath tobroken; He was maroner wel gode, A stertte in to the salte flode, A fischer he segh fot hot, Ever a swam toward the bot. The fischer wende, sum fend it were, Out of is bot he flegh for fere. Ascopard hente the bot an honde And rew himself to the londe, Toward the fur faste a schok, Beves com and him oftok:</p>	<p>To be burned in a barrel later. Outside the town they set up a stake, Where the fire was made. They set the barrel there And they fetched wood and kindling. Ascopard lay inside the castle, Seeing the town and the people. He realized full well that moment That he had been tricked with great guile. Because he was locked in the castle, He shattered the castle wall. He was an expert mariner. He leaped into the salty sea, And he quickly saw a fisherman. He swam directly toward the boat. The fisher thought it was some fiend; He flew out of his boat for fear. Ascopard took the boat in hand And rowed himself to the coast. Toward the fire he hastened quickly. Bevis appeared and overtook him.</p>
3280	<p>“Treitour,” a seide, “whar hastow be? This dai thow havest betraied me!” “Nai, sire!” Ascopard seide, And tolde, Miles him hadde betraide. Toward the fur thai wente blive: The prest, that hire scholde schrive, Godes blessing mote he fonge, For that he held Josiane so longe! In hire smok she stod naked, Thar the fur was imaked;</p>	<p>“Traitor,” he said. “where have you been? Today you have betrayed me!” “No, sir!” Ascopard pleaded And explained that Miles had deceived him. Reconciled, they went toward the fire. The priest was there to hear her confession. May he have God’s blessing In that he delayed Josanne for so long. She stood naked in her smock Where the fire was made.</p>
3290		

⁶⁴ *Caudel*: A sweet alcoholic beverage much like a thin porridge or egg-nog, served hot. The drink had medicinal purposes but seems to have been popular mainly for hangovers or as a nightcap.

3300	<p>Ase men scholde hire forbrenne, Beves on Arondel com renne With is swerd Morgelay; Ascopard com be another way, And slown in that ilche stounde Al that hii aboute the fur founde, And that he hadde for is while, That proude erl, Sire Mile. A sette Josian on is palfrai, And wente forth in here wai; Thai wente to schip anon righte And sailede forth in to Wighte. Wel was Saber paid with than Of Ascopard and of Josian. Beves and Saber sente here sonde Wide in to fele londe, And hii sente an hie After gret chevalrie, Of al the londe the stringeste knighte, That hii owhar finde mighte. That emperur negh daide, His wif confortede him and saide: “Sire,” she seide, “doute yow nought! Of gode consaile icham bethought: Ye scholle sende, for sertaine, After your ost in to Almaine, And whan your ost is come togadre, Send to the King of Scotlonde, me fadre; He wile come to thee an highe With wondergret chevalrie, That thow derst have no sore Of that thef, Saber the hore, Ne of Beves, that is me lothe: Yit ye schollen hem hangen bothe!” Tho the letters were yare, The masegers wer forth ifare. In Mai, whan lef and gras ginth springe, And the foules merie to singe, The King of Scotlonde com to fighte Of Almaine, is owene barouny, With wonder-gret chevalry. “Lordinges,” a seide, “ye witeth alle,” Whan hii were before him in the halle, “That ofte this thef, Saber the hore, Me hath aneied swithe sore.</p>	<p>As men prepared to burn her, Bevis came galloping on Arondel With his sword Morgelai. Ascopard came by another way, And in that same place he killed All that he found about the fire. And this was what that proud earl, Sir Miles, had for his guile. Bevis set Josanne on his palfrey, And they went forth on their way. They boarded their ship right after And sailed forth into Wight. Then Saber was well pleased With Ascopard and Josanne. Bevis and Saber sent their message Far and wide into many lands, And they sent in haste For a great cavalry, For the strongest knights in all the land That they might find anywhere. The emperor nearly died; His wife comforted him and said, “Sir,” she said, “do not be afraid!⁶⁵ I have taken good counsel. You should send, for sure, For your army in Germany. And when your host has come together, Send word to the King of Scotland, my father. He will come to you in haste With a great and fearsome cavalry, So that you need not be troubled By that thief, grey-haired Saber, Nor by Bevis, who is loathsome to me. You will see both of them hang yet.” When the letters were ready, The messengers set forth. In May, when leaf and grass begin to spring, And the birds sing merrily, The King of Scotland came to fight Alongside thirty thousand strong knights From the emperor’s barony in Germany, With an enormously great cavalry. “Lordinges,” he said when they were Before him in the hall, “you know all, How this thief, grey-haired Saber, Has so often aggravated me sorely.</p>
3310		
3320		
3330		

⁶⁵ *Doute yow nought*: The queen uses formal address (*you*) to her husband. Like Jane Austen’s busybody Mrs. Bennet who calls her husband “Mr. Bennet,” the show of submission does not match the queen’s aggressiveness. For a discussion of the Scottish queen’s contrast to Josanne, another foreign queen, see Calkin, 94.

3340	<p>Now is him come help to fighte, Beves of Hamtoun, an hardi knighte, To Sarasins was solde gon longe; Ich wende he hadde ben anhonge. He me threteth for to slen And for to winne is londe aghen; With him he hath a geaunt brought: Erthliche man semeth he nought, Ne no man of flesch ne felle, Boute a fend stolen out of helle; Ascopart men clepeth him ther oute, Of him ichave swithe gret doute.</p>	<p>Now Bevis of Hampton, a hardy knight, Has come to help him fight. He was sold to the Saracens long ago. I believed he had been hanged. He threatens to slay me And to win his land back again. He has brought a giant with him; He seems like no earthly man, Nor like any man of flesh or blood, But a fiend who has stolen out of Hell! Men around there call him Ascopart; I have such great fear of him.</p>
3350	<p>Ac, lordinges,” a seide, “arme ye wel, We scholle besege hem in here castel; The Ascopard be strong and sterk, Mani hondes maketh light werk!” Forth thai wenten ase snel, Til thai come to the castel Thar Saber and Beves weren inne. Thai pighte pavilouns and bente ginne. Saber stod on is tour an high, Al that grete ost a sigh; Gret wonder ther of he hade,</p>	<p>But, lordings,” he said, “arm yourselves well. We will besiege them in their castle. Even if Ascopard is strong and fearsome, Many hands make light work.”⁶⁶ They went forth as swiftly Until they came to the castle Where Saber and Bevis were inside. They raised pavilions and field machinery. Saber stood in his tower on high And he saw all that great army. He was greatly amazed by it.</p>
3360	<p>The holi crois before him he made And swor be his berde hore, Hit scholde some of hem rewe sore. Saber doun of his tour went, After al is knightes a sent: “Has armes, lordinges!” he gan segge, “Th’emperur ther oute us wile belegge. Make we thre vintaine, That be gode and certaine!</p>	<p>He made the holy Cross before him And swore by his grey beard That some of them would sorely regret it. Saber went down from his tower. He sent for all of his knights. “To arms, lordings!” he called. “The emperor outside wants to besiege us. We will make three divisions Which will be firm and sure. The first I will lead out myself, And you the other, Bevis!” he said.</p>
3370	<p>The ferste ich wile me self out lede, And thow that other, Beves!” a sede, “And Ascopard the thredde schel have With is gode, grete stave. Be we thre upon the grene, Wel ich wot and nought ne wene: Mani man is thar oute kete, This dai schel is lif forlete!” Saber is horn began to blowe, That his ost him scholde knowe. “Lordinges,” a seide, “ne doute yow nought,</p>	<p>“And Ascopard will have the third With his strong, huge staff. If we three are upon the green, I know well and have no doubt Many a man that we catch out there Will lose his life this day!” Saber began to sound his horn So that his host should know him. “Lordings,” he said, “have no fear. You will triumph this day so valiantly That they would be better off in Rome Than to have come here!”</p>
3380	<p>Ye scholle this dai be holde so dought, That hem were beter at Rome, Thanne hii hadde hider icode.” Tho th’emperur herde in castel blowe, Tharbi he gan to knowe,</p>	<p>When the emperor heard the sound from The castle, he realized by it</p>

⁶⁶ According to Bartlett Jere Whiting, this is the first recorded usage of this proverb (TEAMS). The source is probably *Proverbs, Sentences, and Proverbial Phrases from English Writings Mainly before 1500* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

3390	<p>That hii armede hem in the castel; His knightes he het ase snel: “Has armes, lordinges, to bataile! Out hii cometh, us to asaile.” Twei ostes thai gonne make, He of Scotlonde hath on itake, Th’emperur that other ladde: His deth that dai ther he hadde. Out of the castel cam before Saber with is berde hore, And in is compainie Thre hondred knightes hardie. Sire Morice of Mounclere His stede smot aghenes Sabere; His spere was sumdel kene,</p>	<p>That they were arming themselves inside. He ordered his knights as quickly: “To arms, lordings, to battle! Out they come, to attack us!” They formed into two divisions. The King of Scotland took one. He met his death there that day; And the emperor led the other. Saber came out of the castle first With his grey beard, And in his company There were three hundred hardy knights. Sir Morris of Montclear Struck against Saber on his steed; His spear was somewhat pointed, Yet Saber rode against him.</p>
3400	<p>And Saber rod him aghene: Though is spere wer scharp igrounde, Saber slough him in that stounde. Out on Arondel tho com Bevoun And mette with is stifader Devoun, And with a dent of gret fors A bar him doun of his hors; With Morgelay, that wolde wel bite, He hadde ment is heved of smite; His ost cam riding him to,</p>	<p>Yet Saber rode against him. Though his spear was sharply ground, Saber killed him in that place. Then Bevis came out on Arondel And met with his stepfather Devon; And with a blow of great force He threw him down from his horse. With Morgelai, which could bite well, He meant to strike off his head. His host came riding to him, Well ten thousand or more.</p>
3410	<p>Wel ten thosend other mo; So stronge were tho hii come. Th’emperur Beves hii benome And broughte him an horse tho; Tharfore was Beves swithe wo. Thar com in the thredde part With is batte Ascopard; Ever else he com than, A felde bothe hors and man.</p>	<p>So strong were those that came That they took the emperor from Bevis And rescued him and his horse; Bevis was very angry for it. Then the third part arrived With Ascopard with his club. As he approached, he continually Felled both horse and man. Bevis was well pleased with him, And called Ascopard and said to him,</p>
3420	<p>A clepede Ascopard and to him saide: “Ascopard, tak right gode hede: Th’emperur rit on a whit stede; Thin hure I schel thee yilde wel, With that thow bringe him to me castel!” “Sire,” a seide, “I schel for sothe In to the castel bringe him to thee!” Ascopard leide on wel enough, Bothe man and hors he slough; Thar nas non armur in that londe,</p>	<p>“Ascopard, pay close attention; The emperor is riding on a white steed. Your wage will be well paid If you will bring him to my castle.” “Sir,” he said, “I will for sure Bring him into the castle to you!” Ascopard laid on well enough; He killed both man and horse. There was no armor in the land That could withstand the giant’s stroke.</p>
3430	<p>That mighte the geauntes strok astonde. The King of Scotlonde, with is bat A yaf him swiche a sori flat Upon the helm in that stounde, That man and hors fel ded to grounde. Thanne anon, withoute sojur, A wente to that emperur, And hasteliche with might and main A hente the hors be the rain;</p>	<p>He gave the King of Scotland such a harsh stroke Upon the helmet with his club That in that moment Man and horse fell dead to the ground. After that, without pausing, He went to the emperor, And hastily, with power and agility, He seized his horse by the reins.</p>

3440	<p>Wolde he, nolde he, faire and wel He bar hors and man to the castel. Of al that other, siker apledte, That were ensembled in that fighte, Of Scotlonde and of Almaine, Beves and Saber with might and maine With deth is dentes gonne down drive, That thar ne scapede non alive. And thus Sire Beves wan the pris And vengede him of is enemis, And to the castel thai wente isame</p>	<p>He carried horse and man to the castle, Whether they liked it or not, firmly and strongly. Of all the others, for a certain fact, Who were engaged in that battle, From Scotland and from Germany, Bevis and Saber, with might and strength, Drove them down with deadly blows So that none there escaped alive. And thus Sir Bevis won victory And avenged himself on his enemies.</p>
3450	<p>With gret solas, gle and game, And that his stifader wer ded, Ase tit he let felle a led Ful of pich and of bremston, And hot led let falle ther-on; Whan hit alther swither seth, Th'emperur thar in a deth, Thar a lay atene.</p>	<p>They went to the castle together With great relief, joy, and freedom. And to ensure that his stepfather was dead, At once he had a lead kettle filled Full of pitch, burning sulfur, And molten lead, which was poured out. When all who were in it seethed, The emperor met his death there Where he lay at his end.</p>
3460	<p>Wende his saule, whider it wende! His moder over the castel lai, Hire lord sethen in the pich she sai; So swithe wo hire was for sore, She fel and brak hire nekke therefore. Else glad he was of hire, Of his damme, ase of is stipsire, And seide: "Damme, forghewe me this gilt, I ne yaf thee nother dent ne pilt!" Thanne al the lordes of Hamteschire Made Beves lord and sire</p>	<p>May his soul go wherever it may! His mother lay on the castle top, And she saw her lord boiling in the pitch. She was so distressed from shock, She fell and broke her neck from it. Bevis was as satisfied with her, His mother, as he was with his stepfather, And said, "Mother, forgive me this act; I never gave you any blow or knock!" Then all the lords of Hampton shire Made Bevis lord and sire</p>
3470	<p>And dede him feuté and omage, Ase hit was lawe and right usage. Tho was Beves glad and blithe And thankede God ful mani a sithe, That he was wreke wel inough Of him, that his father slough. Wel hasteliche she let sende To Coloine after the bischop hende, And spusede Beves and Josiane. Of no joie nas ther wane; Though ich discrive nought the bredale,</p>	<p>And performed fealty and homage, As was lawful and customary. Then Bevis was glad and content And thanked God many times That he was avenged well enough On him who killed his father. Very speedily, Josanne sent word To Cologne for the gracious bishop Who married Bevis and Josanne. There was no lack of joy! Though I won't elaborate on the wedding, You might well guess that it was royal, That there was in every way Food and drink and lavish hospitality. Now Bevis had all his estate. With her he fathered two children In their first year</p>
3480	<p>Whiles that hii were ifere. And Saber him redde thar Wende to the King Edgar;</p>	<p>While they were together. And Saber then advised him To go to King Edgar.⁶⁷</p>

⁶⁷ Possibly Edgar the Aetheling (c. 1051-c. 1126), who was proclaimed king of England in 1066 but never reigned.

3490	<p>Tho with inne a lite stounde The king a fond at Lounde. Beves a knes doun him set, The king hendeliche a gret; The king askede him, what he were And what nedes a wolde there. Thanne answerde Bevoun: "Ichatte Beves of Hamtoun; Me fader was ther th'erl Gii; Th'emperur for is levedi Out of Almaine com and him slough;</p>	<p>Then, within a short space, He found the king at London. Bevis sat himself on his knees And greeted the king courteously. The king asked him who he was And what he needed there. Then Bevis answered, "I am Bevis of Hampton. My father was the Earl Guy. For his lady the emperor of Germany Came and murdered him.</p>
3500	<p>Ichave wreke him wel inough; Ich bidde before your barnage, That ye me graunte min eritage!" "Bletheliche," a seide, "sone min, Ich graunte thee, be Sein Martin!" His marchal he gan beholde: "Fet me," a seide, "me yerde of golde! Gii, is fader, was me marchal, Also Bevis, is sone, schal."</p>	<p>I have avenged him well enough. I plead before your baronage That you will grant me my heritage." "With pleasure, my son," he said. "I endow you, by Saint Martin!" He looked at his constable. "Bring me," he ordered, "my staff of gold. Guy, his father, was my marshal, Just as Bevis, his son, shall be."</p>
3510	<p>His yerd he gan him ther take: So thai atonede withoute sake.</p>	<p>He gave him his staff there, And so they were reconciled without strife.</p>
<p>.....</p> <p>[Several episodes occur. Arondel kills the king's son and Bevis and Josanne go to Armenia in exile. Ascopard allies with Yvor and kidnaps Josanne as she gives birth to twins, Guy and Miles. Saber finds and kills Ascopard and reunites Josanne with Bevis. Terry is found and marries a princess. Ermine dies and makes Bevis' son Guy his heir. Bevis and Guy convert Armenia. Bevis defeats Yvor and returns to England where King Edgar's jealous steward raises a street battle against him. Bevis defeats the London rebels and reconciles with Edgar, who gives his daughter and kingdom to Miles. Bevis moves with Josanne to Mombrant to rule as king.]</p> <p>.....</p>		<p>.....⁶⁸</p>
4587	<p>With him wente Josian, is quene, And levede withoute treie and tene Twenti yer, so saith the bok.</p>	<p>[Bevis ruled with] Josanne, his queen, And they lived without trial or sadness For twenty years, so says the book.</p>

⁶⁸ Lines 3511-4586 form nearly a separate and complete narrative. Mills seems to agree with my division in calling this section the "second move" of the poem, using folklorist Vladimir Propp's terminology. Maldwyn Mills, "Structure and Meaning in *Guy of Warwick*," in *From Medieval To Medievalism*, ed. John Simons (London: MacMillan, 1992), 57.

4590	<p>Thanne swiche siknesse the levedi tok, Out of this world she moste wende; Gii, hire sone, she gan ofsende, And Terry, the riche king, For to ben at here parting. And whan thai were alle thare, To his stable Beves gan fare; Arondel a fond thar ded, That ever hadde be gode at nede; Tharfore him was swithe wo,</p>	<p>Then the lady was taken by such sickness That she had to leave this world. She sent for Guy, her son, And Terry, the rich king, To be with her at her passing. And when they were all there, Bevis walked to his stable And found Arondel dead, Who had always been there in need. For this he had such great sadness.</p>
4600	<p>In to his chaumber he gan go And segh Josian drawe to dede. Him was wo a moste nede, And er her body began to colde, In is armes he gan hire folde, And thar hii deide bothe ifere. Here sone ne wolde in non manere, That hii in erthe beried were. Of Sein Lauarauns he let arere A faire chapel of marbel fin,</p>	<p>He began to go into his chamber And saw Josanne also nearing death. He could not contain his sorrow; And before her body began to chill, He embraced her in his arms And there the both of them died together. Their son wished to by all means Have them buried in the earth. To honor Saint Lawrence he had⁶⁹ A majestic chapel of fine marble built, Which was finished with skilful artifice.</p>
4610	<p>That was ikast with queint engin; Of gold he made an high cornere And leide them thar in bothe ifere. An hous he made of riligioun, For to singe for Sire Bevoun And ek for Josian the fre: God on here saules have pité! And also for Arondel, Yif men for eni hors bidde schel, Thus endeth Beves of Hamtoun.</p>	<p>He made a high recess with gold And laid both of them there together. He established a monastic house To sing prayers for Sir Bevis And also for Josanne the gracious. May God have pity on their souls, And also for Arondel, If men should pray for any horse. Thus the end of Bevis of Hampton.</p>
4620	<p>God yeve us alle Is benesoun!</p>	<p>May God give us all His blessing!</p>
4621	<p>Amen.</p>	<p>Amen.</p>

⁶⁹ *Sein Lauarauns*: Saint Lawrence of Rome (c. 225-258) was martyred under the Valerian persecution and was widely venerated.

Bad Animals and Faithful Beasts in *Bevis of Hampton*

Bevis of Hampton and *Guy of Warwick* were two similar and very popular romances of the late English medieval period as evinced by their continued printing into the seventeenth century and the fulminations against them by humanists and Puritans.¹ Analogues of the story in different languages were scattered throughout Europe. Yet *Bevis of Hampton* now has few readers and receives minimal scholarly attention, and even for medievalists the text, at 4621 lines, has an eat-your-broccoli feeling about it. The unrepentant, cringeworthy Christian triumphalism of the poem does not age well, and recent criticism has been largely limited to examinations of Bevis' proto-English nationalism or feminist readings of Josian and her meanings as a Muslim woman. Part of the glamor of the non-European world in texts such as *The Wonders of the East* were the fantastic creatures of the orient, and Bevis equally abounds with boars, snakes, dragons, lions, fish, and references to numerous other beasts. A recent Kalamazoo session dealt with Bevis' horse,² but little attention has been paid otherwise to the poem's four-footed and crawling denizens and their symbolic functions.

Most medieval Europeans lived close alongside animals in a way modern city-dwellers do not, and unsurprisingly the literature features animals in debate poems and fabliaux. They even receive their own literary subgenre, the bestiary, where different animals are associated with religious meanings. The poet sometimes gives the beasts of *Bevis* natural motivations—lions get hungry—yet also gives them moral agency and

¹ Jennifer Fellows and Ivana Djordjevic, ed., introduction to *Sir Bevis of Hampton in Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), 1.

² Gary Lim, “‘My horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!’: Valuing Arondel in *Bevis of Hampton*,” conference paper, 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies, May 2009, Kalamazoo, MI.

otherworldly significances, personifying and endowing them with fantastic and deadly powers. Dragons are “real” in the story and live for centuries without aging and fly between countries as a matter of course. Finlayson makes the comment that romance marvels are “a necessary component of the narrative and the character of the ‘historical’ hero.”³ Beyond having narrative functions, the animals symbolize the themes of the poem and the spiritual choices and trials which Bevis repeatedly faces. Although Bevis is not presented as historical, the marvelous natures and abilities of the animals do reflect and indicate his character.

Romances such as *Guy of Warwick* and *Bevis of Hampton* have the “heathen” world as their setting, and the Christian-Islam binary is a charged one. Whatever *jus ad bellum*—justification to wage war—the medieval church had in defending Europe from Muslim colonization had been stained by its armies’ *jus in bello*—conduct during war—let alone by the military failure of the crusades. Wilcox suggests that such texts attempt to work out English anxieties over these unpleasant historical events through an idealized depiction.⁴ Said’s famous statement that “we need not look for correspondence between the language used to depict the Orient and the Orient itself, not so much because the language is inaccurate but because it is not even trying to be accurate”⁵ can easily be applied to medieval romance. The genre makes no pretense of historical factuality, instead using an imagined construct of the Muslim world to depict English concerns and

³ John Finlayson, “The Marvellous in Middle English Romance,” *Chaucer Review* 33:4 (1999): 382.

⁴ Rebecca Wilcox, “Romancing the East: Greeks and Saracens in *Guy of Warwick*,” in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 217-40.

⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 71.

to set its Christian virtues into greater contrast. This binary of Saracen-bad / Christian-good also underlies *Bevis* and the animals form a corresponding dual characterization. Most of the poem's creatures fall quite neatly into either moral category based on their symbolic significance.

Bad Animals

Boars

Boars were hunted but not domesticated, and so the poet's insistence on saying "wilde bor" (183) is telling; all boars were wild. The adjective emphasizes the dangerous and voracious nature of the boar and functions in the poem as a symbol of betrayal. One of the paired oppositions of *Bevis* is the virtuous wife and the evil wife, comprised by Bevis' murderous mother and loyal Josian. As "the antithesis of the idealized wife,"⁶ the mother's treason shocks the audience with its callous selfishness. Usually romance stepmothers and stewards and not biological mothers turn on their own children, and this Clytemnestra-figure would fit perfectly into Janekyn's "book of wicked wives" in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*.⁷ Functionally, the mother both portrays a type and highlights Josian's loving fidelity. As a Scottish wife, she may also have reflected contemporary anxieties over the foreign spouses of English kings, such the French Isabella who arranged Edward II's overthrow in 1327, nearing the time-frame of the Auchinleck

⁶ Corinne Saunders, "Gender, Virtue, and Wisdom in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*," in Fellows and Djordjevic, 164.

⁷ Saunders, 164.

manuscript's composition.⁸ Edward warred with the Scots and similarly described the people in vilifying terms.⁹

The mother's untamed desire and temper finds expression in the wild swine that she sends her husband out to find for her as a "boute for / al of the fevre" (184). The *boute* is a remedy—or does it feed and encourage her fever, as the MED definition suggests? She then reminds the audience of her sexual lust and connects herself with the boar by referring to their breeding place (192). Rather than a wild boar, Sir Guy meets with a wild boor, the German emperor who disgracefully beheads him. Once Guy is dead, no more is heard about the boar remedy, yet the animal finds a reprise in the swine that Saber kills to spread blood on Bevis' clothing (350). Bevis, who now realizes he is literally a "houre sone" (410), finds himself stained and dirtied by his mother's betrayal and her fleshly wantonness.

The second boar which Bevis later faces in Armenia displays the same untamed hunger, and the poet piles on descriptions of the boar's rapacious hunger for the flesh of the men "the bor hadde slawe in the wode" (779) with such oral imagery as its feral bristles, and the wild foam streaming from its mouth (809). The boar leers at Bevis "with eien holwe / also a wolde him have aswolwe" (785-6), stressing the boar's gluttony. The swine is animal but more than animal, being a "corsede gast" (781). The scene structurally fulfills the first boar-hunting episode. In destroying the boar, Bevis repudiates and defeats his mother's selfish desire, accomplishing what his father could not. Signally,

⁸ Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 64.

⁹ Calkin, 95.

Bevis sees the boar as a challenge for him alone, as he plans at night how “a wolde kethen is might / upon that swin himself one” (“how he would prove his might alone against that swine,” 752-3). The boar’s death both demonstrates Bevis’ valor and leads to the steward’s jealous attack, yet another betrayal by fellow retainers in Ermine’s household which Bevis remedies.

Dogs

In my experience in developing nations, dogs have jobs. They guard homes and dispose of food rubbish, and are otherwise considered pests. In medieval England, where living standards were also generally low and food precious, having pet dogs equally had a suggestion of wasteful foolishness as seen in the Prioress’ feeding of her hounds with milk and expensive bread (*CT* I.147). Scripture has the unpleasant analogy of the dog returning to its vomit (Prov. 26:11), and scavenging dogs have the typical taint of being dirty, debased and possibly wolfish. The *Havelock* poet repeatedly equates the thieves and outlaws of Ubbe’s realm with “dogges that weren hinged” (1922). Bevis’ antagonists call him a “yonge Cristene hounde” (621) at Christmastime, and after routing them, Bevis angrily scorns the messenger knights and Josian, refusing to speak to a “hethene hounde” (692). His outrageous metaphor insults all members of her faith as unclean, and Josian’s inner grace shines when she defends the knights’ deaths to her father as self-defense and wins back Bevis; but she does not question the insult’s presumption that her religious beliefs are impure or inferior.

Later, after another lover’s quarrel Josain wins back Bevis by promising to “min false godes al forsake / and Cristendom for thee love take” (1195-6). Josian’s willingness and ability to discard the creeds of her ancestors seems improbable if not offensive to

modern readers but conforms to the world of the poem. Her submission to Bevis “is both gendered and religious.”¹⁰ Josian has court refinements but “of Cristene lawe she kouthe naught” (526), suggesting that her Muslim beliefs are merely a disadvantage which education and obedience will rectify.¹¹ Some feminist critics stress Josian’s assertiveness and her rhetorical ability to manipulate the males of the poem, suggesting that her Christianity is cleverly performative rather than a transformative spiritual change.¹² Nevertheless, after her conversion Josian is no longer a part of the Saracen grouping, and Bevis limits his “heathen hounde” epithets to the Muslim warriors he confronts (1006, 1803). The canine comparison suggests spiritual dirtiness, but apparently one which Josian can be cleansed of if she has the inborn will to desire it.

Snakes

No animal in scripture bears the connotations of deceit, temptation, and sin attached to snakes and serpents, which are explicitly linked to Satan in scripture (Rev. 12:9, 20:2) and tradition. When the poet indicates that Bevis has a club “fram wormes, that in prisoun were” (1430), the audience needs little homiletic explanation. Romance snakes are naturally assumed to be hostile in disposition but these reptiles are “foule fendes” (1567) with additionally hellish attributes. Their leader, a female adder who is “for elde blak ase eni cole” (1548), has a particularly diabolical nature like the Edenic snake who is “more crafty than any of the wild animals” (Gen. 3:1). Arondel (1000) is the

¹⁰ Calkin, 72.

¹¹ Myra Seaman, “Engendering Genre in Middle English Romance: Performing the Feminine in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*,” *Studies in Philology* 98:1 (2001): 58.

¹² Calkin, 82.

only other animal that the poet reports as thinking (1550), and Bevis defeats the adder's feint to sting his forehead (1550) only with a club-stroke to her skull—"he will crush your head" (Gen. 3:15).

Beyond the scriptural significations for the poem's medieval audience, the snakes also have a wider meaning in symbolizing the temptation into spiritual death which Bevis faces at this point in the story. For the world of the poet and his audience, a simple medieval dichotomy prevails with Christian belief leading to Heaven and pagan belief ending in perdition or damnation. The crusades lend some historical clarification on the nature of Bevis' temptation. Much European rhetoric held that Islam was not categorically a different faith but a Christian heresy, and a perennial worry for Christendom was crusaders who became too comfortable in the Saracen world and eased into their beliefs. The concern in effect was that the practices of Islam were precariously close to those of Christianity, and regulations were passed to prevent fraternization and sexual relations with Muslims.¹³

Josian's spiritual identity is not essential to her but mutable by choice or grace, in keeping with medieval Augustinian teachings concerning free will. The dangerous corollary of free will was that people could also choose wrongly. Romance tends to depict Saracens either as black and bestial, "justifying attacks on them"¹⁴ as they are unconvertible, or with a chivalric and courtly culture dangerously parallel to that of Christendom. The giant Amourant in *Guy of Warwick* is "as blac he is as brodes brend" (742), and Ascopard similarly has a "lotheliche semlaunt" ("loathly appearance," 2506).

¹³ Calkin, 81.

¹⁴ Calkin, 40.

Conversely, Ermine raises Bevis, treats him well in his court, and protects and knights him. The poet echoes historical worries about Christian crusaders “going Saracen”¹⁵ by having a key scene in which Bevis meets Terry and seems to desert his English identity and homeland by privileging his loyalty and duty to Ermine, stating “he that me tok this letter an honde / he ne wolde love me non other / han ich were is owene brother” (“He who put this letter into my hand could not have more love for me than if I were his own brother,” 1330-2).

In the scene following his meeting with Terry, Bevis perhaps struggles with these conflicting desires as he savagely attacks worshippers exiting a mosque and then offers to Brademond the blessings of “Mahoun, that is god thin / Tervagaunt and Apolin” (1379-80). Bevis then comes to face his physical and spiritual depths in Brademond’s dungeon, additionally symbolized by the evil serpents. If Bevis needs to rehabilitate his soul, the temptation he needs to subjugate is perhaps both spiritual and feminine in its otherness, as the chief snake is appropriately female (1549). Bevis himself veers toward bestiality himself in his physical appearance as his hair grows to his feet. Even after conquering the adder, his spiritual condition is compromised and tenuous. He prays for God’s mercy but can only exit the prison by imitating the guard’s voice and language. As Fellows notes, “if this act of verbal impersonation is all that is required for a Christian knight to masquerade as a Saracen, then the difference between Bevis and the Saracen Other is narrow and complex indeed.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Calkin, 55.

¹⁶ Robert Allen Rouse, “For King and Country? The Tension between National and Regional Identities in *Sir Bevis of Hampton*,” in Fellows and Djordjevic, 121.

Dragons

The “great dragon” of Rev. 12:9 is also Satan, indicating a shared scriptural symbolism between serpents and dragons. Literature and folklore also conflated the physical and moral attributes of dragons with that of snakes, and when Chickering comments that “no serpent in Western literature means well,”¹⁷ he is also speaking about the *Beowulf* dragon. Yet dragons are especially problematic in medieval culture, not least because of the perennial question of whether people believed in them. As sober a document as the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that in the year 793 “wæron geseowene fyrene dracan on þam lyfte fleogende” (“fiery dragons were seen flying through the air”) in Northumbria. Chroniclers note that Harold Hardrada killed at least two,¹⁸ and dragon sightings in England are recorded from as late as 1408.¹⁹ The *Beowulf* manuscript sits in Cotton Vitellius A. xv alongside *The Wonders of the East*, another text featuring dragons which the author reports having seen in India.²⁰

Although in *Beowulf* the dragon has symbolic meanings, the poet seemingly stresses in realistic touches that the dragon is not a psychological abstraction but a real, breathing, eating animal. *Bevis* similarly allows the marvelous and depicts it as mundane. The poet mentions matter-of-factly that two warriors descend to Hell and become immortal dragons who will live “til hit come Domes Dai” (2644). Weiss suggests that the

¹⁷ Howell D. Chickering, Jr., ed. and trans., *Beowulf* (Toronto: Anchor Books, 1977), 256.

¹⁸ W.P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (1908) (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), 168.

¹⁹ Finlayson, 384.

²⁰ Jordanus, *The Wonders of the East*, trans. Henry Yule (London: Hakluyt Society, 1843), 41.

dragon represents English post-crusade hostility to Rome,²¹ but more probably it carries the same evil signification as other medieval dragons. “Sin is literally written on the dragon”²² in the form of the hellish warring kings. Beowulf worries that he has “ecean dryhtne / bitre gebulge” (“bitterly offended the eternal ruler,” 2330-1), and the *Bevis* dragon may similarly be the foul result of Bevis’ sin in failing to serve God. The dragon might also embody the sins of the faithless community, and in legend Saint George follows the dragon’s defeat by converting the local people.

The dragon scene is unique to the English texts, and the poet’s invocation of Saint George, found only in Auchinleck,²³ is particularly interesting. Bevis’ killing of the dragon, again a solitary act with no Wiglaf to aid him, represents his reclamation of his “Englishness” after his drift into Saracen apostasy. This English virtue emphatically contrasts against both the Romans’ inability to quell the dragon and the heathen Ascopard’s spiritually enervated cowardice. The national dimension dovetails into the religious, for in killing the *wyrm* Bevis undergoes a sort of baptism.

Whan overgon was his smerte
 And rekevred was of is hertte,
 Beves sette him up anon;
 The venim was awei igon;
 He was ase hol a man
 Ase he was whan he theder cam.
 On is knes he gan to falle,
 To Jesu Crist he gan to calle (2853-60)

When the pain had diminished
 And his courage was renewed,
 Bevis raised himself up at once.
 The venom had faded away;
 He was as whole a man
 As he was when he came there.
 He fell on his knees
 And began to call on Jesus Christ.

²¹ Judith Weiss, “The Major Interpolations in *Sir Beves of Hamtoun*,” *Medium Aevum* 48 (1979): 72.

²² Saunders, 168.

²³ Rouse, 115.

In Auchinleck *Bevis*' venomous skin is likened to a leper's (2830) with its suggestion of moral corruption and disease. The comparison "suggests an equation between the healing waters of the well and the purifying water of baptism."²⁴ Auchinleck also uniquely cements the baptismal connection by having the water sanctified by a virgin who bathed in it, frightening away the dragon (2804-9).²⁵

Lions

The symbolism of the lions is also difficult to interpret. As in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, they at first want to eat Josian, "grennand on hur with mucche grame" ("snarling on her with great savagery," 2389), and only desist because of her virginal innocence, as she is a "kinges doughter, quene and maide both" (2393), just as the lion who lunges at Una feels "asswagèd with remorse" (I.iii.44).²⁶ In Spenser the lion symbolizes female chastity, and the English manuscripts of *Bevis* seem to "emphasize the need for Josian's Saracen body to conform to Christian-required norms."²⁷ Both Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain* and *Guy of Warwick* feature lions with Christian or nationalist significations such as those attributed to Richard the Lionhearted. Yet in *Bevis* the lions are less abstract and more animal. They kill Boniface, eat a horse, and feel no qualms about attacking *Bevis*. The poet may have realized the conflicting need to demonstrate Josian's purity and have *Bevis* perform a heroic exploit, to defend her from lions who cannot harm her. Josian

²⁴ Jennifer Fellows, "Middle English and Renaissance *Bevis*: A Textual Survey," in Fellows and Djordjevic, 83.

²⁵ Weiss, 72.

²⁶ Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, The Sixteenth Century and Early Seventeenth Century Vol. B eighth ed.*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

²⁷ Calkin, 75.

thus functions more as a spiritual guide and aide to Bevis than a damsel-in-distress, and throughout the poem she defends her chastity with deft skill, diplomacy, and force when necessary. Her willingness to help Bevis is in keeping with her character but cannot be allowed to cheapen his valor.

The poet thus emphasizes the lions' rapacity to enhance Bevis' justification in killing them. Narratively, he must slaughter the lions in self-defense, and symbolically, he may be proving himself as fit to take Josian's virginity by overcoming them. Two signals which suggest such a reading are the lack of evil attributions to the lions and the hints of their identification with Josian. The poet speaks of "beestes felle" (2426) but does not stress their hideousness or impute any sort of diabolical hellishness on the animals as he does with the boar and the serpents. They do what lions do, and Bevis' task is to overcome them. The lions also have an odd sympathy with Josian. The second is a lioness (2429), and Bevis at one point collapses the two, scolding Josian that "boute she lete that lioun be / a wolde hire sle in that destresse / ase fain ase the liounesse" ("unless she left that lion alone, he would slay her as willingly as the lioness," 2476-8). The lions may additionally represent a trace of heathen unruliness in Josian which Bevis must purge, and the scene appropriately segues to her baptism.

Good Animals

Fish

The fish are scaly relatives of the serpents, but in *Bevis* they have the normal scriptural identification with Christians. Christ blesses loaves and fishes and promises to make his disciples "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Tertullian writes that "we, being little

fishes, as Jesus Christ is our great Fish, begin our life in the water.”²⁸ In the medieval *Bestiary* whales deceive and consume fish, just as the devil misleads weak men. As Bevis reaches the shore he makes a beautiful prayer contrasting the innocence of fish to the perfidy of mankind: “thow madest fisch ase wel also man / that nothing of senne ne can / ne nought of fishes kenne / never yet ne dede senne” (1709-1802). After Bevis’ physical and spiritual torpidity in Damascus, his sea journey among the fish symbolizes a cleansing separation from its culture and values and a return to Christian lands. Trenchefis, though a “gode stede” (1818), is still a ‘Saracen’ horse and shucks Bevis off as now irretrievably foreign.

Horses

The poem could easily have been titled *Bevis and Arondel*, as the loyal horse fully completes and supports Bevis’ knightly character. From childhood Bevis expresses the desire that “ich mowe an horse ride” (550) to avenge his father, and Arondel becomes an integral part of Bevis’ identity. Arondel carries Bevis through his first test of honor when mocked by Saracen warriors at Christmas (589), and the two are so faithful that Bevis leaves England in angry exile rather than see his horse unjustly killed. Arondel, like Josian, receives a sort of redemptive conversion through Bevis that makes the horse his own, and Arondel refuses to let the alien Yvor ride him. Both are captured only after a heroic struggle. When Bevis is at his knightly and Christian nadir, he is equally deprived of Arondel as Ermine separates them when sending him to Brademond (1251-5). Later Bevis laments not having “Arondel, me gode palfray” (1608) in the depths of prison, and

²⁸ “Sed nos pisciculi secundum ἰχθῦν in nostrum Iesum Christum in aqua nascimur...” Tertullian, *De Baptismo* Cap. 1.3, in *Tertullian’s Homily on Baptism*, trans. Ernest Evans (London: S.P.C.K., 1964).

Arondel correspondingly suffers seven years of torpidity until their joyful reunion, chained and alone.

Thematically, if Josian functions as a sort of spiritual guide to Bevis as a virtuous wife, like Amoraunt in *Amis and Amiloun*, Arondel connects the two as an incarnation of their love. Bevis' angry rejection of Josian concludes with him sundering the connection, shouting "Thow yeve me an hors: lo it her!" (1131). Upon his liberation from prison, he has more faith in his horse than in Josian, exclaiming "'wer Josiane,' a thoughte, 'ase lele / also is me stede Arondel'" (2033-4).²⁹ Arondel reconciles the two by showing proof of Bevis' identity to Josian in letting Bevis ride him, and then by providing transportation for the couple to leave. The three form a sort of loving trinity at the end of the poem where faithful Arondel, his duty complete, dies at the same moment as Josian (4597-4601). The poet has such high regard for Arondel's selfless service to the two that after inviting prayers for Bevis and Josian's souls he hints at the same for Arondel, "yif men for eni hors bidde schel" ("if men should pray for any horse," 4618).

Bevis of Hampton is often compared to its Auchinleck companion *Guy of Warwick*. Yet to sum up this section the poem also shares a correspondence with *Amis and Amiloun* and *Athelston* as stories featuring estrangement and reconciliation aided by a third character who lovingly heals the separation. Oddly, in *Bevis* this role is played by a horse. Yet the poem uses animals with marvelous characteristics to interact with its heroes and to symbolize their problems and choices. The tempting and malevolent serpents and dragons embody Bevis' imperiled faith and Englishness. Lions play out

²⁹ Seaman, 63.

obstacles between Bevis and Josian which must be surmounted. The beastly boars point to the selfish gluttony of Bevis' mother and Josian's virtue. Dogs suggest the dirtiness of pagan ignorance. Josian ultimately becomes an ideal wife and mother herself, exacerbating the shame of faithless Christian women.³⁰ In answer to the criticism that romances lack psychological shading, Hanna argues that "romance shows interiority allusively."³¹ In *Bevis* as well, the animals do not need to talk to interact and harmonize with what the humans experience.

³⁰ Joanne Charbonneau and Désirée Cromwell, "Gender and Identity in the Popular Romance," in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory James Rushton, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 101.

³¹ Ralph Hanna, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 109.

CHAPTER 4

Floris and Blancheflor

The English *Floris and Blancheflor* survives in four manuscripts: Auchinleck (c. 1330), Cambridge University Library, MS Gg.iv.27.2 (c. 1300), Egerton 2862 (c. 1400), and MS Cotton Vitellius D.iii. (c. 1275). It take as my text source Erik Koope, ed. *Floris and Blancheflour. Sentimental and Humorous Romances*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/ekfbfrm.htm>. Other editions include Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930). As a text source for the French excerpt I use Édélestand Du Méril, ed. *Floire et Blanceflor, Poèmes du 13è Siècle*. Paris: 1856. <http://www.archive.org/details/floireetblancefl00floiuoft>. Du Méril uses National Library of France (Fonds Français) MS 375, 1447, and 12562 (c. 1200).

F1	Oyez, signor, tout li amant, Cil qui d'amors se vont penant, Li chevalier et les puceles, Li damoiseil, les demoiselles: Se mon conte volez entendre, Moult i porrez d'amors aprendre. Cou est du roi Floire l'enfant Et de Blanceflor la vaillant, De qui Berte as-grans-piés fu née; 10 Puis fu mere Charlemaïne, Qui puis tint et France et le Maine;	Listen, lords, and all the lovers ¹ Whose hearts have felt suffering, The knights and the women, The young maids, and noble ladies. Whoever wishes to hear my tale Will be able to learn much about love! The story is of the royal child Floris And of Blancheflor the brave To whom Berta Goosefeet was later born, ² Herself the mother of Charlemagne, Who later held France and the Maine.
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¹ No existing English manuscript has the beginning of the story, and so I have used the first 192 lines of *Floire et Blanceflor*.

² *Berte as-grans-piés*: Bertrada of Laon (720-783), wife of Pepin the Short and Charlemagne's mother, whose unfortunate nickname possibly refers to misshapen feet. One of the earliest manuscripts of the poem, Paris BN 1447, also has Adenot le Roi's *Berte aus Grans Piés* (c. 1270). For a discussion of the French sources, see Patricia E. Grieve, *Floire and Blancheflor and the European Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), chapter 1.

	<p>Floire, son pere, que vous di, Uns rois payens l'engenuï; Et Blanceflor, que tant ama, Uns cuens crestiens l'engendra: Floire fut tout nés de payens, Et Blanceflor de crestiens. Baptizier se fist en sa vie Floire, por Blanceflor s'amie:</p>	<p>Floris, their forefather whom I speak about, Was fathered by a pagan king, And Blanceflor, who was loved by many, Was fathered by a Christian earl.³ And so Floris was born to heathens, And Blanceflor to Christians. Floris had himself baptized in his life Because of the love he had for Blanceflor,</p>
20	<p>Car en un biau jor furent né Et en une nuit engender. Puisque Floire fu crestiens Li avint grans honors et biens.</p>	<p>For on one joyful day they were born, And on the same night conceived. Because Floris was later a Christian, He became a king of great honor and riches.</p>
30	<p>Or sivrai mon proposement: Si parlerai avenanment. En une chambre entrai l'autr'ier, Un venredi apres mangier, Por deporter as demoiseles, Don't en la chambre avoit de beles.</p>	<p>Now to continue with our story, If I might come to speak about it. Not long ago on a Friday I entered a room after supper To have some conversation with some ladies Who were having a chat there.</p>
43	<p>Illoec m'assis por escouter Deus puceles qu'oï parler: Eles estoient doi serors; Ensemble parloient d'amors. L'aisnée d'une amor contoit A sa seror que moult amoit, Qui fa ja entre deus enfans, Bien avoit passé deus cens ans; Mais a un clerc dire l'oït Qui l'avoit léu en escrit. El commença avenanment: Or oyez son commencement. Uns rois estoit issus d'Espagne; De chevaliers ot grant compaignie: En sa nef ot la mer passée; En Galisse fu arivée.</p>	<p>There I seated myself To listen to what the two women were saying. They were two sisters; They spoke together about love. The older one told a story Which the younger one enjoyed very much, And it was about two children Who were well over two years old. But they had heard it recited by a clerk Who had written it down. The story is pleasant, And so now listen to its beginning. A king came from Spain With a large company of knights. He passed over the sea in his ship And arrived in Galicia.</p>
50	<p>Felis ot non; si fu payens: Mer ot passé sor crestiens, Por ou païs la praie prendre, Et la viles torner en cendre. Un mois entier et quinze dis Sejorna li rois ou païs. Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée Ne féist li rois chevaucée; Viles reuboit, avoïrs praoit Et a ses nes tout conduisoit: De quinze liues el rivache, Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache, Ne castel ne vile en estant: Vilains n'i va son boef querant. Es-vos le païs tout destruit;</p>	<p>Felix had no faith and so he was pagan; He passed over the sea to Christendom. Wherever he went, he ravaged the land And turned the villages into ashes. For an entire month and a half The king stayed in that country. There was no day in that time when the king Did not campaign with his army. He despoiled villages, preying on them, And had everyone driven away. Within the limit of fifteen miles No cattle or oxen remained; No castle or village was standing. Peasants could find no beef. The countryside was totally destroyed,</p>
60	<p>Mer ot passé sor crestiens, Por ou païs la praie prendre, Et la viles torner en cendre. Un mois entier et quinze dis Sejorna li rois ou païs. Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée Ne féist li rois chevaucée; Viles reuboit, avoïrs praoit Et a ses nes tout conduisoit: De quinze liues el rivache, Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache, Ne castel ne vile en estant: Vilains n'i va son boef querant. Es-vos le païs tout destruit;</p>	<p>Mer ot passé sor crestiens, Por ou païs la praie prendre, Et la viles torner en cendre. Un mois entier et quinze dis Sejorna li rois ou païs. Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée Ne féist li rois chevaucée; Viles reuboit, avoïrs praoit Et a ses nes tout conduisoit: De quinze liues el rivache, Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache, Ne castel ne vile en estant: Vilains n'i va son boef querant. Es-vos le païs tout destruit;</p>
70	<p>Mer ot passé sor crestiens, Por ou païs la praie prendre, Et la viles torner en cendre. Un mois entier et quinze dis Sejorna li rois ou païs. Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée Ne féist li rois chevaucée; Viles reuboit, avoïrs praoit Et a ses nes tout conduisoit: De quinze liues el rivache, Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache, Ne castel ne vile en estant: Vilains n'i va son boef querant. Es-vos le païs tout destruit;</p>	<p>Mer ot passé sor crestiens, Por ou païs la praie prendre, Et la viles torner en cendre. Un mois entier et quinze dis Sejorna li rois ou païs. Ains ne fu jors qu'o sa maisniée Ne féist li rois chevaucée; Viles reuboit, avoïrs praoit Et a ses nes tout conduisoit: De quinze liues el rivache, Ne remanoit ne bués ne vache, Ne castel ne vile en estant: Vilains n'i va son boef querant. Es-vos le païs tout destruit;</p>

³ The ostensibly historical Blanche Fleur de Laon (died c. 720) was the daughter of the Merovingian king Dagobert III (699-715) and a Saxon princess.

91	<p>Payen en ont joie et deduit. En la compaigne ot un Francois: Chevaliers ert, preu et cortois Qui au baron saint Jaque aloit. Une soie fille i menoit, Qui a l'Apostle s'ert vouée Ains qu'ele issist de sa contrée, Por son mari qui mors estoit, De qui remise enceinte estoit. Li chevaliers se veut deffendre;</p>	<p>While the pagans rejoiced and celebrated. Among the locals was a Frenchman. He was a knight, virtuous and courteous, On pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint James.⁴ He was escorting a woman Who had devoted herself to the apostle And who was from the region. For her husband had died, The man whose baby she was pregnant with. The knight resolved to defend them,</p>
100	<p>Ne chaut a aus de lui vif prendre, Ains l'ocient; s'el laissent mort, Et sa fille mainent au port. Au roi Felis l'ont presentée, Et il l'a forment esgardée: Bien aperçoit a son visage Que ele estoit de haut parage, Et dist, s'il puet, qu'a la roïne Fera present de la meschine: Car de tel chose li préa</p>	<p>But he was not able to save his life, And the plunderers left him for dead And took his lady to the port. They presented her to King Felix And he carefully studied her, Closely perceiving her appearance And that she was of noble peerage. He said, if it would please the queen, He would make her a slave as a present Since he valued such things When he crossed the sea from plundering.</p>
110	<p>Quant il por reuber mer passa. Atant s'en-entrent tout es nes, Amont traient tres-tout lor tres: Or ont boin vent et bien portent; Si repairent lié et joiant. Il n'orent pas deus jor erré. Qu'en lor païs sont arrive.</p>	<p>Then all of them boarded, And they traveled upstream expertly. They were carried well by the wind So that they returned safely and easily. They had not sailed two days When they arrived in their country.</p>
127	<p>Es-vos le roi en la cite Son barnage a tres-tout mandé: Son eschec lor depart li rois,</p>	<p>Then the king was in the city And all of his baronage was summoned. The king divided up the booty,</p>
130	<p>Bien largement, comme cortois, Et, por sa part, a la roïne Donc de gaaing la meschine. La roïne s'en fait moult liée; En sa chambre l'a envoyée. Sa loi li laisse bien garder; Servir la fait et honorer; O li sovent jue et parole, Et francois aprent de s'escole.</p>	<p>The king divided up the booty, Very generously and with courtesy, And as for the queen, She was rewarded with the slave. The queen herself was very happy. The slave was sent to her chamber. She obeyed the queen's rules well, And served and honored her; They often amused themselves and talked And schooled themselves in French.</p>
140	<p>La meschine ert cortoise et prous; Moult se faisoit amer a tous: La roïne moult bien servoit, Comme cele cui ele estoit.</p>	<p>The slave was courteous and virtuous; She was loved by all And was of good service to the queen, Who was also expecting a child.</p>
161	<p>Le jor de le la Pasque-florie, Si com le reconte lor vie, Vint li terme qu'eles devoient Enfanter cou que pris avoient. Travail orent et paine grant</p>	<p>On the day of Palm Sunday, As the story of their life is told, The term came to a close Of this child who was so priceless. Great labor pains came to the mothers</p>

⁴ The French version relates that a group of pilgrims travels to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, northern Spain. The path is called "The Way of Saint James" and Felix, a pagan Spanish king, attacks and robs the pilgrims in his depredations.

170	Ains que né fussent li enfant: Valles fu nés de la payene, Et meschine ot la crestïene. Li doi enfant, quant furent né, De la feste furent nomé: La crestïene, por l'honor De la feste, ot nom Blancheflor; Li rois noma son chier fil Floire; Aprende le fist a Montoire. Li pere ama moult son enfant; La mere plus ou autretant. Livré l'ont a la damoisele, Por cou qu'ele estoit sage et bele, A norrir et a maistroier,	And later the children were born: The pagan gave birth to a boy, And the slave had a Christian girl. When the two children were born, They were named for the festival: The Christian, to honor the day, Was named Blancheflor; The king named his dear son Floris; ⁵ His schooling was taken at Montargis. ⁶ The father had great love for his child; The mother loved him equally or more. They were entrusted to the slave, For she was wise and beautiful, To raise and to teach, Excepting only their nursing.
180	Fors seulement de l'alaitier: Une payene l'alaitoit, Si com lor lois le commandoit. Moult le norrissoit doucement Et gardoit ententivement Plus que sa fille, et ne savoit Lequel des deus plus chier avoit: Onques ne lor sevrá mangier Ne boire, fors seul l'alaitier: En un lit tout seul les couchoit;	A pagan woman nursed them As was commanded by their laws. ⁷ She cared for him with kindness And guarded him attentively Just as much as her daughter, and no one knew Which of the two were dearer to her. They never ate or drank separately, Only excepting their nursing. They slept only in one bed; Together they grew and were raised. ⁸ When the children were five years old, They were very tall, beautiful, and noble.
190	Andeus passoit et abevroit. Quant cinq ans orent li enfant, Moult furent bel et gent et grant:	No one in the land would ever need ⁹ To try to find fairer children. The Christian woman cared for them at the time. She loved the two of them very deeply. She reared them together Until they were seven years of age. The king beheld his dear son And said to him on this occasion That it would be a great loss Unless his son were sent To study books and to know letters,
1	Ne thurst men never in londe After feirer children fonde. The Cristen woman fedde hem thoo; Ful wel she lovyd hem both twoo. So longe she fedde hem in feere That they were of elde of seven yere. The king behelde his sone dere, And seyde to him on this manere That harme it were mucche more	
10	But his son were sette to lore On the book, letters to know,	

⁵ The two children are given “flowery” names—Floris (“Belonging to the flower”) and Blancheflor (“White flower”)—as they are both born on Palm Sunday, also called *Paske Flourie*.

⁶ *Montoire*: The French MS has Montoro, Spain, near Cordoba. The English MSS have Montargis, France, near Orleans instead. TEAMS notes that *Montargis* derives from Odysseus’ faithful dog Argos, and suggests that the choice of place name may symbolize Floris’ loyalty.

⁷ One Spanish version of the story states that the mother’s milk transferred the spirit of Christianity to Floris, perhaps explaining such a prohibition (Grieve, 162).

⁸ *Passoit*: Some MSS seem to have *peissoit*, which suggests “they drank and ate,” rather than passing time.

⁹ At line 193 the surviving English text begins. TEAMS uses the London Egerton 2862 MS until 367, where Auchinleck begins.

<p>20</p> <p>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>50</p> <p>60</p>	<p>As men don both hye and lowe. “Feire sone,” he seide, “thow shalt lerne, Lo, that thow do ful yerne.” Florys answerd with wepyng, As he stood byfore the kyng; Al wepyng seide he: “Ne shal not Blancheflour lerne with me? Ne can y nocht to scole goon Without Blauncheffloure,” he seide than. “Ne can y in no scole syng ne rede Without Blaunchefflour,” he seide. The king seide to his soon: “She shal lerne for thy love.” To scole they were put. Both they were good of wytte; Wonder it was of hur lore, And of her love wel the more. The children lovyd togeder soo, They myght never parte atwoo. When they had five yere to scoole goon, So wel they had lerned thoo, Inowgh they couth of Latyne, And wel wryte on parchemyn. The kyng understood the grete amoure Bytwene his son and Blanchefloure, And thought, when they were of age, That her love wolde nocht swage; Nor he myght nocht her love withdrawe, When Florys shuld wyfe after the lawe. The king to the queene seide thoo, And tolde hur of his woo, Of his thought and of his care, How it wolde of Floreys fare. “Dame,” he seide, “y tel thee my reed: I wyl that Blauncheffloure be do to deed. When that maide is yslawe And brought of her lyf dawe, As sone as Florys may it underyete, Rathe he wylle hur forgete. Than may he wyfe after reed.” The queene answerd then and seid (And thought with hur reed Save the mayde fro the deed): “Sir,” she seide, “we aught to fond That Florens lyf with menske in lond, And that he lese not his honour For the mayden Blaunchefflour. Whoso myght take that mayde clene That she nere brought to deth bydene,</p>	<p>As men do, both high and low. “Fair son,” he said, “you will learn. Now see that you do it very intently.” Floris answered in tears, As he stood before the king. As he wept he said, “Blancheflor will not learn with me? I cannot go to school Without Blancheflour,” he added. I cannot sing or read in any school Without Blancheflour,” he pleaded. The king said to his son, “Because of your love, she will learn.” They were sent to school, And both of them had good wits. It was a wonder to see their studies And their love even more so. The children were so devoted to each other That they could never be parted. When they had gone to school five years, They had been taught so well That they knew Latin fluently enough And could write expertly on parchment. The king perceived the great affection Between his son and Blancheflour, And thought, when they were of age, That her love would not weaken. Nor might he prevent her emotions When Floris could marry according to law.¹⁰ The king then spoke to the queen, And told her of his distress, Of his thoughts and of his worries About how things might go with Floris. “My lady,” he said, “I will tell you my plans. I would prefer to put Blancheflour to death. When that maid is dead, And her life’s days brought to an end, As soon as Floris discovers it He will soon forget her. Then he may marry more advisedly.” The queen answered and spoke, And hoped with her advice To save the maiden from death, “Sire,” she said, “we ought to ensure That Floris lives with honor in the land, And that he not lose his reputation Because of the virgin Blancheflour. If someone were to take that maiden away So that she was not put to death,</p>
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¹⁰ Felix likely worries that his son will take a wife who is not only socially disadvantaged but a Christian, and that when Floris becomes of age the king will have difficulty preventing their marriage.

	<p>Hit were muche more honour Than slee that mayde Blancheflour.” Unnethes the king graunt that it be soo: “Dame, rede us what is to doo.” “Sir, we shul oure soon Florys Sende into the londe of Mountargis. Blythe wyl my suster be, That is lady of that contree. And when she woot for whom</p>	<p>It would be much more respectable Than to slay that innocent girl.” Reluctantly, the king granted that it be so. “Madam, advise me what should be done.” “Sire, we will send our son Floris Into the land of Montargis. My sister, the lady of that country, Will be pleased.</p>
70	<p>That we have sent him us froom, She wyl doo al hur myght, Both by day and by nyght, To make hur love so undoo As it had never ben soo.” “And, sir,” she seide, “y rede eke That the maydens moder make hur seek. That may be that other resoun For that ylk encheson, That she may not fro hur moder goo.”</p>	<p>And when she knows for whom We have sent him away from us, She will do all her might, Both by day and by night, To make their love so distant As if it had never been. And sire,” she continued, “I also advise That the maiden’s mother feign illness. That can be another reason For the same action, That she may not go from her mother.”</p>
80	<p>Now ben these children swyth woo, Now they may not goo in fere, Drewryer thinges never noon were. Florys wept byfore the kyng, And seide: “Sir, without lesyng, For my harme out ye me sende, Now she ne myght with me wende. Now we ne mot togeder goo, Al my wele is turned to woo.” The king seide to his soon aplyght:</p>	<p>Now these children were in great sorrow, For they could not go together. There was never a sadder sight! Floris wept before the king And said, “Sire, without lying, You send me away to my harm If she may not go with me. Now that we cannot be together, All my happiness is turned to despair.” The king said to his son in earnest, “Son, within this fortnight,</p>
90	<p>“Sone, withynne this fourtenyght, Be her moder quykke or deed, Sekerly,” he him seide, “That mayde shal com thee too.” “Ye, sir,” he seid, “y pray yow it be soo. Yif that ye me hur sende, I rekke never wheder y wende.” That the child graunted, the kyng was fayn And him betaught his chamburlayn. With muche honoure they theder coom, As fel to a ryche kynges soon.</p>	<p>Whether her mother be alive or dead, For sure,” he said to him, “That maid will come to you.” “Yes, sire,” he answered, “I beg of you That it be so. If you send her to me, I don’t mind at all where I go.” Having the child’s consent, the king was eased And entrusted him to his chamberlain. With much honor they traveled forth, As was fitting for a rich king’s son.</p>
100	<p>Wel feire him receyvyd the Duke, Orgas, That king of that castel was, And his aunt, with muche honour, But ever he thought on Blanchefloure. Glad and blythe they ben him withe; But for no joy that he seith Ne myght him glade, game ne gle, For he myght not his lyf see. His aunt set him to lore</p>	<p>The duke, Orgas, who was king of that castle, Received him graciously, As did his aunt, with great honor. But he forever thought about Blancheflour. They were glad and merry with him. But there was no joy that he found In sports or amusement, nor could they cheer him, For he could not see his sweetheart. His aunt set him to study Where the other children were,</p>
110	<p>There as other children wore, Both maydons and grom; To lerne mony theder coom. Inowgh he sykes, but nocht he lernes; For Blauncheflour ever he mornes.</p>	<p>Both maidens and boys. Many came there to learn. He sighed often, but learned nothing; He continually mourned for Blancheflour.</p>

	<p>Yf eny man to him speke, Love is on his hert steke. Love is at his hert roote, That nothing is so soote; Galyngale ne lycorys</p>	<p>If any man spoke to him, Only love stuck to his heart. Love was at his heart's root, And nothing was so sweet; Neither spice nor licorice¹¹</p>
120	<p>Is not so soote as hur love is, Ne nothing ne non other flour. So much he thenketh on Blancheflour, Of oo day him thynketh thre, For he ne may his love see. Thus he abydeth with muche woo Tyl the fourtenyght were goo. When he saw she was nought ycoom, So muche sorow he hath noom, That he loveth mete ne drynke,</p>	<p>Was as sweet as her love was, Nor anything of any other flower. He thought so much about Blancheflour That one day seemed like three, For he could not see his love. Thus he waited with great sadness Until the fourteenth night had passed. When he saw she had not come, He was taken by so much grief That he wanted neither food nor drink, And neither would go into his body.</p>
130	<p>Ne may noon in his body synke. The chamberleyn sent the king to wete His sones state, al ywrete. The king ful sone the waxe tobrake For to wete what it spake. He begynneth to chaunge his mood, And wel sone he understode, And with wreth he cleped the queene, And tolde hur alle his teene, And with wrath spake and sayde:</p>	<p>The chamberlain sent word to inform the king Of his son's state in writing. The king very quickly broke the wax In order to know what the letter said. His mood began to change, And very soon he understood, And with anger he called the queen, And told her all his vexation, And spoke in wrath and said, "Have that maiden sent for! Her head will go from her body!"</p>
140	<p>"Let do bryng forth that mayde! Fro the body the heved shal goo." Thenne was the quene ful woo. Than spake the quene, that good lady: "For Goddes love, sir, mercy! At the next haven that here is Ther ben chapmen ryche ywys, Marchaundes of Babyloyn ful ryche, That wol hur bye blethelyche. Than may ye for that lovely foode</p>	<p>"The queen was very distressed then. The queen, that good lady, answered, "For God's love, sir, have mercy! At the nearest harbor There are rich traders, certainly, Wealthy merchants from Persia,¹² Who will gladly buy her. Then you will have for that lovely girl A great deal of property and goods. And so she will be gotten rid of In such a way that we do not slay her." Reluctantly, the king granted this, But truly, it happened in that way. The king sent for the agent, Who was able and courteous, And knew how to buy and sell well, And had many languages at his tongue. Very soon the maiden was given to him,</p>
150	<p>Have muche catell and goode. And soo she may fro us be brought, Soo that we slee hur nought." Unnethes the king graunted this, But forsoth, so it is. The king let sende after the burgeise, That was hende and curtayse, And welle selle and bygge couth, And moony langages had in his mouth. Wel sone that mayde was him betaught,</p>	

¹¹ *Galyngale*: Galingal is an Asian spice related to ginger which would have been very exotic to a medieval English audience. It is commonly used in Thai Tom Yum soup.

¹² *Babyloyn*: The poet may simply mean a romantic idea of Persia, and the French MS also has *Babiloine*. Reiss argues that this is *Bab-al-yun*, a district of old Cairo (TEAMS). E. Reiss, "Symbolic Detail in Medieval Narrative: *Floris & Blancheflour*," *Papers on Language & Literature* 7 (1971): 346. But the land area of the emir's palace complex seems too massive to fit inside a suburb.

160	An to the haven was she brought. Ther have they for that maide yolde Twenté mark of reed golde, And a coupe good and ryche, In al the world was non it lyche; Ther was never noon so wel grave, He that it made was no knave. Ther was purtrayd on, y weene, How Paryse ledde away the queene, And on the covercle above	And she was brought to the harbor. There the traders paid for that maid Twenty marks of red gold, ¹³ And a cup, splendid and costly; In all the world there was none like it. There was never one so finely engraved. He who crafted it was no apprentice. There was a depiction on it, as I am told, Of how Paris led away Queen Helen, And on the lid above it
170	Purtrayde was ther both her love; And in the pomel theron Stood a charbuncle stoon. In the world was not so depe soler That it nold lyght the botelere, To fylle both ale and wyne; Of sylver and gold both good and fyne. Enneas the king, that nobel man, At Troye in batayle he it wan, And brought it into Lumbardy,	Their love for each other was portrayed. And on the round knob on top Stood a carbuncle stone. In all the world there was no cellar so deep That it would not give light to a butler To fill it with either ale or wine. It was of silver and gold, good and fine. Aeneas the king, that valiant man, Won it at Troy in battle, And brought it to Lombardy,
180	And gaf it his lemman, his amy. The coupe was stoole fro King Cesar; A thief out of his tresour hous it bar. And sethe that ilke same thief For Blanchefloure he it geef. For he wyst to wynne suche three, Myght he hur bryng to his contree. Now these marchaundes saylen over the see With this mayde to her contree. So longe they han undernome	And gave it to his beloved, his Lavinia. ¹⁴ The cup was stolen from the Caesar; A thief carried it out of his treasure house. And afterward that same thief Gave it in trade for Blancheflour. For he expected to gain such a profit If he could bring her to his country. Now these merchants sailed over the sea With this maid to their land. They journeyed so far Until they arrived in Babylon.
190	That to Babyloyn they ben coom. To the Amyral of Babyloyn They solde that mayde swythe soon; Rath and soone they were at oon. The Amyral hur bought anoon, And gafe for hur, as she stood upryght, Sevyn sythes of gold her wyght, For he thought, without weene, That faire mayde have to queene. Among his maydons in his bour	Very quickly, they sold the girl To the emir of the city. Hastily, they soon agreed on the sale. The emir bought her at once, And paid for her, as she stood upright, Seven times her weight in gold. For he thought, without a doubt, To have that fair maid as queen. He had her placed, with great honor, Among the maidens in his harem.
200	He hur dide with muche honour. Now these merchaundes that may belete, And ben glad of hur byyete. Now let we of Blancheflour be And speke of Florys in his contree. Now is the burgays to the king coom	Now the merchants left the maid behind, And were pleased with their earnings. Now we will let Blancheflour be, And speak of Floris in his country. The agent returned to the king

¹³ *Twente mark*: A mark was 2/3 of a pound in England, or 13s 4p. According to the UK National Archives website, 20 marks in today's money would be about US\$10,000 (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/>). As with many romances, this may be as fanciful as paying seven times her weight in gold (196).

¹⁴ *Amy*: Lavinia, Aneas' love and Latinus' daughter in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

<p>210</p> <p>220</p> <p>230</p> <p>240</p> <p>250</p>	<p>With the golde and his garyson, And hath take the king to wolde The selver and the coupe of golde. They lete make in a chirche A swithe feire grave wyrche, And lete ley ther uppon A new feire peynted ston, With letters al aboute wryte With ful muche worshipp. Whoso couth the letters rede, Thus they spoken and thus thei seide: “Here lyth swete Blaunchefloure That Florys lovyd par amoure.” Now Florys hath undernome, And to his fader he is coome. In his fader halle he is lyght. His fader he grette anoonryght, And his moder, the queene, also. But unnethes myght he that doo That he ne asked where his leman bee. Nonskyns answeere chargeth hee. So longe he is forth noom, Into chamber he is coom. The maydenys moder he asked ryght: “Where is Blauncheflour, my swete wyght?” “Sir,” she seide, “forsothe, ywys, I ne woot where she is.” She bethought hur on that lesyng That was ordeyned byfore the king. “Thow gabbest me,” he seyde thoo, “Thy gabbyng doth me muche woo. Tel me where my leman be.” Al wepyng seide thenne shee: “Sir,” shee seide, “deed.” “Deed?” seide he. “Sir,” she seide, “forsothe, yee!” “Allas, when died that swete wyght?” “Sir, withynne this fourtenyght The erth was leide hur above, And deed she was for thy love.” Flores, that was so feire and gent, Sownyd there verament. The Cristen woman began to crye To Jhesu Crist and Seynt Marye. The king and the queene herde that crye; Into the chamber they ronne on hye, And the queene sawe her byforn On sowne the childe that she had born. The kinges hert was al in care, That sawe his son for love so fare.</p>	<p>With the gold and the payment, And remitted the silver and cup of gold For the king to keep. They had a shrine made And a very beautiful grave fashioned, And placed on there A new and finely painted gravestone, With letters written all about, With a lavish dedication. For whoever could read the letters They spoke thus and read, “Here lies sweet Blancheflour, Who loved Floris with passion.”¹⁵ Floris was undertaking the journey, And he came to his father. He dismounted in his father’s hall. He greeted the king right away, And his mother, the queen, as well. But he had scarcely done so When he asked where his beloved was, Not even waiting for any kind of answer. And so he was brought forth Until he arrived in a chamber. He asked the maiden’s mother at once, “Where is Blancheflour, my sweet lass?” “Sir,” she said, “in truth, in fact, I do not know where she is.” She was mindful of the deception Which was ordered by the king. “You’re teasing me,” he replied. “Your gabbing does me great hurt. Tell me where my sweetheart is!” She then replied, in tears, “Sir,” she said, “she is dead.” “Dead?” he cried. “Sir,” she said, “in truth, yes.” “Alas! When did that sweet creature die?” “Sir, within this fortnight The earth was laid above her, And she was dead for your love.” Floris, who was so fair and gentle, Was overcome there, in truth. The Christian woman began to call On Jesus Christ and sainted Mary. The king and queen heard that cry. They ran into the chamber in haste, And the queen saw before her The child that she had bore in a faint. The king’s heart was all distraught To see what had happened to his son for love.</p>
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¹⁵ *That Florys lovyd par amoure*: TEAMS notes that who loved who is not clear in the ME line, and perhaps the ambiguity intentionally emphasizes that their feelings were mutual.

260	<p>When he awooke and speke myght, Sore he wept and sore he syght, And seide to his moder ywys: “Lede me there that mayde is.” Theder they him brought on hyghe; For care and sorow he wold dyye. As sone as he to the grave com, Sone there behelde he then, And the letters began to rede That thus spake and thus seide: “Here lyth swete Blauncheflour, That Florys lovyd par amoure.” Thre sithes Florys sownyde nouth, Ne speke he myght not with mouth. As sone as he awoke and speke myght, Sore he wept and sore he syght. 270 “Blauncheflour,” he seide, “Blauncheflour! So swete a thing was never in boure; Of Blauncheflour is that y meene, For she was com of good kyn. </p>	<p>When he awoke and could speak, He wept and sighed bitterly, And said to his mother in earnest, “Take me to where that maid is.” They brought him there in haste, For he was dying of anguish and sorrow. As soon as he came to the grave, He beheld it at once And began to read the letters So that he spoke and said thus,¹⁶ “Here lies sweet Blancheflour, Who loved Floris with passion.” Floris swooned three times; Nor could he speak with his mouth. As soon as he awoke and could talk, He wept and sighed bitterly. “Blancheflour,” he said, “Blancheflour! There was never so sweet a thing in any bower. I mourn for Blancheflour, For she came from a worthy family. </p>
Vit -- -- --	<p>Vor in worlde nes nere non Pine imake of no wimmon; Inouȝ þu cupest of clergie And of alle curteysie. </p>	<p>There was no one in the world Your equal among women! You were well-learned in faith And in all courtesy.¹⁷ </p>
275	<p>Lytel and muche loveden thee For thy goodnesse and thy beauté. Yif deth were dalt aryght, We shuld be deed both on oo nyght. On oo day born we were, 280 We shul be ded both in feere. Deeth,” he seide, “ful of envye, And of alle trechorye, Refte thow hast me my leman. Forsoth,” he seide, “thow art to blame. She wolde have levyd, and thow noldest, And fayn wolde y dye, and thow woldest. After deeth clepe no more y nylle, But slee myself now y wille.” His knyf he braide out of his sheth, 290 Himself he wolde have doo to deth, And to hert he had it smeten, Ne had his moder it underyeten. Then the queene fel him uppon, And the knyf fro him noom. She reft him of his lytel knyf,</p>	<p>High and low loved you For your goodness and your beauty. If death were dealt out fairly, We would both be dead the same night. We were born on one day; We will both be dead together. Death,” he cried, “full of envy And of all treachery! You have robbed me of my beloved. Truly,” he said, “you are to blame. She would have lived had you not interfered, And I would have gladly died had you permitted it. I will no longer cry for death But will slay myself right now!” He drew his knife out of its sheath. He would have put himself to death And struck at his own heart Had his mother not realized it. Then the queen fell upon him And seized the knife from him. She took away his little knife,</p>

¹⁶ *That thus spake*: Floris is reading out loud. It was considered unusual to read silently until the modern era. There is a famous story of St. Augustine’s curiosity at seeing Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (d. 397), reading without vocalizing.

¹⁷ Four lines from the London Vitellius MS, not in Auchinleck.

<p>300</p> <p>310</p> <p>320</p> <p>330</p> <p>340</p>	<p>And savyd there the childes lyf. Forth the queene ranne, al wepyng, Tyl she com to the kyng. Than seide the good lady: “For Goddes love, sir, mercy! Of twelve children have we noon On lyve now but this oon. And better it were she were his make Than he were deed for hur sake.” “Dame, thow seist soth,” seide he. “Sen it may noon other be, Lever me were she were his wyf Than y lost my sonnes lyf.” Of this word the quene was fayn, And to her soon she ran agayn. “Floryes, soon, glad make thee, Thy lef thow shalt on lyve see. Florys, son, through engynne Of thy faders reed and myne, This grave let we make, Leve son, for thy sake; Yif thow that maide forgete woldest, After oure reed wyf thow sholdest.” Now every word she hath him tolde How that they that mayden solde. “Is this soth, my moder dere?” “Forsoth,” she seide, “she is not here.” The rowgh stoon adoun they leyde, And sawe that there was not the mayde. “Now, moder, y think that y leve may. Ne shal y rest nyght ne day, Nyght ne day ne no stound, Tyl y have my lemmon found. Hur to seken y woll wend, Though it were to the worldes ende.” To the king he goth to take his leve, And his fader bade him byleve. “Sir, y wyl let for no wynne, Me to bydden it were grete synne.” Than seid the king: “Seth it is soo, Seth thow wylt noon other doo, Al that thee nedeth we shul thee fynde. Jhesu thee of care unbynde.” “Leve fader,” he seide, “y telle thee Al that thow shalt fynde me. Thow mast me fynde, at my devyse, Seven horses al of prys:</p>	<p>And there she saved the child’s life. The queen ran away in tears Until she came to the king. Then the good lady said, “For God’s love, sir, have mercy! From twelve children we have None alive now but this one! It would be better if she were his wife Than for him to be dead for her sake.” “Madam, you speak the truth,” he sighed. “Since it cannot not be otherwise, I would rather she were his wife Than to lose my son’s life.” With these words the queen was calmed, And she ran back to her son. “Floris, my son, cheer yourself. You will see your sweetheart alive. Floris, son, through a deceitful trick Of your father’s and my design, We had this grave made, Dear son, for your sake. If you had forgotten that girl, You would marry according to our wishes.” She told him every word About how they sold that maiden. “Is this the truth, my dear mother?” “In truth,” she answered, “she is not here.” They laid aside the rough stone And saw that the maid was not there. “Now, mother, I think that I can live. I will not rest night or day, Night, day, or one hour, Until I have found my beloved. I will go to seek her, Even to the ends of the earth.” He went to the king to take his leave, And his father asked him to stay. “Sire, I won’t desist for any gain. To demand that of me would be a great sin.” Then the king answered, “Since it is so, Since you will not have it any other way, We will provide you with all you need. May Christ deliver you from distress!”¹⁸ “Dear father,” he said, “I will tell you All that you will supply me with. You may equip me, at my request, With seven horses, all of value:</p>
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¹⁸ *Jhesu thee of care unbynde*: To have the king entrust his son to Christ is either a scribal mistake or another example of the slipshod depiction of non-Christians. See also the note for *Bevis* (500). Felix’s faith is ambiguous as the text never explicitly says that he is Muslim and the descriptor ‘pagan’ (F59) could mean any non-Christian or pre-Christian belief. Yet later Floris prays to God (899-900).

350	<p>And two ycharged, uppon the molde, Both with selver and wyth golde; And two ycharged with moonay For to spenden by the way; And three with clothes ryche, The best of al the kyngryche. Seven horses and sevyen men, And thre knaves without hem, And thyn own chamburlayn, That is a wel nobel swayn. He can us both wyssh and reede, As marchaundes we shull us lede.” His fader was an hynde king, The coupe of golde he dide him bryng, That ilke self coupe of golde That was Blanchefflour foryolde.</p>	<p>With two loaded, to the earth, With both silver and gold, And two laden with money To spend along the way, And three with rich clothes, The best in all the kingdom. Seven horses and seven men, And three servants in addition to them, And my own chamberlain. He is a very dedicated servant; He can both guide and advise us. We will conduct ourselves as merchants.” His father was a gracious king. He gave the cup of gold to him, The same golden cup itself That had been given for Blanchefflour.</p>
360	<p>“Have this, soon,” seide the king, “Herewith thow may that swete thing Wynne, so may betyde, Blanchefflour with the white syde, Blanchefflour, that faire may.” The king let sadel a palfray, The oon half white so mylke, And that other reed so sylk. I ne kan telle you nowt Hou richeliche the sadel was wrout. The arsouns were gold pur and fin, Stones of vertu set therin, Bigon abouten with orfreis. The Quen was hende and curteis. She cast her hond to hire fingre, And drough therof a riche ringe. “Have nou, sone, here this ring. While thou hit hast, doute thee nothing, Ne fir thee brenne, ne drenchen in se, Ne iren ne stel schal derie thee; And be hit erli and be hit late, To thi wille thou schalt have whate.” Weping thai departed nouthe And kiste hem with softe mouthe. Thai made for him non other chere Than thai seye him ligge on bere. Nou forht thai nime with alle main, Himself and his chaumberlain. So longe thai han undernome To the havene thai beth icome</p>	<p>“Take this, son,” said the king, “With it you might win back That sweet girl, if it may so happen, Blanchefflour with the light complexion,¹⁹ Blanchefflour, that fair maid.” The king had a palfrey saddled, With one side as white as milk, And the other as red as silk. I cannot begin to describe How richly the saddle was made. The saddlebows were gold, pure and fine, With stones of quality set inside, Surrounded about with gold embroidery. The queen was graceful and considerate. She put her hand to her finger And drew off a magnificent ring. “Take this ring here now, son. While you have it, fear nothing. You will not burn in fire, or drown in the sea. Neither iron nor steel will harm you. Whether it be early or late, You will have what is your will.” Weeping, they parted then, And kissed each other softly. They behaved for him no differently Than if they saw him lying on a funeral bier. Now he and his chamberlain Went forth with all might. They traveled a long time Until they came to the place</p>
370	<p>380</p>	

¹⁹ *White syde*: A puzzling line. TEAMS has *side*, suggesting a light aspect, where Bennett and Smithers render *syde* as long or flowing, i.e. blonde hair. The medieval sense that light hair or skin complexion was purer or more beautiful is evidently operant here, as Blanchefflour is the daughter of a Saxon noble. See also Walter Clyde Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty* (Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1916), 11-21 and 80-86.

390	<p>Ther Blaunchefflour lai anight. Richeliche thai were idight. The loverd of the hous was wel hende; The child he sette next his hende, In the altherfairest sete. Gladliche thai dronke and ete, Al that therinne were. Al thai made glade chere, And ete and dronke echon with other. Ac Florice thoughte al an other. Ete ne drinke mighte he nought;</p>	<p>Where Blancheflour slept at night. They were provided for lavishly. The lord of the house was very hospitable; He sat the young man next to him, In the finest of all chairs. All those who were in there Ate and drank happily. They all made a cheerful mood And ate and drank with each other. But Floris' thoughts were all on another. He could not eat or drink.</p>
400	<p>On Blaunchefflour was al his thought. The levedi of the hous underyat Hou this child mourning sat, And seide here loverd with stille dreme: “Sire,” she saide, “nimstou no yeme Hou this child mourning sit? Mete and drynk he forgit, Litel he eteth and lasse he drinketh. He nis no marchaunt, as me thinketh.” To Florice than spak she:</p>	<p>All his thoughts were on Blancheflour. The lady of the house noticed How this child sat mourning, And said to her lord in a low voice, “Sir,” she said, “haven't you noticed How this boy sits gloomily? He takes no notice of food and drink. He eats little and drinks less. It seems to me he is no merchant.” She then said to Floris,</p>
410	<p>“Child, ful of mourning I thee se. Thous sat herinne this ender dai Blaunchefflour, that faire mai. Herinne was that maiden bowght, And over the se she was ibrowght. Herinne thai boughte that maden swete. And wille here eft selle to biyete. To Babiloyne thai wille hire bring, And selle hire to kaiser other to king. Thou art ilich here of alle thinge,</p>	<p>“Child, I see you full of mourning,²⁰ The same way that Blancheflour, That fair maid, sat here the other day. That girl was delivered here And was sold from over the sea. Here they bought that sweet maiden, And they will trade her again for a profit. They have sent her to Babylon And will sell her to an emperor or a king. You are like her in every way, In appearance and in mood, Except that you are a man and she is a maid.” This is what the wife spoke to Floris. When Floris heard his lover's name, He was so glad to hear that sound That his heart was all lit up. He had the cup of gold filled straightaway. “Madam,” he said, “this toast is yours, And both the gold and the wine— Both the gold and the wine as well, For you spoke of my beloved. For her I thought, for her I sighed. And now I know where I might find her. No bad weather will hinder me From seeking her in Babylon!” Floris rested there all night. In the morning, when it was daylight, He set out on the salty sea.</p>
420	<p>Of semblant and of mourning, But thou art a man and she is a maide.” Thous the wif to Florice saide. Tho Florice herde his lemman nevene, So blithe he was of that stevene That his herte bigan al light. A coupe of gold he let fulle right. “Dame,” he saide, “this hail is thin, Bothe the gold and the win, Bothe the gold and the win eke,</p>	<p>For her I thought, for her I sighed. And now I know where I might find her. No bad weather will hinder me From seeking her in Babylon!” Floris rested there all night. In the morning, when it was daylight, He set out on the salty sea.</p>
430	<p>For thou of mi lemman speke. On hir I thought, for here I sight, And wist ich wher hire finde might, Ne scholde no weder me assoine That I ne schal here seche at Babiloine.” Florice rest him there al night. Amorewe, whan hit was dailight, He dide him in the salte flod,</p>	<p>For her I thought, for her I sight, And wist ich wher hire finde might, Ne scholde no weder me assoine That I ne schal here seche at Babiloine.” Florice rest him there al night. Amorewe, whan hit was dailight, He dide him in the salte flod,</p>

²⁰ *Child* may formally denote a knight-in-training, but Floris is an eastern prince and is nowhere mentioned as becoming a knight. The poet is likely sentimentally emphasizing his youth.

<p>440</p> <p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>Wind and weder he hadde ful god. To the mariners he gaf largeliche That broughten him over bletheliche To the londe thar he wold lende, For thai founden him so hende. Sone so Florice com to londe, Wel yerne he thankede Godes sonde To the lond ther his lemman is; Him thoughte he was in paradis. Wel sone men Florice tidingges told The Amerail wolde feste hold, And kinges an dukes to him come scholde, Al that of him holde wolde, For to honure his heghe feste, And also for to heren his heste. Tho Florice herde this tiding, Than gan him glade in alle thing, And in his herte thoughte he That he wolde at that feste be, For wel he hopede in the halle His leman sen among hem alle. So longe Florice hath undernome To a fair cité he is icome. Wel faire men hath his in inome, Ase men scholde to a kinges sone, At a palais - was non hit iliche. The louerd of the hous was wel riche, And gold inow him com to honde, Bothe bi water and be londe. Florice ne sparede for no fe, Inow that there ne scholde be Of fissue, of flessch, of tendre bred, Bothe of whit win and of red. The louerd hadde ben wel wide; The child he sette bi his side, In the altherferste sete. Gladliche thai dronke and ete. Ac Florice et an drank right nowt, On Blanche flour was al his thought. Than bispak the bourgeis, That hende was, fre and curteys: “Child, me thinkketh swithe wel Thi thought is mochel on thi catel.” “Nai, on mi catel is hit nowt, On other thing is al mi thought. Mi thought is on alle wise Mochel on mi marchandise; And yit that is mi meste wo, Yif ich hit finde and schal forgo.” Thanne spak the louerd of that inne:</p>	<p>He had favorable wind and weather. He paid the mariners generously Who gladly brought him across To the land where he wished to go For they found him so gracious. As soon as Floris came ashore, He fervently thanked God for bringing him To the land where his beloved was. It seemed to him he was in paradise. Very soon men told Floris the news That the emir planned to hold a feast, And that kings and dukes were to come to him, All that hold land from him, To honor his high feast And also to hear his commands. When Floris heard this report, He was cheered in every way, And in his heart he resolved That he would be at that feast, For he was confident he would see His lover among them all in the hall. Floris undertook his journey Until he came to a fair city. Men lodged him comfortably, As one should for a king's son, In a palatial house; there was none like it. The master of the inn was prosperous, And gold in plenty came into his hand, Both by water and by land. Floris did not spare any expense, Lest there should not be enough Of fish, of meat, of fresh bread, Or of wine, both white and red. The lord was wise in the world's ways; He set the youth by his side, In the best seat of all. They ate and drank happily. But Floris ate and drank almost nothing; All of his thoughts were on Blanche flour. Then the host spoke, A gracious man, dignified and courteous: “Young man, it seems clear to me Your mind is very much on your goods.” “No, not at all on my property. My thoughts are all on something else. My mind, in every way, Is on recovering my merchandise.²¹ And it will be my greatest sorrow If I find it and must lose it.” Then the master of that inn mused,</p>
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²¹ British Library Egerton 2862 MS has *For to fynde my marchandise* (464).

490	<p>“Thous sat this other dai herinne That faire maide Blaunchefflour. Bothe in halle and ek in bour, Evere she made mourning chere, And biment Florice, here leve fere. Joie ne blisse ne hadde she none, Ac on Florice was al here mone.” Florice het nime a coppe of silver whight, And a mantel of scarlet, Ipaned al with meniver, And gaf his hoste ther.</p>	<p>“It is the same way that Blanchefflour, That fair maid, sat here the other day. Both in the hall and in her chamber, She always had a look of mourning And grieved for Floris, her dear companion. She had no joy or ease, But all her lamenting was for Floris.” Floris ordered a cup of white silver brought, And a cloak of scarlet, All lined with fur, And gave it to his host.</p>
500	<p>“Have this,” he saide, “to thine honour, And thou hit mighte thonke Blaunchefflour. Stolen she was out mine countreie; Here ich here seche bi the waie. He mighte make min herte glad That couthe me telle whider she was lad.” “Child, to Babiloyne she is ibrought, And Ameral hire hath ibought. He gaf for hire, ase she stod upright, Seven sithes of gold here wight. For hire faired and for hire schere</p>	<p>“Have this,” he said, “for your honor, And you may thank Blanchefflour for it. She was stolen from my country. I seek her here by these roads. The man would make my heart glad Who could tell me where she was taken.” “Boy, she has been brought to Babylon, And the emir has bought her. He paid for her, as she stood upright, Seven times her weight in gold! For her beauty and her bearing The emir has paid so dearly for her, For he thinks, beyond a doubt, To have that fair maid as queen. He has placed her with great honor Among the other maidens in his tower.” Then Floris rested there all night. In the morning when it was daylight, He rose up early And gave his host a hundred shillings,²² To him and to his hostess, And took his leave and kissed them.</p>
510	<p>The Ameral hire boughte so dere, For he thinketh withouten wene That faire mai to haven to quene. Amang other maidenen in his tour He hath hire ido with mochel honour.” Nou Florice rest him there al night. On morewe, whan hit was dailight, He aros up in the moreweninge, And gaf his hoste an hondred schillinge, To his hoste and to his hostesse,</p>	<p>And took his leave and kissed them. And he earnestly asked his host If he would help him, if he could, How he might with some ruse Win the fair maiden for himself. “Young man, you will come to a bridge. You will meet the toll keeper right away. His house is at the bridge’s end. He is a gracious man and gentle. We are sworn brothers pledged by oath. He can counsel and advise you rightly. You will give to him a ring, From myself as a token, And he will help you in every way As if it had happened to me.” Floris took the ring and made his goodbye,</p>
520	<p>And nam his leve and gan hem kesse. And yerne he hath his oste bisought, That he him helpe, yif he mought, Hou he mighte with sum ginne, The faire maiden to him awinne. “Child, to one brigge thou schalt come; A burgeis thou findest ate frome. His paleis is ate brigges ende, Curteis man he his and hende. We beth wed brethren and trewthe iplight.</p>	<p>And he earnestly asked his host If he would help him, if he could, How he might with some ruse Win the fair maiden for himself. “Young man, you will come to a bridge. You will meet the toll keeper right away. His house is at the bridge’s end. He is a gracious man and gentle. We are sworn brothers pledged by oath. He can counsel and advise you rightly. You will give to him a ring, From myself as a token, And he will help you in every way As if it had happened to me.” Floris took the ring and made his goodbye,</p>
530	<p>He thee can wissen and reden aright. Thou schalt beren him a ring Fram miselve to tokning, That he thee helpe in eche helve So hit were bifalle miselve.” Florice tok the ring and nam his leve,</p>	<p>Floris took the ring and made his goodbye,</p>

²² *An hondred schillinge*: about £2590 or \$US4100 in modern money (UK National Archives), rather an expensive hotel bill but in keeping with Floris’ aristocratic refinement. The sentiment also emphasizes by extension Blanchefflour’s value to Floris. See also line 736.

540	<p>For there no leng wolde he bileve. Bi that hit was undren hegh The brigge he was swithe negh. When he was to the brigge inome, The burges he fond ate frome, Sittende on a marbelston. Fair man and hende he was on. The burgeis was ihote Dayre. Florice him grette swithe faire, And hath him the ring irawt And wel faire him bitawt. Thourgh tokning of that ilke ring Florice hadde ther god gestning Of fichss, of flessch, of tendre bred,</p>	<p>For he would not linger any longer. By the time it was high noon He was very near the bridge. When he came to the bridge, The first thing he saw was the bridgekeeper, Sitting on a marble stone. He was a fair and gracious man. The townsman was named Dary. Floris greeted him courteously And handed him the ring And entrusted it to him in good faith. Through the token of that ring Floris had a good welcome there Of fish, of meat, of fresh bread, And wine, both white and red.</p>
550	<p>Bothe of whit win and of red. Ac evere Florice sighte ful cold, And Darys gan him bihold: “Leve child, what mai the be, Thous carfoul ase I thee se? I wene thou nart nowt al fer, That thou makest thous doelful cher. Other thee liketh nowt thin in?”</p>	<p>But Floris continually sighed distractedly, And Dary observed him. “Dear boy, what is the matter with you, To be as sorrowful as I see you? I guess that you are not feeling well So that you have such a doleful look. Or do you not like your lodging?”</p>
560	<p>Nou Florice answered him: “Yis, sire, bi Godes ore, So god I ne hadde yore. God late me bide thilke dai That ich thee yelde mai. Ac I thenke in alle wise Upon min owen marchaundise, Wherfore ich am hider come, Lest I ne finde hit nowt ate frome. And yit is that mi meste wo, Yif ich hit finde and sschal forgo.”</p>	<p>Then Floris answered him, “No, sir, by God’s mercy,²³ I never had so good a one before! May God let me live to see the day That I may repay you. But I am thinking in every way About my own property, Which is why I have come here, Lest I not find it at the outset. And yet it will be my greatest sorrow If I find it and must lose it.”</p>
570	<p>“Child, woldest thou tel me thi gref? To helpe thee me were ful lef.” Nou everich word he hath him told, Hou the maide was fram him sold, And hou he was of Speyne a kinges sone, And for hire love thider icome, For to fonde with som ginne That faire maide to biwinne. Daris now that child bihalt, And for a fol he him halt:</p>	<p>“Child, will you not tell me your heart? I would be very pleased to help you.” Then he told him every word, How the maid was sold from him And how he was a king’s son from Spain, Who had come here for love of her, In order to devise some stratagem To win that fair maid. Dary observed the boy then And took him for a fool.</p>
580	<p>“Child,” he seith, “I se hou goth: Iwis, thou yernest thin owen deth. Th’Ameral hath to his justening Other half hondred of riche king.</p>	<p>“Boy,” he said, “I know how it will go. Truly, you desire your own death! The emir has invited to his tournament A hundred and fifty rich kings.²⁴</p>

²³ *Yis, sire*: The tendency of PDE with negative questions, so frustrating for many learners of English, is to say ‘no,’ i.e. I disagree with what you said, rather than ‘yes,’ i.e. I do like the lodgings. At least here, ME does the latter.

590	<p>That altherrichchest kyng Ne dorste beginne swich a thing; For mighte th' Ameral hit underyete, Sone thou were of live quite. Abouten Babiloine, withouten wene, Sexti longe milen and tene And ate walle thar beth ate Seven sithe twente gate.</p>	<p>The most powerful king among them Would not dare attempt such a thing. For if the emir discovered it, You would soon lose your life. Around Babylon, without a doubt, It's seventy miles long! And on the walls there are gates— Seven times twenty!</p>
600	<p>Twente toures ther beth inne, That everich dai cheping is inne; Nis no dai thourg the yer That scheping nis therinne plener. An hondred toures also therto Beth in the borewe, and somdel mo. That alderest feblest tour Wolde kepe an emperour To comen al ther withinne, Noither with strengthe ne with ginne. And thei alle the men that beth ibore Adden hit up here deth iswore, Thai scholde winne the mai so sone As fram the hevene hegh the sonne and mone. And in the bourh, amide the right, Ther stant a riche tour, I thee aplight. A thousand taisen he his heighe, Woso it bihalt, wid, fer, and neghe. And an hondred taisen he is wid,</p>	<p>There are twenty towers inside Where there is trading every day. There isn't a day throughout the year That the markets aren't going strong. There's a hundred towers to go with them In the district, and several more. The weakest tower of them all Would keep an emperor From coming inside there, Whatever strength or ingenuity they had. Even if all the men who are born Swore to fight to their death, They would as soon win the maid As win the sun and moon from the heavens! And in the castle, right in the middle, There is a splendid tower, I assure you; Its height is a thousand fathoms tall To whoever beholds it, near or far. And it is a hundred fathoms wide, And built with extravagant pride, Of lime and marble stone.</p>
610	<p>And imaked with mochel prid Of lim and of marbelston; In Cristienté nis swich non. And the mortar is maked so wel, Ne mai no man hit breke with no stel. And the pomel above the led Is iwrouth with so moche red, That men ne dorfen anight berne Neither torche ne lanterne; Swich a pomel was never bigonne, Hit schineth anight so adai doth the sonne.</p>	<p>There is nothing like it in Christendom. And the mortar is so well-built That no man could break it with any steel. And the globe on top of the roof Was created with so much skill That men do not need to burn at night Either a torch or a lantern. Such a globe was never made before! It shines at night like the sun by day. Inside that rich tower there is A chamber for twenty-four maidens. The man would be doing well Who could live in that place! He would never need, for sure, To ask for more bliss.</p>
620	<p>Nou beth ther inne that riche toure Four and twenty maidenen boure. So wel were that ilke man That mighte wonen in that an. Now thourt him nevere, ful iwis, Willen after more blisse. Nou beth ther seriaunts in the stage To serven the maidenen of parage.</p>	<p>To ask for more bliss. There are servants on the upper floor To serve the maidens of high birth.</p>

²⁴ *Other half hondred*: Another confusing expression which TEAMS interprets as “half of a second hundred,” 150 in total.

630	<p>Ne mai no seriaunt be therinne That in his brech bereth the ginne, Neither bi dai ne bi night, But he be ase capoun dight. And at the gate is a gateward, He nis no fol ne no coward; Yif ther cometh ani man Withinne that ilche barbican, But hit be bi his leve He wille him bothe bete and reve.</p>	<p>No servant may go in there Who has his manhood in his pants,²⁵ Neither by day or by night, Unless he is fixed like a rooster! And at the entrance is a gatekeeper. He is no fool or coward. If any man enters Within that same fortress Unless by his permission, He will both beat and emasculate him.</p>
640	<p>The porter is proud withalle, Everich dai he goth in palle. And the Amerail is so wonder a gome That everich yer hit is his wone To chesen him a newe wif. And whan he a newe wif underfo, He knoweth hou hit schal be do. Thanne scholle men fechche doun of the stage Alle the maidenens of parage, An brenge hem into on orchard, The fairest of al middelhard;</p>	<p>The porter is proud, to add. Every day he walks in fine clothes. And the emir is so incredible a man That every year it is his practice To choose himself a new wife.²⁶ And when he takes a new wife, He knows how it will be done. Men will bring down from upstairs All the maidens of high birth And bring them into the orchard. It is the fairest on all earth; There are the songs of birds.</p>
650	<p>Ther is foulen song, Men mighte libben ther among. Aboute the orchard goth a wal, The werste ston is cristal. Ther man mai sen on the ston Mochel of this werldes wisdom. And a welle ther springeth inne That is wrowt with mochel ginne. The welle is of mochel pris, The strem com fram Paradis.</p>	<p>Men might live long there! Around the orchard there is a wall, And the cheapest stone is crystal. A man might see on the stone Much of this world's wisdom.²⁷ And a well springs in there Which was crafted with great ingenuity. The well is of great magnificence; The stream came from Paradise!</p>
660	<p>The gravel in the grounde of precieuse stone, And of vertu iwis echone, Of sapphires and of sardoines, Of oneches and of calsidoinis. Nou is the welle of so mochel eye, Yif ther cometh ani maiden that is forleie, And hi bowe to the grounde For to waschen here honde, The water wille yelle als hit ware wod, And bicom on hire so red so blod.</p>	<p>The gravel in the ground is precious stone, And each one has special virtues— Sapphires and sardonyx stone, Onyx and clear quartz. The well is held in such awe; For if any maid approaches who is not a virgin, And she bows to the ground In order to wash her hands, The water will cry out as if it were angry And become on her as red as blood.</p>
670	<p>Wich maiden the water fareth on so, Hi schal sone be fordo.</p>	<p>Whichever maiden the water reacts so with Will soon be put to death.</p>

²⁵ *That in his brech bereth the ginne*: An amusing euphemism: ‘Who has the engine/equipment in his pants.’ A *capon* (632) is a castrated rooster. Eunuchs were indispensable for guarding harems in fiction.

²⁶ In the French version the emir repudiates and executes his ex-wives annually, making Blanche-flor like Scheherazade in *One Thousand and One Nights*. But the English text does not state this, suggesting that the emir is perhaps polygamous.

²⁷ The observer might see the mason’s craftsmanship and attention, or as TEAMS suggests, the lines are literal: sage texts are inscribed on the stones.

	<p>And thilke that beth maidenen clene, Thai mai hem wassche of the rene. The water willeerne stille and cler, Nelle hit hem make no daunger. At the welle heved ther stant a tre, The fairest that mai in erthe be. Hit is icleped the Tre of Love, For floures and blosmes beth ever above. </p>	<p>But those maidens who are pure May wash themselves from the stream. The water will run still and clear And will give them no danger. At the head of the well there is a tree, The fairest that may be on earth. They call it the Tree of Love, As flowers and blossoms are always about. </p>
C	<p>So sone so þe olde beoþ idon -- Per springeþ niwe riȝt anon </p>	<p>As soon as an old one falls down, A new one springs up at once.²⁸ </p>
680	<p>And thilke that clene maidenen be, Men schal hem bringe under that tre. And wichso falleth on that flour, Hi schal ben chosen quen with honour. And yif ther ani maiden is That th' Amerail halt of mest pris, The flour schal on here be went Thourh art and thourgh enchantement. Thous he cheseth thourgh the flour, 689 And evere we herkneth when hit be Blancheflour.”</p>	<p>And for those who are pure maidens, Men bring them under the tree. And whoever the flower falls on Will be chosen queen with honor. And if there is any maiden Whom the emir thinks the most excellent, The flower will be steered toward her Through artifice and through enchantment. In this way he chooses through the petal, And all expect it will be Blancheflour.”²⁹</p>
690	<p>Thre sithes Florice swouned nouthe, Er he mighte speke with mouthe. Sone he awok and speke might, Sore he wep, and sore he sight. “Darie,” he saide, “ich worht ded, But ich have of thee help and red.” “Leve child, ful wel I se That thou wilt to dethe te; The beste red that I can (Other red I ne can):</p>	<p>Floris fell faint three times then Before he could speak with his tongue. As soon as he came to and could talk, He wept sorely, and sighed bitterly. “Dary,” he said, “I will be finished Unless I have your help and advice.” “Dear boy, I can see full well That you are walking into death. Here is the best guidance I know. I know no other course!</p>
700	<p>Wende tomorewe to the tour, Ase thou were a god ginour, And nim in thin hond squir and scantiloun; Als thai thou were a masoun Bihold the tour up and down. The porter is colvard and feloun; Wel sone he wil come to thee, And aske what mister man thou be, And ber upon thee felonie, And saie thou art comen the tour asprie.</p>	<p>Go tomorrow to the tower As if you were an expert craftsman And carry in your hand a square and ruler. As if you were a stonemason, Examine the tower up and down. The porter is a scoundrel and criminal. Very soon he will come up to you And ask what kind of craftsman you are, And accuse you of some offense And claim you came to spy on the tower.</p>
710	<p>Thou schalt answeren him swetelich And speke to him wel mildelich, And sai thou art a ginour, To biheld that ilche tour, And for to lerne and for to fonde</p>	<p>You will answer him pleasantly And speak to him amiably, And say that you are an engineer And have come to observe that tower In order to learn and attempt</p>

²⁸ The Cambridge MS.

²⁹ Cambridge has *Alle weneþ hit schulle beo Blancheflour*, “Everyone thinks it will be Blancheflor.” 689 is long and is printed here on two lines.

720	<p>To make another in thi londe. Wel sone he wil come thee ner, And bidde thee plaien at the scheker. To plaien he wil be wel fous, And to winnen of thin wel coveitous. When thou art to the scheker brought, Withouten pans ne plai thou nowt. Thou schalt have redi mitte Thritti mark under thi slitte. And yif he winne ought of thin Al leve thou hit with him. And yif thou winne ought of his, Thou lete therof ful litel pris. Wel yerne he wille thee bidde and praie That thou come amorewe and plaie.</p>	<p>To make another in your homeland. Quite soon he will come near you And invite you to play at checkers.³⁰ He will be very keen to play, And greedily intent on beating you. When you are brought to the board, You cannot play without any money. You will have ready with you Thirty marks in your pocket. And if he wins anything from you, Be sure to give it to him. And if you win anything from him, Do not make too much of it. He will eagerly ask you and insist That you come back tomorrow and play.</p>
730	<p>Thou schalt sigge thou wilt so, And nim with thee amorewe swich two. And ever thou schalt in thin owen wolde Thi gode cop with thee atholde, That ilke self coppe of golde That was for Blancheflour iyolde. The thridde dai bere with thee an hondred pond And thi coppe al hol and sond. Gif him markes and pans fale; Of thi moné tel thou no tale.</p>	<p>You will say that you will, And take twice as much with you. And you will always keep At hand your fine cup, That very same cup of gold Which was given for Blancheflour. On the third day take a hundred pounds with you,³¹ And your cup, safe and sound. Give him marks and plenty of pennies. Do not keep count of your money.</p>
740	<p>Wel yerne he thee wille bidde and praie That thou legge thi coupe to plaie. Thou schalt answeren him ate first No lenger plaie thou ne list. Wel moche he wil for thi coupe bede, Yif he mighte the better spede. Thou schalt bletheliche given hit him, Thai hit be gold pur and fin, And sai: ‘Me thinketh hit wel bisemeth te, Thai hit were worth swiche thre.’</p>	<p>He will eagerly ask and insist That you stake your cup in the game. You will at first answer him That you don’t feel like playing longer. He will make a high offer for your cup, If he might have more luck for doing so. You will give it to him cheerfully, Though it is gold, pure and fine, And say, “To me it is fitting for you, Even if it were worth three times as much.”</p>
750	<p>Sai also thee ne faille non, Gold ne selver ne riche won. And he wil thanne so mochel love thee, That thou hit schalt bothe ihere and see That he wil falle to thi fot And bicometh thi man, yif he mot. His manred thou schalt afonge, And the trewthe of his honde. Yif thou might thous his love winne, He mai thee help with som ginne.”</p>	<p>Say also that you are not short of anything, Gold or silver or fine goods. And then he will love you so much, And you will both hear and see it, That he will fall to your feet And become your servant, if he may. You will receive his homage, And an oath of loyalty from his hand. If you might be able to win him over so, He might help you with some stratagem.”</p>
760	<p>Nou also Florice hath iwrowt</p>	<p>Then Floris worked things</p>

³⁰ The medieval English played backgammon and other board games but checkers was not commonly known until later centuries. As with the chess match in *Guy* (668), such games would have had an exotic eastern atmosphere to them.

³¹ *An hondred pond*: Enormous stakes, US\$75,000 in modern money (UK National Archives), though Floris is ‘gambling’ for Blancheflor.

770	<p>Also Darie him hath itawt, That thourgh his gold and his garsome The porter is his man bicomē. “Nou,” quath Florice, “Thou art mi man, And al mi trest is thee upan. Nou thou might wel ethe Arede me fram the dethe.” And everich word he hath him told Hou Blancheflour was fram him sold,</p>	<p>Just as Dary instructed him to, So that through his gold and treasure The porter became his man. “Now,” said Floris, “you are my man, And all my trust is in you. Now you can easily Protect me from death.” And he told him every word How Blancheflour was sold from him,</p>
780	<p>And hou he was of Spaine a kynges sone, And for hire love thider icome, To fonde with som ginne The maiden agen to him winne. The porter that herde and sore sighte: “Ich am bitraid thourgh righte; Thourgh thi catel ich am bitraid, And of mi lif ich am desmaid. Nou ich wot, child, hou hit geth: For thee ich drede to tholie deth. And natheles ich ne schal thee nevere faile mo, The whiles I mai ride or go. Thi foreward ich wil helden alle, Whatso wille bitide or falle. Wende thou hom into thin in Whiles I think of som ginne. Bitwene this and the thridde dai Don ich wille that I mai.” Florice spak and wep among, That ilche terme him thoughte wel long.</p>	<p>Who had come here for her love, To try with some ploy To win the maiden back to him. The porter listened and sighed sorely, “I have been betrayed in full. Through your goods I am ensnared, And I am in despair for my life. Now I know, boy, how matters stand. For you I dread to suffer death! But nonetheless, I will never fail you, As long as I can ride or walk. I will hold your conditions in full, Whatever happens or comes. Go back home to your inn While I think of some plan. Between now and the third day I will do what I can.” Floris at times spoke and wept, Thinking the period of time very long.</p>
790	<p>The porter thoughte what to rede. He let floures gaderen in the mede, He wiste hit was the maidenes wille. Two coupon he let of floures fille; That was the rede that he thought tho: Florice in that o coupe do. Tweie gegges the coupe bere, So hevi charged that wroth thai were. Thai bad God yif him evel fin That so mani floures dede therin.</p>	<p>The porter decided what to do. He had flowers gathered from the meadow, Thinking it would be to the maiden’s liking. He had two baskets of flowers filled, And this was the trick he thought of then: Floris was put into one basket. Two young women carried the basket, Who were annoyed by the heavy weight. They asked God to give a nasty end To whoever put so many flowers in there!</p>
800	<p>Thider that thai weren ibede Ne were thai nowt aright birede, Acc thai turned in hire left hond, Blanchefloures bour around. To Clarice bour the coupe thai bere With the floures that therinne were. There the coupepe thai sette adoun, And gaf him here malisoun, That so fele floures embroughte on honde. Thai wenten forht and leten the coppe stonde.</p>	<p>When they were ordered to go up, They were not directed correctly; And so they turned to their left, Bypassing Blancheflour’s room. They carried the basket to Clarice’s bower With the flowers that were in there. There they set the basket down And muttered their curses on him Who brought together so many flowers. They went out and left the basket standing.</p>
810	<p>Clarice to the coppe com and wolde The floures handlen and biholde. Florisse wende hit hadde ben his swet wight; In the coupe he stod upright, And the maide, al for drede,</p>	<p>Clarice went to the basket, wanting To handle and look at the flowers. Floris thought it was his sweet lass; He stood upright in the basket, And the maid, out of fear,</p>

	<p>Bigan to schrichen an to grede. Tho he segh hit nas nowth she, Into the coupe he stirte aye, And held him bitraied al clene; Of his deth he ne gaf nowt a bene.</p>	<p>Began to shriek and cry out. When he saw that it was not his beloved, He jumped back into the basket, Thinking himself betrayed in full. He didn't count his life worth a bean.³²</p>
820	<p>Ther come to Clarice maidenenes lepe Bi ten, be twenti, in one hepe, And askede what here were That hi makede so loude bere. Clarice hire understod anonright That hit was Blauncheflour, that swete wight, For here boures negh were, And selden that thai neren ifere And aither of other counseil thai wiste, And michel aither to other triste.</p>	<p>Maidens came rushing to Clarice, By ten and twenty, in one crowd, And asked her what was the matter That made her carry on so. Clarice realized right away that it was Meant for Blauncheflour, that sweet girl, For their rooms were near each other And it was seldom that they were not together, So that they knew each other's secrets And had deep trust in each other.</p>
830	<p>Hii gaf hire maidenenes answeere anon That into boure thai sscholden gon: “To this coupe ich cam, and wolde The floures handli and biholde. Ac er ich hit ever wiste A boterfleye togain me fluste. Ich was so sor adrad of than, That sschrichen and greden I bigan.” The maidenenes hadde therof gle And turnede agen, and let Clarisse be.</p>	<p>After a moment she told the maidens That they should return to their bowers. “I came to this basket, wanting To handle the flowers and look at them. But before I knew what was happening A butterfly darted out toward me. I was so terribly startled by it That I began to shriek and cry.” The maidens had a laugh over it And went back out, and left Clarice alone. As soon as the maidens were gone, Clarice went at once to Blauncheflour's room And said laughing to Blauncheflour, “Would you like to see a very nice flower? It's a flower that you will like, After you have seen it a little while.”</p>
840	<p>So sone so the madenes weren agon, To Blauncheflours bour Clarice wente anon And saide leyende to Blauncheflour: “Wiltou sen a ful fair flour? Swiche a flour that thee schal like, Have thou sen hit a lite.” “Avoy, dameisele,” quath Blauncheflour, “To scorne me is litel honour.</p>	<p>“Stop it, girl,” said Blauncheflour. “There's little honor in teasing me. She who marries for love and has joy for it Can take pleasure in flowers.³³ I'm hearing, Clarice, it's no idle gab, That the emir will take me as his wife. But that day will never come When men will condemn me For being untrue in love, Nor will I change my heart for someone new, For anyone's love, or for anyone else, ever, Just as Floris would not in his country. Now that I will lose sweet Floris, No one else will have joy from me.”</p>
C	<p>[Ho that luveth par amur And hath therof ioye, mai luve flures.]</p>	
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848	<p>Ich ihere, Clarice, withoute gabbe, The Ameral wil me to wive habbe.</p>	
850	<p>Ac thilke dai schal never be That men schal atwite me That I schal ben of love untrewre, Ne chaung I love for non newe, For no love, ne for non eie; So doth Floris in his contreie. Nou I schal swete Florice misse, Schal non other of me have blisse.” Clarice stant and behalt that reuthe,</p>	<p>Clarice stood and beheld that sorrow,</p>

³² *Of his deth he ne gaf nowt a bene*: Egerton 2862 has *lyf*. ME often uses *straw*, *berry*, or *oyster* in such expressions to mean something almost worthless. PDE might use ‘plugged nickel’ or an obscenity. I take the translation from Taylor, who lists several related phrases. A.B. Taylor, *Floris and Blauncheflor: A Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1927), note to line 878.

³³ In Cambridge MS.

860	<p>And the treunesse of this treuthe. Leighande sche saide to Blanchefflour: “Com nou se that ilche flour.” To the coupe thai yeden tho. Wel blisful was Florisse tho, For he had iherd al this. Out of the coupe he stirte iwis. Blanchefflour chaungede hewe; Wel sone aither other knewe. Withouten speche togidere thai lepe, Thai clepte and keste and eke wepe.</p>	<p>And the faithfulness of her pledge. Then, laughing, she said to Blanchefflour, “Come now and see that flower!” They went to the basket. Floris was very blissful For he had heard all this. He sprang out of the basket, in truth. Blanchefflour changed her color; At once they recognized each other. Without words they leaped together.</p>
870	<p>Hire cussing laste a mile, And that hem thoughte litel while. Clarice bihalt al this, Here contenance and here bliss, And leighende saide to Blanchefflour: “Felawe, knouestou ought this flour? Litel er noldest thou hit se, And nou thou ne might hit lete fro thee. He moste conne wel mochel of art That thou woldest gif therof ani part.”</p>	<p>Their emotions and their joy, And said to Blanchefflour laughing, “Sister, do you know this flower? A little earlier you would not see it, And now you cannot let it go from you. He must know a lot of tricks For you to give him any part of yourself!”</p>
880	<p>Bothe thise swete thinges for blis Falleth down, here fet to kis, And crieth hire merci, al weping, That she hem biwraie nowt to the king, To the king that she hem nowt biwreie, Wher thourgh thai were siker to deye. Tho spak Clarice to Blanchefflour Wordes ful of fin amour: “Ne doute thou nammore withalle Than to miself hit hadde bifalle.</p>	<p>Both of these sweet things, for their joy, Fell down to kiss her feet And to beg for her mercy, in tears, That she would say nothing to the king, That she would not betray them to the king, For which they would be sure to die. Clarice then spoke to Blanchefflour Words full of kind love: “Have no more fear about all this Than if it had happened to me.</p>
890	<p>White ye wel, witerli, That hele ich wille youre bother druri.” To on bedde she hath hem ibrowt, That was of silk and sendal wrought. Thai sette hem there wel softe adoun, And Clarice drowgh the courtyn roum. Tho bigan thai to clippe and kisse, And made joie and mochele blisse. Florice ferst speke bigan, And saide: “Louerd that madest man,</p>	<p>You can be certain and be sure That I will conceal your lovesickness.”³⁴ She brought them to a bed Which was crafted of fine silk and linen. They laid themselves down quietly, And Clarice drew the curtain round. Then they began to embrace and kiss, And had joy and great pleasure. Floris first began to speak And said, “Lord, who made man, I thank you, God’s son.</p>
900	<p>Thee I thanke, Godes sone, Nou al mi care ich have overcome. And nou ich have mi lef ifounde, Of al mi kare ich am unbounde.” Nou hath aither other itold Of mani a care foul cold, And of mani pine stronge,</p>	<p>I thank you, God’s son. For now I have overcome all my troubles. And now that I have found my beloved, I am delivered from all my pains.” Then each told the other About many hardships, foul and cold, And about many strong torments</p>

³⁴ *Hele ich wille youre bother druri*: TEAMS suggests that *heal* here means, “I will cure your lovesickness,” but also gives a second meaning of *heal* as ME *helen*, hide or conceal, which is what Clarice does.

<p>910</p> <p>920</p> <p>930</p> <p>940</p> <p>950</p> <p>960</p>	<p>That thai han ben atwo so longe. Clarice hem servede al to wille, Bothe dernelich and stille, But so ne mighte she hem longe iwite That hit ne sscholde ben underyete. Nou hadde the Amerail swich a wone That everi dai ther sscholde come Two maidenen ut of hire boure, To serven him up in the toure, With water and cloth and bacyn, For to wasschen his hondes in; That other scholde bringge comb and mirour, To serven him with gret honour. And thai thai servede him never so faire, Amorewen scholde another paire; And mest was woned into the tour Therto Clarice and Blaunchefflour. So longe him servede the maidenen route That hire service was comen aboute: On the morewen that thider com Florice Hit fel to Blaunchefflour and to Clarice. Clarice - so wel hire mote bitide - Aros up in the morewentide, And clepede after Blaunchefflour, To wende with here into the tour. Blaunchefflour saide: "Ich am comende," Ac here answeere was al slepente. Clarice in the wai is nome, And wende that Blaunchefflour had come. Sone so Clarice com in the tour The Ameral asked after Blaunchefflour. "Sire," she saide anonright, "Shethath iwaked al this night, And ikneled and iloke, And irad upon hire boke, And bad to God here oreisoun, That He thee give His benisoun And thee helde longe alive. Nou sche slepeth al so swithe, Blaunchefflour, that maiden swete, That hii ne mai nowt comen yhete." "Certe," said the kyng, "Nou is hi a swete thing. Wel aughte ich here yerne to wive, Whenne she bit so for mi live." Another dai Clarice arist And hath Blaunchefflour atwist Whi hi made so longe demoere. "Aris up, and go we ifere." Blaunchefflour saide: "I come anan." And Florice here klippe bigan And felle aslepe on this wise; And after hem gan sore agrise. Clarice to the piler cam;</p>	<p>Because they had been apart so long. Clarice served them to their liking, Both discreetly and quietly, But she could not protect them for long Without it being discovered. Now the emir had such a custom That every day two maidens Had to come out of their room To serve him up in the tower, With water and a cloth and basin For him to wash his hands in. The other was to bring a comb and mirror To serve him with great honor. Even though he was served ever so courteously, The next morning another pair had to go. And the two who went to the tower most often Were Clarice and Blaunchefflour. The rest of the maidens had served him So that their turn to serve was coming up. In the morning after Floris came It fell to Blaunchefflour and Clarice. Clarice, the best of fortune to her, Rose up in the morning And called for Blaunchefflour To go with her into the tower. Blaunchefflour said, "I'm coming!" But her answer was half-asleep. Clarice took her way, Thinking that Blaunchefflour was on her way. As soon as Clarice arrived in the tower The Emir asked about Blaunchefflour. "Sire," she answered at once, "Shethath been awake all this night. She knelt, and watched, And read her book, And made her prayers to God That He give His blessing to you And keep you alive long. Now she is sleeping so soundly, That sweet maid, Blaunchefflour, That she is not able to come yet." "For certain," said the king, "Shetheth a sweet thing! I should very much want to marry her, When she prays for my life so." Another day came and Clarice arose And asked Blaunchefflour scoldingly Why she made such a long delay. "Get up, and we will go together." Blaunchefflour said, "I'm coming soon." But Floris pulled her close And they fell asleep in this way. Afterwards it would bring them terror. Clarice came to the doorway.</p>
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<p>970</p>	<p>The bacyn of gold she nam, And hath icleped after Blauncheflour, To wende with here into the tour. She ne answerede nai ne yo, Tho wende Clarice she ware ago. Sone so Clarice com into the tour, The Ameral asked after Blauncheflour, Whi and wharfore she ne come, As hi was woned to done.</p>	<p>She took the basin of gold And called for Blancheflour To go with her into the tower. She did not answer yes or no, And so Clarice thought she had already gone. As soon as Clarice arrived in the tower, The Emir asked about Blancheflour, And why she did not come As she was accustomed to doing.</p>
<p>980</p>	<p>“She was arisen ar ich were, Ich wende here haven ifonden here. What, ne is she nowt comen yit?” “Nou she me douteth al to lit.” Forht he clepeth his chaumberleyn, And bit him wende with alle main, And wite wi that she ne come, As hi was wone bfore to done. The chaumberleyn hath undernome, Into hir bour he his icome, And stant bfore hire bed, And find thar twai, neb to neb, Neb to neb, an mouth to mouth: Wel sone was that sorewe couth. Into the tour up he steigh, And saide his louerd al that he seigh. The Ameral het his swerd him bring, Iwiten he wolde of that thinge. Forht he nimth with alle mayn, Himself and his chaumberlayn,</p>	<p>“She was up before I was. I thought that I would find her here.” “What? She has not come yet! Now she fears me all too little!”³⁵ He called his chamberlain forth, And ordered him to go with all his retinue, To find out why she did not come As she was used to doing before. The chamberlain took his way And arrived in her bedroom. He stood before her bed To find two there, face to face, Body to body, and mouth to mouth. Very soon the disaster was known! He rushed into the tower And told his lord all that he had seen. The emir ordered him to bring his sword; He would find out about this affair! He came forth with all his staff, Himself and his chamberlain, Until they arrived where the two lay. The sleep was still in their eyes. The emir had the covers thrown down A little beneath their chests. Then he saw very quickly That one was a man and the other a woman. He quaked with anguish where he stood. It was his urge to execute them. He thought to himself that before he killed them, They should tell him who they were, And later he would put them to death. The couple awoke in the meantime. They saw the sword drawn over them, And they were in terror of being slain. Then the bold emir thundered Words that demanded a prompt answer: “Tell me now, my pretty lover, Who made you so brave To come into my tower</p>
<p>990</p>	<p>Til thaie come thar thai two laie; Yit was the slep fast in hire eye. The Ameral het hire clothes keste A litel binethen here breste. Than segh he wel sone anon That on was a man, that other a womman. He quok for anguisse ther he stod; Hem to quelle was his mod. He him bithoughte, ar he wolde hem quelle, What thai were thai sscholde him telle, And sithen he thoughte hem of dawe don. The children awoken under thon. Thai segh the swerd over hem idrawe; Adrad thai ben to ben islawe. Tho bispak the Ameral bold Wordes that scholde sone bi told: “Sai me now, thou bel ami, Who made thee so hardi For to come into mi tour,</p>	<p>“Tell me now, my pretty lover, Who made you so brave To come into my tower</p>
<p>1000</p>	<p>For to come into mi tour,</p>	<p>To come into my tower</p>

³⁵ I am giving line 972 to the Emir, which makes more sense. No ME romance MS has quotation punctuation, but in British Library Egerton 2862 (880) Clarice does not speak and the line is clearly the Emir's.

1010	<p>To ligge ther bi Blaunchefflour? To wrotherhale ware ye bore; Ye schollen tholie deth therfore.” Thanne saide Florice to Blaunchefflour: “Of oure lif nis non socour.” And mercy thai cride on him so swithe, That he gaf hem respit of here live Til he hadde after his baronage sent, To awreken him thourgh jugement. Up he bad hem sitte bothe</p>	<p>And lie there by Blanchefflour? You were born for ill fortune, And you will suffer death for it.” Then Floris said to Blanchefflour, “There is no help for our lives.” They cried to him for mercy so intently That he gave their lives postponement Until he could send for his barons To avenge himself through judgment. He ordered them both to sit up And put on their clothes,</p>
1020	<p>And siththe he let hem binde fast, And into prisoun hem he cast, Til he had after his barenage sent To wreken him thourgh jugement. What helpeth hit longe tale to sschewe? Ich wille you telle at wordes fewe. Nou al his baronage hath undernome, And to the Amerail they beth icome. His halle, that was heighe ibult, Of kynges and dukes was ifult.</p>	<p>And then he had them bound fast And cast into prison Until he had sent for his baronage To take punishment through a verdict. What good is it to tell a long tale? I will tell you in a few words. Now all his barons had arrived, And came to the emir. His hall, which was built high, Was filled with kings and dukes.</p>
1030	<p>He stod up among hem alle, Bi semblaunt swithe wroth withalle. He saide: “Lordingges, of mochel honour Ye han herd speken of Blaunchefflour, Hou ich hire bought dere aflight For seven sithes of gold hire wight. For hire faired and hire chere Ich hire boughte allinge so dere, For ich thoughte, withouten wene, Hire have ihad to mi quene.</p>	<p>He stood up among them all, With his expression one of great anger. He said, “Lords, of great honor, You have heard Blanchefflour spoken about, How I bought her dearly and rightfully For seven times her weight in gold. For her fairness and her beauty, I bought her in full at such expense. For I thought, without a doubt, To have her as my queen.</p>
1040	<p>Bifore hire bed miself I com, And fond bi hire an naked grom. Tho thai were me so lothe I thoughte to han iqueld hem bothe, Ich was so wroth and so wod; And yit ich withdrough mi mod. Fort ich have after you isent, To awreke me thourgh jugement. Nou ye witen hou hit is agon, Awreke me swithe of mi fon.”</p>	<p>I came myself to her bed And found with her a naked boy. At the time they were so detestable to me That I thought to kill them both, I was so enraged and so crazed. And yet I held back my emotions. On that basis I have sent for you, To avenge me through your decision. Now that you know how it happened, Avenge me swiftly on my foes!”</p>
1050	<p>Tho spak a kyng of on lond: “We han iherd this schame and schonde, Ac, er we hem to dethe wreke, We scholle heren tho children speke, What thai wil speke and sigge, Yif thai ought agein wil allegge. Hit ner nowt right jugement Withouten answeere to acoupement.” After the children nou men sendeth Hem to brenne fur men tendeth.</p>	<p>Then a king of one land spoke up: “We have heard this shame and disgrace. But, before we condemn them to death, We will hear the children speak Whatever they wish to say, to see If they have anything as a defense. It would not be a just deliberation Without an answer to the accusation.” Men now sent for the children, Intending for them to burn in fire.</p>
1060	<p>Twaie Sarazins forth hem bringe Toward here deth, sore wepinge. Dreri were this schildren two;</p>	<p>Two Saracens brought them forth Toward their death, as they wept bitterly. The two lovers were inconsolable;</p>

<p>1070</p> <p>1080</p> <p>1090</p> <p>1100</p> <p>1110</p>	<p>Nou aither biwepeth otheres wo. Florice saide to Blaunchefflour: “Of oure lif nis non socour. Yif manken hit tholi might Twies I scholde die with right: One for miself, another for thee, For this deth thou hast for me.” Blaunchefflour saide agen tho: “The gelt is min of oure bother wo.” Florice drew forth the ring That his moder him gaf at his parting. “Have nou this ring, lemman min, Thou ne schalt nowt die whiles hit is thin.” Blaunchefflour saide tho: “So ne schal hit never go, That this ring schal ared me; Ne mai ihc no deth on thee se.” Florice the ring here araught, And hi him agein hit bitaught. On hire he hath the ring ithrast, And hi hit haveth awai ikast. A duk hit segh and beghe to grounde, An was glad that ring he founde. On this maner the children come Weping to the fur and to hire dome. Bifor al that folk thai ware ibrowt, Dreri was hire bother thought. Ther nas non so sterne man That thise children loked upan, That thai ne wolde alle ful fawe Here jugement have withdrawe, And with grete garisoun hem begge - Yif thai dorste speke other sigge - For Florice was so fair a yongling, And Blaunchefflour so swete a thing. Of men and wimmen that beth nouthe, That gon and riden and speketh with mouthe, Beth non so fair in hire gladnesse, Als thai ware in hire sorewenesse. No man ne knewe hem that hem was wo Bi semblaunt that thai made tho, But bi the teres that thai schadde, And fillen adoun bi here nebbe. The Ameral was so wroth and wod That he ne might withdraw his mod. He bad binde the children faste, Into the fir he hem caste. Thilke duk that the gold ryng hadde Nou to speke rewthe he hadde. Fain he wolde hem helpe to live And tolde hou thai for the ring strive. The Ameral het hem agen clepe, For he wolde tho schildren speke. He askede Florice what he hete,</p>	<p>Each wept for the other’s grief. Floris said to Blanchefour, “For our lives there is no help. If it were possible for a human being, I would rightfully die twice, Once for myself, a second time for you, For your death is because of me!” Blancheflour then answered, “The guilt is mine for both our woe.” Floris drew off the ring That his mother gave him at their parting. “Take this ring, my beloved. You will not die while it is yours.” Blancheflour replied, “It will never happen so That this ring will save me. I will not see you put to death.” Floris handed the ring to her, And she passed it back to him. He thrust the ring on her, And she flung it away. A duke saw it and bent to the ground, And was glad to find that ring. In this manner the children came weeping, To the fire and to their doom. They were brought before all the people, And both of them seemed so pitiable. There was no man so stern Who looked upon these children That he did not wish fervently To have their judgment withdrawn, And to buy them with a great ransom, If they only dared to speak out or protest. For Floris was so fair a young man, And Blancheflour was so sweet a thing. Of men and women who live now, That walk and ride and speak with their mouths, There are none so fair in their happiness As they were in their sorrow. No man could see that they were full of grief By the bearing that they had Except by the tears that they shed Which fell down their faces. The emir was so furious and livid That he could not control his temper. He ordered the couple bound fast And thrown into the fire. The same duke who received the gold ring Was now moved by compassion to speak. He was eager to help them to live And explained how they argued over the ring. The emir had them called back, For he wanted the two to speak. He asked Floris what his name was,</p>
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	<p>And he him told swithe skete. "Sire," he saide, "Yif hit were thi wille, Thou ne aughtest nowt this maiden spille. 1120 Ac, sire, lat aquelle me, And lat that maiden alive be." Blancheflour saide tho: "The gilt is min of oure bother wo." And the Ameral saide tho: "Iwis ye sculle die bo. With wreche ich wille me awreke, Ye ne scholle nevere go ne speke." His swerd he braid out of his sschethe, The children for to do to dethe. 1130 And Blancheflour pult forth hire swire, And Florice gan hire agein tire. "Ich am a man, ich schal go bifore. Thou ne aughtest nought mi deth acore." Florice forht his swire pulte And Blancheflour agein hit brutte. Al that iseyen this Therefore sori weren iwis, And saide: "Dreri mai we be Bi swiche children swich rewthe se." 1140 Th'Ameral, wroth thai he were, Bothe him chaungede mod and chere For aither for other wolde die, And he segh so mani a weping eye. And for he hadde so mochel loved the mai, Weping he turned his heved awai, And his swerd hit fil to grounde; He ne mighte hit holde in that stounde. Thilke duk that the ring found With th'Ameral spak and round, 1150 And ful wel therwith he spedde; The children therwith fram dethe he redde. "Sire," he saide, "hit is litel pris These children to slen, iwis. Hit is the wel more worsschipe Florice conseile that thou wite, Who him taughte thilke gin For to come thi tour within, And who that him broughte thar, The bet of other thou might be war." 1160 Than saide th'Ameraille to Florice tho: "Tel me who thee taughte herto." "That," quath Florice, "ne schal I nevere do, But yif hit ben forgiven also That the gin me taughte therto; Arst ne schal hit never bi do." Alle thai praied therefore iwis; The Ameral graunted this. Nou everi word Florice hath him told, Hou the made was fram him sold, 1170 And hou he was of Speyne a kyngges sone,</p>	<p>And he told him very promptly. "Sire," he said, "If it is your will, You ought not to let this maiden die But, sire, to let me be executed, And let the maiden go alive." Blancheflour then protested, "The guilt is mine for both of our troubles." The emir then thundered, "For certain, both of you will die! I will have revenge in my anger. You will never walk or speak again!" He drew his sword out of its sheath To put the couple to death, And Blancheflour thrust forth her neck, And Floris began to pull her back. "I am a man, I will go before. You should not suffer my death." Floris presented his neck forth And Blancheflour drew it back. All who saw this Were sorry for it, I know, And said, "It is too much sadness To see these youngsters in such anguish!" The emir, as angry as he was, Changed both his mood and his expression, For each was ready to die for the other, And he saw so many weeping eyes. And because he had loved the maid so much, He turned his head away in tears And his sword fell to the ground. He could not hold it at that moment. The duke who had found the ring Spoke and whispered with the emir, And fared successfully for it, For he saved the couple from death. "Sire," he said, "There is little honor In slaying these children, for sure. It would be much more commendable For you to know Floris' confidante, Who showed him the trick To come inside your tower, And who brought him there, So that you might be more aware of others." Then the emir said to Floris, "Tell me who taught you to do this." "That," replied Floris, "I will never do, Unless there is also forgiveness For him who taught me the trick. Before that it will never be done." All there pleaded for this, for sure; The emir granted it. Then Floris told him every detail, How the maid was sold from him, And how he was a prince of the king of Spain,</p>
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	<p>For hire love thider icome, To fonden with som gin That faire maiden for to win. And hou thourgh his gold and his garisoun The porter was his man bicom, And hou he was in the coupe ibore; And alle this other lowen therfore. Nou the Amerail - wel him mote bitide - Florice he sette next his side, 1180 And made him stonde ther upright, And had idubbed him to knight, And bad he scholde with him be With the formast of his mené. Florice fallet to his fet, And bit him gif him his lef so swet. The Ameral gaf him his lemman; Alle the othere him thanked than. To one chirche he let hem bringge And wedde here with here owene ringge. 1190 Nou bothe this children alle for bliss Fil the Amerales fot to kis; And thourgh conseil of Blancheflour Clarice was fet down of the tour, And the Amerale here wedded to quene. There was feste swithe breme I ne can nowt tellen alle the sonde, Ac the richest feste in londe. Nas hit nowt longe after than That Florice tidingge to cam 1200 That his fader the king was ded. And al the barnage gaf him red That he scholde wenden hom And underfongen his kyndom. At Ameral he nom his leve, And he him bad with him bileve. Thanne bispak the Ameral: “Yif thou wilt do, Florice, bi mi conseil, Dwelle here, and wend nowt hom. Ich wille thee given a kyngdom 1210 Also longe and also brod, Als evere yit thi fader bod.” “I nel bileve for no winne; To bidde me hit were sinne.” Thai bitaught the Amerail oure Dright, And thai com hom whan thai might, And let croune him to king, And hire to quene, that swete thing, And underfeng Cristendom of prestes honde, And thonkede God of alle His sonde.</p>	<p>Who had come for her love To try with some plan To win that fair maiden; And how, through his gold and treasures, The porter had become his man, And how he was carried in the basket. All the others laughed over this. Now the emir – may he fare well – Set Floris by his side And made him stand there upright, And dubbed him a knight, And asked if he would stay with him With the leaders of his retinue. Floris fell to his feet And implored him to give him his love so sweet. The emir granted him his beloved. All the others thanked the emir. He had them ushered to a church, And they were wedded there with their own ring. Now both of these children, all for bliss, Fell at the emir’s feet to kiss them. And through the encouragement of Blancheflour, Clarice was fetched down from the tower, And the emir wedded her as his queen.³⁶ There was a feast so sumptuous That I cannot describe all the courses, But it was the richest feast in the land. It was not long after then That the news came to Floris That his father the king was dead. All of the baronage gave him advice That he should go home And take charge of his kingdom. He took his leave of the emir, Who asked him to stay with him. Then the emir said, “Floris, if you will follow my advice And stay here, and not go home, I will give you a kingdom As long and broad as well As anything your father offered.” “I will not stay for any pleasures. To order me to would be a sin.” They commended the emir to our Lord, And they came home at their leisure, And Floris was crowned king, And she as queen, that sweet creature, And he received baptism by priests’ hands, And thanked God for all His works.</p>
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³⁶ In other versions the emir annually executes his wives and the French poet stresses that the emir gives up this practice for Clarice (Taylor, note to 1279). Taylor’s lineation differs from that of TEAMS.

1220	<p>Nou ben thai bothe ded; Crist of Hevene houre soules led. Nou is this tale browt to th'ende, Of Florice and of his lemman hende, Hou after bale hem com bote; So wil oure Louerd that ous mote. Amen siggeth also, And ich schal helpe you therto.</p>	<p>Now they are both dead, Their souls led by Christ to Heaven. Now this tale is brought to the end, Of Floris and his fair sweetheart, How after their troubles came relief. So may our Lord do also for us. Say 'Amen' as well, And I will join you in it.</p>
1228	<p>Explicit</p>	<p>The End</p>

Growing Up in *Floris and Blancheflor*

The Middle English *Floris and Blancheflor* tests the argument that medieval romances are worth reading as literary texts. As Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, it has little “there” there. The story lacks any distinct didactic message in religious or courtly values. The characters are not particularly saintly—both histrionically threaten suicide over lost love—and Floris’ perfunctory conversion at the close receives one line. The poem has little interest in Saracen-Christian issues, and *heathen* and *pagan* never appear in the text.¹ No character is English, precluding any possible nationalistic agenda. Floris does not engage in any heroic acts of martial prowess. Everyone he meets helps him and his enemies act honorably, even the emir’s porter after being tricked.² Blancheflor’s role is so nominal that she does not suggest any feminine ideal. Despite the exotic locales, the characters and plot border on banal, as neither hero really grows through adversity and no believable conflict or danger ever threatens in this “springtime idyll.”³ In *Guy of Warwick* the hero constantly swoons, but over graver matters and not in the style of Floris’ boyish infatuation. Many romances have heroes who are children, but modern editions of *Floris* have been especially styled as sentimental juvenilia.⁴

¹ Siobhain Bly Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: The Auchinleck Manuscript* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 129. Floris converts but his prior faith is never specified.

² Norris J. Lacy, “The Flowering (And Misreading) of Romance: *Floire et Blancheflor*,” *South Central Review* 9:2 (1992): 20. Lacy describes the longer French version and not the English, but the stories are almost corresponding in themes and content.

³ Geraldine Barnes, “Cunning and Ingenuity in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflor*,” *Medium Aevum* 53 (1984): 10.

⁴ For a particularly cloying example see Alice Leighton, *The Sweet and Touching Tale of Fleur & Blanchefleur* (London: D. O’Connor, 1922).



Fig. 1, image from *The Sweet and Touching Tale of Fleur & Blanchefleur*, 1922 (7).

Romance texts often telegraph their endings, but *Floris and Blancheflor* cuts off any possible tension by giving away the denouement at the text's introduction. The poet's design "admits only minor complications, never any serious doubts about the lovers' destiny."⁵ Lacy calls the poem a 'roman rose,' a conflict-less piece of entertainment rather than drama, which conveys "not event but the presentation of event."⁶ Yet a narrative with no conflict, suspense, climax, or resolution is not much of a narrative. Unless *Floris and Blancheflor* simply comprises an image poem or dream vision, we are missing something. A reading which may have better utility sees the poem's didactic content as neither religious nor courtly but organically more similar to that of folktale. The poem has several connections to such genres: it has the stock motifs of the fickle step-parent (Felix) and the exotic "wonders of the east" setting; it has an opaque ancestry

⁵ Lacy, 21.

⁶ Lacy, 22.

in popular legend;⁷ and its sentimental story has simple and stereotypical features. I do not intend a psychoanalytical reading of the sort that Bruno Bettelheim did for fairy tales, but the poem might be interpreted as exploring deeper themes of emotional, moral, and sexual development which might have appealed to a younger audience.

Segol suggests that Floris' pursuit of Blanche-flor constitutes a "metaphorical pilgrimage"⁸ which fulfills the journey of Blanche-flor's mother to the shrine of Saint James of Compostela. But the poem lacks any transcendent symbolism in Floris' efforts to reclaim Blanche-flor. He simply wants his girl back, and the poem is billed purely as a love story (F6)⁹ with few spiritual significations; the children's Palm Sunday / *Pasque-florie* birthdate has little more religious meaning in the story than supplying their matching names. Calling Floris' actions a quest may even be too strong. For much of the poem he acts rather passively, relying on his father's money and the goodwill of others: "their pity achieves for him everything which he is incapable of doing for himself."¹⁰ If Floris' conversion comprises the climactic fulfillment of the pilgrimage, the token report that Floris "underfeng Cristendom of prestes honde" (1218) seems bizarrely understated for the son of a pagan/Muslim warrior.

⁷ The likely French exemplar for the English poem dates to around 1200, and a Spanish analog from the ninth century has been put forth. Loomis lists a number of Arabic and Latin legends and tales which may have influenced the poem, but none are definitive. Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, *Medieval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1963), 184-94. The identification with Charlemagne is not in most versions and probably has no historical basis. See also Patricia E. Grieve, *Floire and Blanche-flor and the European Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸ Marla Segol, "Floire and Blanche-flor: Courtly Hagiography or Radical Romance?" *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 23 (2003): 245. Segol also describes the French analog and not the English.

⁹ I use *F* to indicate the French lines which replace the lost English beginning to the poem.

¹⁰ Jane Gilbert, "Boys Will Be... What? Gender, Sexuality, and Childhood in *Floire et Blanche-flor* and *Floris et Lyriope*." *Exemplaria* 9 (1997): 42. Again, Gilbert discusses the French version.

Yet each host that Floris encounters teaches him something and guides him toward a more mature and self-reliant character. The progress of the stopovers which Floris makes during his search for Blanche-flor indicates increasing emotional independence. In his first stay at a lord's house Floris offers a gold cup in thanks for the lady's information on Blanche-flor's whereabouts (427-9) but displays no further agency. The next day Floris's world grows to include Babylon, where he shows more assertiveness in communicating his wishes to the palace lord, first through gnomic statements about recovering "mi marchandise" (484) and then by stating outright his intention to overcome the emir "with sum ginne" (523). His subsequent lodging with Dary results in concrete action as Floris now needs to operate alone without any paternal direction to navigate the hostile world of the emir's palace. As Floris nears Blanche-flor, his horizons have geographically and psychologically expanded into greater empowerment. However automatic they are, the risks which Floris overcomes progressively swell. Floris' hosts can conceivably inform on him, and the porter can "bothe bete and reve" (638) him if his nerve fails.

Floris' alliance with Dary also demonstrates an emerging cognitive maturity, for Floris now plans out careful subterfuge to rescue Blanche-flor to compensate for the military prowess he lacks. Barnes reads the poem as a series of dupings and tricks reminiscent of Greek New Comedy,¹¹ and Floris progresses from being a naïve victim of such ruses to having the ability to perform them and understand their psychology. Upon reaching the emir's palace, Floris manipulates the porter like another one of his chess

¹¹ Geraldine Barnes, "Cunning and Ingenuity in the Middle English *Floris and Blanche-flur*," *Medium Aevum* 53 (1984): 10-25.

pieces into his service. Each one of these encounters involves larger scope for intelligent action. Floris' reunion with Blancheflor in the harem rooms seems somewhat of a regression to childishness, and Floris must be carried into the tower passively as one more flower in a basket. The comic scene where Floris is deposited in the wrong room allows him to lament that his life is worth "nowt a bene" (819), but the audience knows this "stylistic detour"¹² will not prevent the preordained happy ending. It functions more as a minor backfire of the porter and Floris' ploy and leads to another entertaining trick in Clarice's quick thinking.

Yet Floris' act requires an increasingly nuanced moral awareness, as he now must incriminate and endanger Blancheflor in his artifice. The emir orders both beheaded and not the intruder alone. While the poet does overdo the pathos, the French is even more maudlin, whereas the English version has the court motivated by concern about how Floris entered.¹³ Subsequently, Floris accepts full responsibility for his actions. He pleads to the emir to "lat aquelle me / and lat that maiden alive be" ("have me killed and let the maiden go alive," (1120-1). Romance conventionally presumes that its ethics are "so compelling that anyone who confronts the court inevitably becomes a part of it,"¹⁴ and the emir partly melts because *amor vincit omnia*. But he chiefly relents after seeing that each will die for the other (1142). The emir may gauge that killing Blancheflor has the appearance of a jealousy undignified to his position but may also be impressed by Floris'

¹² Peter Haidu, "Narrativity and Language in Some XIIth Century Romances," *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974): 145. Haidu also discusses the French version.

¹³ Barnes, 20.

¹⁴ Matthew Boyd Goldie, *Middle English Literature: A Historical Sourcebook* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 20.

audacity and moral precocity, as his readiness to undergo death for his actions gives him a depth beyond his years.

Roger Ascham complained that reading romances led to “baudrye,”¹⁵ but the English texts seldom depict any real smut, despite the desires of modern critics to make romance seem more ‘dangerous.’ Much of *Floris and Blancheflor* feels especially puerile, and the pregnancy of the mothers supplies the only evidence of sex in the first half. The heroes have mirroring names and similar features, suggesting to a medieval audience that they are soulmates.¹⁶ But their babyish courtship goes no further than reading stories of Ovid’s lovers together, and only in the French;¹⁷ the English merely has them learning Latin together (33), hardly an activity evincing romantic passion. Floris’ later whine to his father that “ne can y noight to scole goon / without Blaunchefloure” (19-20) has more the tone of a child pleading for his playmate than *eros*. Gilbert argues that effeminacy is “a common characteristic of boyhood in medieval literature,”¹⁸ perhaps to accentuate the hero’s later masculinity. In this poem the two children are barely differentiated by gender and do everything together but their nursing (F188).

Yet Floris undergoes a certain sexual maturing through the text. The first lord’s wife notes that Floris is identical to Blancheflor, except that “thou art a man and she is a maide” (421). The next lord in Babylon states only a similarity in their emotions (488),

¹⁵ *Toxophilus* (1545), in *English Works*, ed. W.A. Wright (Cambridge, 1904), xiv, quoted in Nicola McDonald, *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England* (Manchester: University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁶ Gilbert, 44-5. In her note Gilbert lists other tales of identical and thus predestined pairs, such as *Piramus et Tisbé*, Chretien de Troyes’s *Erec et Enide*, and *Amis and Amiloun*, albeit homosocially.

¹⁷ Segol, 252.

¹⁸ Gilbert, 43.

and no further comparisons occur as Floris' mentors switch from exclusively females to males. Clarice invites Blanchefflor to "sen a ful fair flour" (843), but means a joke on the flower basket rather than on Floris's masculinity; the audience understands the irony of Floris/flower, but Clarice does not yet know his name. In the bedroom discovery scene the French manuscript has a moment of humor where the emir's chamberlain thinks that Floris *is* Clarice,¹⁹ but the English has the emir throw down the covers and see "wel some anon / that on was a man, that other a womman" (994-5). At least physically, the two children have become differentiated in gender.

Are Floris and Blanchefflor having sex? I do not want to commit the same offense I criticized by torturing the text for dirty meanings it does not have. Yet no one in the story claims that Blanchefflor has remained a virgin. The narrator states that "bigan thai to clippe and kisse / and made joie and mochele blisse" (896-7) in a private bed. In the mornings Floris "here klippe bigan" ("pulled her close," 957), and the chamberlain finds them "neb to neb, an mouth to mouth" ("body to body, and mouth to mouth," 982). After all this the narrator nowhere reassures the reader that the two were only practicing their Latin declensions, in comparison to the *Bevis of Hampton* poet's protest that "he dede nothing bouthe ones hire kiste!" (1213). The term *maiden* can simply refer to an unmarried woman in Middle English without reference to sexual experience. Neither Floris nor Blanchefflor tries to protest innocence to the emir or to his barons, as presumably Blanchefflor's lost virginity can be physically verified. Although Floris' journey has not

¹⁹ A.B. Taylor, *Floris and Blanchefflor: A Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), 21. See line 2889-90, "ge vos plevis / qu'eles dorment lui et Claris"—"I swear to you that they are sleeping, her and Claris." Reference from Édélestand Du Méril, ed., *Floire et Blanchefflor, Poèmes du 13è Siècle* (Paris: 1856).

realistically been a long one in time passed, he has progressed towards a growing sexual maturity, or at least the awareness of such dynamics.

Psychological readings can be dangerous, but the poem's background characters suggest additional sexual meanings. Gilbert suggests that the story is about Floris' attempts to be taken seriously as an adult with sexual agency,²⁰ and such a poem might have appealed to gentle sons and daughters who historically did not usually marry as they wished.²¹ Floris' precocious sexuality threatens parental authority, and Felix's primal male anger in attempting to eliminate Blancheflor perhaps enacts a denial of Floris' sexual autonomy, as the queen must consistently come to the pair's defense. Much as Felix earlier adds the Christian slave to his proto-harem, the emir possesses an outright sexual monopoly on his women. Segol calls the emir's garden a corrupted version of the heavenly paradise, but beyond its religious symbolism the garden is also "centered on male desire, erected around a giant phallus of a tower, imprisoning young and desirable women within it."²² The garden is only paradise for him. Floris carries a cup depicting Helen being led away by Paris, and Blancheflor's sexual favors are similarly a zero-sum game. Either the emir will enjoy them or Floris will. Floris thwarts the intentions of both dominant males to deny adult sexual activity to him, and upon abandoning his claims the emir's sword falls to the ground impotently (1146).

Kelly argues that *Floris and Blancheflor* is a much darker text than the usual "charming," "sentimental," and "exotic far-east" adjectives applied to the poem mean,

²⁰ Gilbert, 45.

²¹ Taylor, 11.

²² Segol, 256.

pointing out Blancheflor's reality as a powerless slave born to a mother taken in violence. Like Helen and the cup, she is a commodified and voiceless object of trade.²³ Yet the story seems too thin and naïve to support such grave themes. The fanciful plot and the lack of real suffering or loss rules out any such serious gloom, and Blancheflor functions more like a placeholder than a living character. She receives almost no lines, functioning more for Floris' purposes than her own. The poet interestingly lavishes a great deal of description on such physical props of the story as the tomb, the cup, and the palace, cultivating "an 'illusion of reality' only in regard to art objects created by the unlikelike characters."²⁴ Lacy suggests that the text emphasizes its fictionality in order to fully enable its playful stratagems and humor, noting that the narrator takes several lines to state how he heard it from two sisters who heard it from a cleric. The poet does not use present-tense interjections ("Damn him who cares!") or present the story as true history. The poem comprises "a literary work in the purest sense."²⁵

Few romances attempt hyper-realism, but if the *Floris and Blancheflor* narrator appears especially bent on stressing the fictiveness of his story, its purposes—if any exist outside simple amusement—likely lie outside creating a sustained depicted world. At the narrative level, Floris wins back Blancheflor, and the poem's ending is hasty and automatic as the two are "hastily bundled into the structures of normative adult life—knighthood, marriage, inheritance, and Christianity."²⁶ At a richer symbolic level, *Floris*

²³ Kathleen Coyne Kelly, "The Bartering of Blancheflor in the Middle English *Floris and Blancheflor*," *Studies in Philology* 91:2 (1994): 106.

²⁴ Lacy, 22.

²⁵ Lacy, 25.

²⁶ Gilbert, 48.

and Blancheflor plays out a boy's progression toward manhood as Floris learns, in ideal-time if not realistic time, to take responsibility for himself in order to obtain love and an adult identity. In the medieval era the boundaries between childhood and adulthood were less marked, making the romance child more like "un petit homme."²⁷ The teenager as a developmental stage would not arrive until the twentieth century. A very wide audience might have seen their ideal selves reflected in Floris' passage into noble *amor* and kingship but also mature self-actualization. Although not a typical romance in its lack of monsters, armor, and battles, at the poem's close Floris does achieve, with the blessings of church and court, "a Lady and a fief."²⁸

²⁷ Philippe Ariès, *L'enfant et Lavie Familiale Sous L'ancien Regime* (Paris: Plon, 1960) 24, quoted in Gilbert, 39.

²⁸ Haidu, 134.

CHAPTER 5

Gamelyn

Gamleyn survives only in manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* in the *c* and *d* families, but twenty-five copies exist. I take as my text source Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren, eds. *The Tale of Gamelyn. Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997.

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/gamelyn.htm>. Other editions include Walter William Skeat, ed., *The Tale of Gamelyn* (1884) and Walter Hoyt French & Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930). Skeat and French & Hale used as their base text MS Harley 7334 (c. 1410), whereas recent scholarship favors MS Petworth (c. 1420), the base text of the TEAMS edition.

	Fitt 1	Chapter 1
1	<p>Lithes and listneth and harkeneth aright, And ye shul here of a doughty knyght; Sire John of Boundes was his name, He coude of norture and of mochel game. Thre sones the knyght had and with his body he wan, The eldest was a moche schrewe and sone bygan. His brether loved wel her fader and of hym were agast, The eldest deserved his faders curs and had it atte last. The good knight his fadere lyved so yore,</p>	<p>Pay attention, hear me, and listen closely, And you will hear about a sturdy knight. His name was Sir John of Boundes,¹ And he knew much about refinement and leisure. The knight had three sons and fathered them all. The eldest was a wicked rogue and soon showed it; His brothers loved their father well and were appalled by him. The eldest deserved his father's curse and ultimately had it. His father, the good knight, lived long, Until death neared and tormented him sorely.</p>
10	<p>That deth was comen hym to and handled hym ful sore. The good knyght cared sore sik ther he lay, How his children shuld lyven after his day. He had bene wide where but non husbonde he was, Al the londe that he had it was purchas. Fayn he wold it were dressed amonge hem alle, That eche of hem had his parte as it myght falle. Thoo sente he in to contrey after wise knyghtes To helpen delen his londes and dresen hem to-rightes. He sent hem word by letters thei shul hie blyve,</p>	<p>The good knight worried himself sick where he lay About how his children would fare after his day. He had traveled far and wide but was no farmer; All the land he held was purchased.² He was anxious to have it divided among them So that each would have his part as it might fall. He sent out to the countryside for wise knights To help portion out his lands and divide them justly. He sent them word by letter that they should come quickly If they wanted to speak with him while he was alive.</p>
20	<p>If thei wolde speke with hym whilst he was alyve. Whan the knyghtes harden sik that he lay, Had thei no rest neither nyght ne day, Til thei come to hym ther he lay stille On his dethes bedde to abide goddys wille. Than seide the good knyght seke ther he lay, “Lordes, I you warne for soth, without nay,</p>	<p>When the knights heard that he lay sick, They did not rest by night or day Until they had come to where he lay still On his death's bed to abide God's will. Then the good knight, as he lay sick, said: “Lordings, I tell you in truth, with no denial,</p>

¹ *Boundes*: This likely means no more than the ‘boundaries’ of some border, although Skeat asserts that the word is straight from Old French *bonne*, limit. The setting of the story is not specified, although there is a Gamlingay near Cambridge. Walter W. Skeat, *The Tale of Gamelyn* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), viii, ix. The pejorative term ‘bounder,’ referring to an ill-bred opportunist such as Dickens’ Josiah Bounderby, is Victorian.

² Sir John’s land was bought *fee simple* as a freehold and thus he is entitled to distribute it as he wishes. Although his executors insist on awarding it to the eldest son under the contemporary practice of primogeniture, John’s countermand has legal validity. See Edgar F. Shannon Jr., “Mediaeval Law in the *Tale of Gamelyn*,” *Speculum* 26:3 (1951): 458-9.

<p>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>50</p>	<p>I may no lenger lyven here in this stoude; For thorgh goddis wille deth droueth me to grounde.” Ther nas noon of hem alle that herd hym aright, That thei ne had routh of that ilk knyght, And seide, “Sir, for goddes love dismay you nought; God may don boote of bale that is now ywrought.” Than speke the good knyght sik ther he lay, “Boote of bale God may sende I wote it is no nay; But I beseche you knyghtes for the love of me, Goth and dresseth my londes amonge my sones thre. And for the love of God deleth not amyss, And forgeteth not Gamelyne my yonge sone that is. Taket hede to that oon as wel as to that other; Seelde ye seen eny hier helpen his brother.” Thoo lete thei the knyght lyen that was not in hele, And wenten into counselle his londes for to dele; For to delen hem alle to on that was her thought. And for Gamelyn was yongest he shuld have nought. All the londe that ther was thei dalten it in two, And lete Gamelyne the yonge without londe goo, And eche of hem seide to other ful loude, His bretheren myght yeve him londe whan he good cowde. And whan thei had deled the londe at her wille, They comen to the knyght ther he lay stille, And tolde him anon how thei had wrought; And the knight ther he lay liked it right nought. Than seide the knyght, “Be Seint Martyne, For al that ye han done yit is the londe myne; For Goddis love, neighbours stonde alle stille,</p>	<p>I may no longer live here in this place. For through God’s will, death draws me to the earth.” There were none of them who heard him Who did not have pity for that knight. They said, “Sir, for God’s love, do not despair. God may bring good out of ill fortune that has befallen.” The good knight, sick where he lay, replied: “God may bring good from adversity; I know it can’t be denied. But I beg of you knights, for the sake of my love, To go and divide my lands among my three sons. And for the love of God do not deal wrongly, And do not overlook Gamelyn, who is my young son.³ Take heed of that one as well as the others. You seldom see any heir help his own brother.”⁴ They left the knight lying there in his poor health, And went into counsel to deal out his lands. Their intentions were to deal them all to one, And for Gamelyn, the youngest, to have nothing. They parceled out in two all the land that was there And let young Gamelyn go without land, And each of them said to the other plainly That his brothers might give him land when they were best able. And when they had dealt out the land by their will, They returned to the knight where he lay still And immediately told him what they had done. The knight, where he lay, was not pleased at all. The knight cried, “By Saint Martin,⁵ For all that you have done, it is still my land! For God’s love, neighbors, stop all actions,</p>
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³ Gamelyn is young at the story’s beginning, as he spends sixteen years under his brother (356). He was evidently born when Sir John was older. Skeat etymologizes the name as *gamel-ing*, “son of the old man” (viii).

⁴ Proverbial. Compare the Old French proverb “A landmark is well-placed between the lands of two brothers.”

⁵ St. Martin divided his cloak between himself and a beggar. See note for *Amis and Amiloun*, 2014.

<p>60</p> <p>70</p> <p>80</p>	<p>And I wil delen my londe after myn owne wille. John, myne eldest sone shal have plowes fyve, That was my faders heritage whan he was alyve; And my myddelest sone fyve plowes of londe, That I halpe forto gete with my right honde; And al myn other purchace of londes and ledes That I biquethe Gamelyne and alle my good stedes. And I biseche you, good men that lawe conne of londe, For Gamelynes love that my quest stonde.” Thus dalt the knyght his londe by his day, Right on his deth bed sik ther he lay; And sone afterward he lay stoon stille, And deide whan tyme come as it was Cristes wille. Anoon as he was dede and under gras grave, Sone the elder brother giled the yonge knave; He toke into his honde his londe and his lede, And Gamelyne him selven to clothe and to fede. He clothed him and fedde him evell and eke wroth, And lete his londes forfare and his houses bothe, His parkes and his wodes and did no thing welle; And sithen he it abought on his owne felle. So longe was Gamelyne in his brothers halle, For the strengest, of good will they douted hym alle; Ther was noon therinne neither yonge ne olde, That wolde wroth Gamelyne were he never so bolde. Gamelyne stood on a day in his brotheres yerde, And byganne with his hond to handel his berde; He thought on his landes that lay unsowe, And his fare okes that doune were ydrawe; His parkes were broken and his deer reved;</p>	<p>And I will deal out my land according to my own will. John, my eldest son, will have five plows.⁶ That was my father’s heritage when he was alive. And my middle son five plows of land Which I helped to get with my right hand. And all my other holdings of lands and tenants I bequeath to Gamelyn with all my good horses. And I beseech you, good men who know the laws of the land, That my will should stand for love of Gamelyn.” Thus did the knight divide his land in his day, Right on his deathbed where he lay sick. And soon afterward he lay as still as a stone And died when the time came, as it was Christ’s will. As soon as he was dead and under the grave’s grass, The elder brother swindled the young boy. He took in hand Gamelyn’s land and tenants, And Gamelyn himself to clothe and feed. He clothed and fed him poorly and grudgingly, And let his lands and houses go to ruin, Along with his parks and woods, and did nothing well. Later he would pay for it with his own hide. Gamelyn was in his brother’s hall so long that Even the strongest were attentively cautious of him.⁷ There was no one in there, young or old, Who would anger Gamelyn, however bold he was. Gamelyn stood one day in his brother’s yard And began to stroke his beard with his hand. He thought about his lands that lay fallow And his fair oaks that were cut down. His parks were broken into and his deer stolen.</p>
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⁶ *Plowes fyve*: A plow was a legal unit of land in the Danelaw, and was said to be the amount of land a team of oxen could cultivate in a year. About 120 acres, it was similar to the English hide or carucate.

⁷ *Of good will*: Not the modern sense of goodwill or fair play, but ‘of their own accord,’ i.e. with strong feeling or resolution. Skeat gives an example from the romance *Octovian Imperator* where sailors unsurprisingly run from a lioness “with good wylle” (37).

<p>90</p> <p>100</p> <p>110</p>	<p>Of alle his good stedes noon was hym byleved; His hous were unhilled and ful evell dight; Tho thought Gamelyne it went not aright. Afterward come his brother walking thare, And seide to Gamelyne, “Is our mete yare?” Tho wrathed him Gamelyne and swore by Goddys boke, “Thow schalt go bake thi self I wil not be thi coke!” “What? brother Gamelyne howe answerst thou nowe? Thou spekest nevere such a worde as thou dost nowe.” “By feithe,” seide Gamelyne “now me thenketh nede; Of al the harmes that I have I toke never yit hede. My parkes bene broken and my dere reved, Of myn armes ne my stedes nought is byleved; Alle that my fader me byquathe al goth to shame, And therfor have thou Goddes curs brother be thi name!” Than spake his brother that rape was and rees, “Stond stille, gadlynge and holde thi pees; Thou shalt be fayn to have thi mete and thi wede; What spekest thow, gadelinge of londe or of lede?” Than seide Gamelyne the child so yinge, “Cristes curs mote he have that me clepeth gadelinge! I am no wors gadeling ne no wors wight, But born of a lady and gete of a knyght.” Ne dorst he not to Gamelyn never a foot goo, But cleped to hym his men and seide to hem thoo, “Goth and beteth this boye and reveth hym his witte, And lat him lerne another tyme to answer me bette.” Than seide the childe yonge Gamelyne, “Cristes curs mote thou have brother art thou myne! And if I shal algates be beten anoon,</p>	<p>Out of all his fine horses, none were left for him. His house was unroofed and in disrepair. Gamelyn resolved then that it was not right. Afterward his brother came walking there, And said to Gamelyn, “Is supper ready?” This infuriated Gamelyn, who swore by the Bible, “You can bake it yourself! I won’t be your cook!”⁸ “What? Brother Gamelyn, what did you say to me? You never spoke such words as you do now.” “In faith,” said Gamelyn, “it now seems justified! Of all the injuries to me, I never took offense yet. My parks have been broken into and my deer stolen. Nothing is left of my arms and my horses. All that my father left to me has gone to shame. And so may your name be cursed by God for it!” His brother, who was quick to anger, spoke: “Stand still, you little beggar, and shut your mouth! You’ll be content to have your food and clothes. What can you tell me, you bastard, about land or tenants?” Then Gamelyn, the child so young, answered: “Christ’s curse on him who calls me ‘bastard’! I am no low beggar nor a common criminal, But born of a lady and fathered by a knight.” His brother did not dare step a foot toward Gamelyn, But called to his men and then said to them, “Go and beat this boy out of his wits, And teach him to answer me better next time.” Then the young man Gamelyn said, “Christ’s curse on you, brother of mine! And if I must be beaten today anyway,</p>
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⁸ This Cinderella-type order to “get busy with those pots and pans” is answered with common address (*thou*) rather than polite address (*you*), a clear act of defiance on Gamelyn’s part to his elder brother (TEAMS). Skeat notes that John evidently uses the royal *we* (*is our mete yare?*) in the previous line (37). In Thomas Lodge’s *Euphues’ Golden Legacy* (1592), which Skeat claims is partly based on *Gamelyn*, the villain here uses the condescending title *sirha*, *sirrah* (Skeat, xviii).

<p>120</p> <p>130</p> <p>140</p>	<p>Cristes curs mote thou have but thou be that oon!” And anon his brother in that grete hete Made his men to fette staves Gamelyn to bete. Whan every of hem had a staf ynomen, Gamelyn was werre whan he segh hem comen; Whan Gamelyne segh hem comen he loked overall, And was ware of a pestel stode under the wall; Gamelyn was light and thider gan he lepe, And droof alle his brotheres men right sone on an hepe And loked as a wilde lyon and leide on good wone; And whan his brother segh that he byganne to gon; He fley up into a loft and shette the door fast; Thus Gamelyn with his pestel made hem al agast. Some for Gamelyns love and some for eye, Alle they droughen hem to halves whan he gan to pleye. “What now!” seyde Gamelyne “evel mot ye the! Wil ye bygynne contecte and so sone flee?” Gamelyn sought his brother whider he was flowe, And seghe where he loked out a wyndowe. “Brother,” sayde Gamelyne “com a litel nere, And I wil teche thee a play at the bokelere.” His brother him answerde and seide by Seint Richere, “The while that pestel is in thine honde I wil come no nere; Brother, I will make thi pees I swer by Cristes oore; Cast away the pestel and wrethe the no more.” “I most nede,” seide Gamelyn, “wreth me at onys,</p>	<p>To Hell with you unless you are the one to do it!”⁹ Straightaway his brother, in his hot fury, Made his men fetch staves to beat Gamelyn. When every one of them had taken a staff, Gamelyn was aware when he saw them coming. When Gamelyn saw them nearing, he looked around And noticed a large pestle under the wall.¹⁰ Gamelyn was light and leapt toward it, And very soon drove all his brother’s men onto a pile And looked as a wild lion as he laid into a good number. And when his brother saw that he began to run. He flew up into a loft and shut the door fast. Thus Gamelyn terrified them all with his club. Some loved Gamelyn and some feared him, And all of them took sides when he began to fight. “What now?” said Gamelyn. “Foul fortune to you!”¹¹ Will you confront me and so soon run away?” Gamelyn looked to find where his brother had flown And saw where he peeped out a window. “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “come a little nearer, And I will teach you a lesson with my shield.”¹² His brother answered and said, “By Saint Richard,¹³ While that club is in your hand I will come no closer. Brother, I swear by Christ’s grace I will make peace with you. Cast away the pestle and trouble yourself no more.” “I am justified in being angry now,” said Gamelyn,</p>
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⁹ *But thou be that oon*: Interpreters disagree on this line. Gamelyn may also be saying “Christ’s curse on you unless you are the one beaten.”

¹⁰ *Pestel*: In a kitchen, a grinding bat could be an imposing tool (TEAMS). Havelock also uses a kitchen weapon, in his case a door-beam (1794).

¹¹ *Evel mot ye the*: “May you thrive evilly.” This expletive, or variations, is common in ME but lacks bite in translation. Compare PDE “to hell with you.”

¹² *Bokelere*: A buckler was a small, round shield for hand-to-hand combat. As with his puns about beating priests later (512), Gamelyn is making a grim joke about playing martial sports with his pestel.

¹³ *Seint Richere*: Probably St. Richard of Chichester, 1197-1253, revered for brotherly love.

<p>150</p> <p>160</p>	<p>For thou wold make thi men to breke my bonys, Ne had I hadde mayn and myght in myn armes, To han hem fro me thei wold have done me harmes.” “Gamelyn,” seide his brother, “be thou not wroth, For to sene the han harme me were right loth; I ne did it not, brother, but for a fondinge, For to loken wher thou art stronge and art so yenge.” “Come adoune than to me and graunt me my bone Of oon thing I wil the axe and we shal saught sone.” Doune than come his brother that fikel was and felle, And was swith sore afeerd of the pestelle. He seide, “Brother Gamelyn axe me thi bone, And loke thou me blame but I it graunte sone.” Than seide Gamelyn “Brother, iwys, And we shul be at one thou most graunte me this: Alle that my fader me byquath whilst he was alyve, Thow most do me it have if we shul not strive.” “That shalt thou have, Gamelyn I swere be Cristes oore! Al that thi fadere the byquathe, though thou wolde have more; Thy londe that lith ley wel it shal be sawe, And thine houses reised up that bene leide ful lawe.” Thus seide the knyght to Gamelyn with mouthe, And thought on falsnes as he wel couthe. The knyght thought on tresoun and Gamelyn on noon, And wente and kissed his brother and whan thei were at oon Alas, yonge Gamelyne no thinge he ne wist With such false tresoun his brother him kist!</p> <p>Fitt 2</p>	<p>“For you would have had your men break my bones. If I did not have power and strength in my arms To keep them away, they would have done me harm.” “Gamelyn,” replied his brother, “don’t be upset, For it would be hateful for me to see you hurt. I did not mean it, brother, as more than a test, To find out if you are strong while still so young.” “Come down to me, then, and grant my wish. I will ask one thing of you and we will be reconciled.” Down came his brother, who was fickle and cruel, And sorely afraid of the club. He said, “Brother Gamelyn, ask me your request, And see that you blame me if I do not grant it soon.” Then Gamelyn said, “Brother, indeed, For us to be at one you must grant me this: You must turn over to me, if we are not to quarrel, All that my father left to me while he was alive.” “You will have it, Gamelyn, I swear by God’s mercy! All that your father bequeathed you, even more if you wanted. Your land that lies untilled will be sown, And your houses that lie fallen will be raised up.” The knight said these things to Gamelyn with his mouth, But thought of treachery, which his mind knew well. The knight planned treason though Gamelyn intended none, And he went and kissed his brother when they were reconciled. Alas, young Gamelyn suspected nothing When his brother kissed him with such false deceit.</p>
<p>170</p>	<p>Lytheneth, and listeneth, and holdeth your tonge, And ye shul here talking of Gamelyn the yonge.</p>	<p>Part 2</p> <p>Pay attention, and listen, and hold your tongue, And you will hear a story about Gamelyn the young.</p>

<p>180</p> <p>190</p>	<p>Ther was there bisiden cride a wrastelinge, And therfore ther was sette a ramme and a ringe; And Gamelyn was in wille to wende therto, Forto preven his myght what he coude doo. “Brothere,” seide Gamelyn, “by Seint Richere, Thow most lene me tonyght a litel coursere That is fresshe for the spore on forto ride; I moste on an erande a litel here beside.” “By god!” seide his brothere “of stedes in my stalle Goo and chese the the best spare noon of hem alle Of stedes and of coursers that stoden hem byside; And telle me, good brother, whider thou wilt ride.” “Here beside, brother is cried a wrastelinge, And therfore shal be sette a ram and a ringe; Moche worschip it were brother to us alle, Might I the ram and the ringe bringe home to this halle.” A stede ther was sadeled smertly and skete; Gamelyn did a peire spores fast on his fete. He sette his foote in the stirop the stede he bistrode, And towards the wrastelinge the yonge childe rode. Whan Gamelyn the yonge was riden out atte gate, The fals knyght his brother loked yit after thate, And bysought Jesu Crist that is hevene kinge, He myghte breke his necke in the wrestelinge. As sone as Gamelyn come ther the place was, He lighte doune of his stede and stood on the gras, And ther he herde a frankeleyn “weiloway” singe,</p>	<p>A wrestling match was announced nearby, And a ram and a ring were set for it.¹⁴ Gamelyn wanted to go there To prove his prowess of what he could do. “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “by Saint Richard, Tonight you must lend me a fast horse That is keen to ride under the spur. I must go on an errand for a little while near here.” “By God,” said his brother, “from the steeds in my stall, Go and choose the best; spare none of them Out of the coursers and horses that stand by.¹⁵ And tell me, good brother, where will you ride?” “A wrestling match has been called nearby, And a ram and a ring have been set as prizes. It would bring great honor to us all, brother, If I brought the ram and ring home to this hall.” A steed was saddled handsomely and quickly. Gamelyn put a pair of spurs tightly on his feet. He set his foot in the stirrup and mounted the horse, And the youngster rode toward the wrestling match. When Gamelyn the youth had ridden past the gate, His brother the false knight continued to stare out at it And implored Jesus Christ, who is Heaven’s king, That he might break his neck in the wrestling. As soon as Gamelyn arrived where the match was, He dismounted his horse and stood on the grass. And there he heard a landowner wail “Woe is me!”¹⁶</p>
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¹⁴ Wrestling matches were a popular pastime in the countryside enjoyed by peasant and nobility, and a ram and ring would have been standard prizes. Chaucer’s Miller “wolde have alwey the ram” (I.548). Some scholars claim that actually participating would have been undignified for the genteel, making Sir Thopas’ unlikely plaudit that “of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer” (VII.740) additionally humorous.

¹⁵ *Coursers*: coursers were very fast and light horses often used in battle.

¹⁶ *Frankeleyn*: A franklin was a rural freeman who owned his own land but was not noble. Together with the urban merchant bourgeoisie they formed a nascent middle class, and thus the proverbial hard-working yeoman.

<p>200</p> <p>210</p> <p>220</p> <p>230</p>	<p>And bygonne bitterly his hondes forto wringe. “Good man,” seide Gamelyn, “whi mast thou this fare? Is ther no man that may you helpen out of care?” “Allas!” seide this frankeleyn, “that ever was I bore! For twey stalworth sones I wene that I have lore; A champion is in the place that hath wrought me sorowe, For he hath sclayn my two sones but if God hem borowe. I will yeve ten pound by Jesu Christ! and more, With the nones I fonde a man wolde handel hym sore.” “Good man,” seide Gamelyn, “wilt thou wele doon, Holde my hors the whiles my man drowe of my shoon, And helpe my man to kepe my clothes and my stede, And I wil to place gon to loke if I may spede.” “By God!” seide the frankleyn, “it shal be doon; I wil myself be thi man to drowe of thi shoon, And wende thou into place, Jesu Crist the spede, And drede not of thi clothes ne of thi good stede.” Barefoot and ungirt Gamelyn inne came, Alle that were in the place hede of him nam, Howe he durst aventure him to doon his myght That was so doghty a champion in wrasteling and in fight. Up stert the champioun rapely anon, And toward yonge Gamelyn byganne to gon, And seide, “Who is thi fadere and who is thi sire? For sothe thou art a grete fool that thou come hire!” Gamelyn answerde the champioun tho, “Thowe knewe wel my fadere while he myght goo, The whiles he was alyve, by seynt Martyn! Sir John of Boundes was his name, and I am Gamelyne.” “Felawe,” sayde the champion, “so mot I thrive, I knewe wel thi fadere the whiles he was alyve; And thi silf, Gamelyn, I wil that thou it here, While thou were a yonge boy a moche shrewe thou were.”</p>	<p>As he started to bitterly wring his hands. “Good man,” said Gamelyn, “why are you making this fuss? Is there no man who can help you out of your troubles?” “Alas,” said the franklin, “that I was ever born! For I believe that I have lost two sturdy sons. There is a champion here who has brought me sorrow, For he will slay my two sons unless God will rescue them. I would give ten pounds, by Jesus Christ, and more¹⁷ On the spot if I found a man who would handle him roughly.” “Good man,” said Gamelyn, “if you will be so kind, Hold my horse while my man takes off my shoes, And help my man to keep my clothes and steed, And I will go there to see if I might be successful!” “By God,” said the franklin, “It will be done! I will myself be the man to take off your shoes And lead you to the place, Jesus Christ help you, And don’t worry about your clothes or your fine steed!” Gamelyn came in barefoot and unarmed. All that were in the place took notice of him, How he dared to risk himself to show his might, Against so rugged a champion in wrestling and in fighting. At once the champion started up in haste And came toward young Gamelyn, And said, “Who is your father and who is your lord? For certainly, you are a great fool to come here!” Gamelyn answered the challenger, “You knew my father well while he was still about, While he was alive, by Saint Martin! Sir John of Boundes was his name, and I am Gamelyn.” “Fellow,” said the champion, “as I live and breathe, I knew your father well while he was alive! And as for you, Gamelyn, I’d like you to hear it; When you were a young boy you were a little rogue.”</p>
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¹⁷ *Ten pound*: About US\$5500 in modern money, a large sum for the non-aristocratic franklin (UK National Archives).

<p>240</p> <p>260</p>	<p>Than seide Gamelyn and swore by Cristes ore, “Now I am older wexe thou shalt finde me a more!” “By God!” seide the champion “welcome mote thou be! Come thow onys in myn honde thou shalt nevere the.” It was wel within the nyght and the mone shone, Whan Gamelyn and the champioun togider gon gone. The champion cast turnes to Gamelyne that was prest, And Gamelyn stode and bad hym doon his best. Than seide Gamelyn to the champioun, “Thowe art fast aboute to bringe me adoun; Now I have proved mony tornes of thine, Thow most,” he seide, “oon or two of myne.” Gamelyn to the champioun yede smertely anon, Of all the turnes that he couthe he shewed him but oon, And cast him on the lift side that thre ribbes to-brake, And therto his owne arme that yaf a grete crake. Than seide Gamelyn smertly anon, “Shal it bi hold for a cast or ellis for non?” “By God!” seide the champion, “whedere it be, He that cometh ones in thi honde shal he nevere the!” Than seide the frankeleyn that had the sones there, “Blessed be thou, Gamelyn, that ever thou bore were!” The frankleyn seide to the champioun on hym stode hym noon eye, “This is yonge Gamelyne that taught the this pleye.” Agein answerd the champioun that liketh no thing wel, “He is alther maister and his pley is right felle; Sithen I wrasteled first it is goon yore, But I was nevere in my lif handeled so sore.” Gamelyn stode in the place anon without serk, And seide, “Yif ther be moo lat hem come to werk; The champion that pyned him to worch sore, It semeth by his countenance that he wil no more.” Gamelyn in the place stode stille as stone,</p>	<p>Then Gamelyn said, and swore by Christ’s grace, “Now that I have grown older you will find me a bigger one.” “By God,” said the champion, “you’re welcome to try. Fall into my hands once and you will never last.” It was well into the night and the moon shone When Gamelyn and the champion fell together. The fighter tried feints on Gamelyn, who was ready, And Gamelyn stood and told him to give it his best. Then Gamelyn said to the champion, “You are eager to bring me down. Now that I’ve withstood many of your turns, You must,” he concluded, “stand one or two of mine!” At once Gamelyn rushed smartly up to the champion. Of all the plays he knew, he showed him only one And threw him on his left side so that three ribs broke, And his arm gave out a great crack. Straightaway, Gamelyn jibed sharply, “Shall it be counted as a throw, or else for nothing?” “By God!” said the champion. “Whoever it is, He who falls once into your hands will never last!” Then the franklin, who had his sons there, said “Blessed be you, Gamelyn, that you were ever born!” The franklin said to the champion, no longer with fear,¹⁸ “This is young Gamelyn who taught you these moves.” The champion, who was very displeased, answered again: “He is the master in every way and his play is very harsh. It has been a long time since I first wrestled, But never in my life have I been handled so roughly.” Gamelyn stood in that place without a shirt And said, “If there are more, let them come to play! The champion was so anxious to work me over— It seems by his appearance that he doesn’t want any more.” Gamelyn stood in the place as still as a stone</p>
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¹⁸ *On hym stode hym noon eye*: *Eye* does not refer to vision here but to *awe*: “he no longer stood in awe of him.”

<p>270</p> <p>280</p>	<p>For to abide wrastelinge but ther come none; Ther was noon with Gamelyn that wold wrastel more, For he handeled the champioun so wonderly sore. Two gentile men that yemed the place, Come to Gamelyn -- God yeve him goode grace! -- And seide to him, "Do on thi hosen and thi shoon, For soth at this tyme this fare is doon." And than seide Gamelyn, "So mot I wel fare, I have not yete halvendele sold my ware." Thoo seide the champioun, "So broke I my swere, He is a fool that therof bieth thou selleth it so dere." Tho seide the frankeleyne that was in moche care, "felawe," he saide "whi lackest thou this ware? By seynt Jame of Gales that mony man hath sought, Yit is it to good chepe that thou hast bought." Thoo that wardeynes were of that wrastelinge Come and brought Gamelyn the ramme and the ryng, And Gamelyn bithought him it was a faire thinge, And wente with moche joye home in the mornynge. His brother see wher he came with the grete route, And bad shitt the gate and holde hym withoute. The porter of his lord was soor agaast, And stert anoon to the gate and lokked it fast.</p> <p>Fitt 3</p> <p>Now lithenes and listneth both yonge and olde, And ye schul here gamen of Gamelyn the bolde.</p>	<p>To bear more wrestling, but none came up. There was no one who would wrestle with Gamelyn, For he handled the champion with such amazing ferocity. Two gentlemen who ran the place Approached Gamelyn. God give them good grace! They said to him, "Put on your hose and shoes, For truly, at this moment the games are finished." Then Gamelyn said, "As I live and breathe, I have not yet sold off half my wares!"¹⁹ The champion answered, "By the hairs on my head,²⁰ He is a fool who buys what you sell at such a high price!" The franklin, who had faced such troubles, answered, "Fellow," he said, "why are you finding fault with the sale? By Saint James of Spain, whom many men have sought,²¹ What you have bought has been too good a deal!" Then the umpires of the wrestling match Came and awarded Gamelyn the ram and the ring, And Gamelyn thought it was a fair sight And went home in the morning with great joy. His brother saw him coming with a large company And ordered the gate shut to hold him out. The porter was sorely afraid of his lord And ran at once to the gate and locked it fast.</p> <p>Part 3</p> <p>Now pay attention and listen, both young and old, And you will hear the adventures of Gamelyn the bold.</p>
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¹⁹ Reminiscent of a medieval *flyting* (or possibly American rap music competitions), *Gamelyn* has many scenes of witty, stylized insults. The analogy is that Gamelyn is a merchant who is selling his goods (wrestling moves). The challenger gripes that he has paid too much for the 'merchandise.'

²⁰ *So broke I my swere*: 'As I have use of my neck.' A mild expletive with the sense of "As I live and breathe," or "While there's a head on my shoulders."

²¹ The shrine of Saint James is at Santiago di Compostella in Galicia, the destination of the pilgrims at the beginning of *Floris and Blancheflor*. The exact same line appears in "De Simonie" (475) in Auchinleck. Line 760 is also a repeat. Skeat, xii-iii.

<p>290</p> <p>300</p> <p>310</p> <p>320</p>	<p>Gamelyn come to the gate forto have come inne, And it was shette faste with a stronge pynne; Than seide Gamelyn, "Porter, undo the yate, For good menys sones stonden ther ate." Than answerd the porter and swore by Goddys berd, "Thow ne shalt, Gamelyne, come into this yerde." "Thow lixt," seide Gamelyne "so broke I my chyne!" He smote the wikett with his foote and breke awaie the pyne. The porter seie thoo it myght no better be, He sette foote on erth and bygan to flee. "By my feye," seide Gamelyn "that travaile is ylore, For I am of fote as light as thou if thou haddest it swore." Gamelyn overtoke the porter and his tene wrake, And girt him in the nek that the boon to-brake, And toke hym by that oon arme and threwe hym in a welle, Seven fadme it was depe as I have herde telle. Whan Gamelyn the yonge thus had plaied his playe, Alle that in the yerde were drowen hem awaye; Thei dredden him ful sore for werk that he wrought, And for the faire company that he thider brought. Gamelyn yede to the gate and lete it up wide; He lete inne alle that gone wolde or ride, And seide, "Ye be welcome without eny greve, For we wil be maisters here and axe no man leve. Yusterday I lefte," seide yonge Gamelyne, "In my brothers seler fyve tonne of wyne; I wil not this company partyn atwynne, And ye wil done after me while sope is therinne; And if my brother gruche or make foule chere, Either for spence of mete and drink that we spende here, I am oure catour and bere oure alther purs, He shal have for his grucchinge Seint Maries curs. My brother is a nigon, I swere be Cristes oore, And we wil spende largely that he hath spared yore; And who that make grucchinge that we here dwelle, He shal to the porter into the drowe-welle." Seven daies and seven nyghtes Gamelyn helde his feest,</p>	<p>Gamelyn came to the gate in order to come in, And it was shut fast with a strong pin. Gamelyn responded, "Porter, undo the gate, For good men's sons are standing by waiting." The porter answered and swore by God's beard, "Gamelyn, you will not come into this yard!" Gamelyn said, "By the hairs on my face, you're a liar!" He kicked the wicket with his foot and broke off the pin. The porter saw then there was nothing to do And took to his feet and began to flee. "By my faith," said Gamelyn, "that was a wasted effort, For I am as light of foot as you, even if you'd sworn the opposite." Gamelyn overtook the porter and avenged his anger, And struck him in the neck so that the bone broke, And took him by one arm and threw him in a well. It was seven fathoms deep, as I've heard told. When Gamelyn the youngster had done his work, Everyone who was in the yard drew away from him. They dreaded him sorely for what he had done, And for the fair company that he had brought there. Gamelyn sauntered to the gate and opened it wide. He let in all that were walking or riding, And said, "You are welcome here without any grievance, For we will be masters here and ask no man's permission. Yesterday I left," young Gamelyn continued, "Five barrels of wine in my brother's cellar. I will not let this company part from each other, If you do as I say, while there is still a mouthful left. And if my brother grouches or makes a sour face About the expense of food or drink that we consume here, I am our host and carry the purse for it all, And he will have Saint Mary's curse for his griping. My brother is a stingy miser, I swear by Christ's grace, And we will enjoy in full what he has hoarded before. And whoever complains that we are staying here Will follow the porter into the drawing well." Gamelyn held his feast for seven days and seven nights.</p>
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<p>330</p> <p>340</p> <p>350</p>	<p>With moche solace was ther noon cheest; In a litel torret his brother lay steke, And see hem waast his good and dorst no worde speke. Erly on a mornynge on the eight day, The gestes come to Gamelyn and wolde gone her way. “Lordes,” seide Gamelyn, “will ye so hie? Al the wyne is not yit dronke so brouke I myn ye.” Gamelyn in his herte was ful woo, Whan his gestes toke her leve fro hym for to go; He wolde thei had dwelled lenger and thei seide nay, But bytaught Gamelyn, “God and good day.” Thus made Gamelyn his feest and brought wel to ende, And after his gestes toke leve to wende.</p> <p>Fitt 4</p> <p>Lithen and listen and holde your tunge, And ye shal here game of Gamelyn the yonge; Harkeneth, lordingges and listeneth aright, Whan alle gestis were goon how Gamelyn was dight. Alle the while that Gamelyn heeld his mangerye, His brothere thought on hym be wroke with his trecherye. Whan Gamylyns gestes were riden and goon, Gamelyn stood anon allone frend had he noon; Tho aftere felle sone within a litel stounde, Gamelyn was taken and ful hard ybounde. Forth come the fals knyght out of the solere, To Gamelyn his brother he yede ful nere, And saide to Gamelyn, “Who made the so bold For to stroien the stoor of myn household?” “Brother,” seide Gamelyn, “wreth the right nought, For it is many day gon sith it was bought;</p>	<p>No quarreling troubled the great merriment. His brother hid lying in a little turret And watched them squander his goods and dared not speak out. Early in the morning on the eighth day, The guests came to Gamelyn and wished to leave. “Gentlemen,” said Gamelyn, “must you rush off so? If my eyes can still see, all the wine isn’t drunk yet.” Gamelyn was heavy at heart When his guests took their leave to go home. He wished they would stay longer but they said no, Only telling Gamelyn, “Goodbye and God be with you!” Thus Gamelyn had his feast and brought it to a good end After his guests made their goodbyes and left.</p> <p>Part 4</p> <p>Pay attention and listen, and hold your tongue, And you will hear the adventures of Gamelyn the youngster. Hear me, lordings, and listen closely To hear how Gamelyn was treated when his guests were gone. All the while that Gamelyn held his festivities, His brother schemed treacherously how to be avenged. When Gamelyn’s guests had left and ridden away, He suddenly stood alone, without one friend. In one cruel moment within a short time, Gamelyn was seized and bound up tightly. The false knight came forth out of the study²² And went up close to his brother Gamelyn And said, “Who made you so bold To waste the supplies of my household?” “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “you have no right to be angry, For it is many days since it was paid for.</p>
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²² *Solere*: A medieval *solar* often had sunshine for reading but etymologizes to French *seule*, alone. It was a separate room for privacy which would become in Victorian times a *drawing room* or *parlor*. Here it is evidently separate from the main house, in a *turret* (327).

<p>360</p> <p>370</p> <p>380</p>	<p>For, brother, thou hast had by Seint Richere, Of fiftene plowes of londe this sixtene yere, And of alle the beestes thou hast forth bredde, That my fader me byquath on his dethes bedde; Of al this sixtene yere I yeve the the prowte, For the mete and the drink that we han spende nowe.” Than seide the fals knyght (evel mote he thee!) “Harken, brothere Gamelyn what I wil yeve the; For of my body, brother here geten have I none, I wil make the myn here I swere by Seint John.” “Par fay!” seide Gamelyn “and if it so be, And thou think as thou seist God yeelde it the!” Nothinge wiste Gamelyn of his brother gile; Therefore he hym bygiled in a litel while. “Gamelyn,” seyde he, “oon thing I the telle; Thoo thou threwe my porter in the drowe-welle, I swore in that wrethe and in that grete moote, That thou shuldest be bounde bothe honde and fote; This most be fulfilled my men to dote, For to holden myn avowe as I the bihote.” “Brother,” seide Gamelyn, “as mote I thee! Thou shalt not be forswore for the love of me.” Tho maden thei Gamelyn to sitte and not stonde, To thei had hym bounde both fote and honde. The fals knyght his brother of Gamelyn was agast, And sente efter fetters to fetter hym fast. His brother made lesingges on him ther he stode, And tolde hem that commen inne that Gamelyn was wode. Gamelyn stode to a post bounden in the halle, Thoo that commen inne loked on hym alle. Ever stode Gamelyn even upright!</p>	<p>For brother, by Saint Richard, you have had Fifteen plows of land these sixteen years, And you have bred all the animals That my father left me on his deathbed. For the food and drink that we have spent now, In all these sixteen years I have given you the profit.” Then the false knight answered—may he have foul fortune— “Pay attention, brother Gamelyn, to what I will give you. Because I have no children of my own body, Gamelyn, I will make you my heir, I swear by Saint John. “By my faith!” said Gamelyn. “If it be so, And you do as you say, God reward you for it!” Gamelyn knew nothing of his brother’s guile; Therefore he tricked him in a short while. “Gamelyn,” he said, “one thing I must tell you. When you threw my porter in the well, I swore in my rage and among those assembled, That you should be tied both hand and foot. This must be done in form to satisfy my men, In order to hold my vow as I promised you.”²³ “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “as I live and die, You will not be made a liar for my sake.” Then they made Gamelyn to lie down and not stand, Until they had him bound both hand and foot. His brother the false knight was afraid of Gamelyn And sent for fetters to shackle him fast. His brother made up lies about him where he stood And told those who came in that Gamelyn was mad. Gamelyn stood chained to a post in the hall. All those who came in looked at him. Gamelyn stood upright without end!</p>
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²³ John is claiming that he promised to bind Gamelyn in front of his men and must now do so perfunctorily to avoid appearing a liar. Although Gamelyn’s naivety seems ridiculous, Skeat comments that it was not unusual for the terms of an oath to be literally fulfilled, using the example of the ‘pound of flesh’ codicil in Shylock’s contract to Antonio in *The Merchant of Venice*. In novelized versions of *Gamelyn* the brother simply ambushes him in his sleep (Skeat, 42).

<p>390</p> <p>400</p> <p>410</p>	<p>But mete and drink had he noon neither day ne nyght. Than seide Gamelyn, “Brother, be myn hals, Now have I aspied thou art a party fals; Had I wist the tresoun that thou hast yfounde, I wold have yeve strokes or I had be bounde!” Gamelyn stode bounde stille as eny stone; Two daies and two nyghtes mete had he none. Than seide Gamelyn that stood ybounde stronge, “Adam Spencere me thenketh I faste to longe; Adam Spencere now I biseche the, For the moche love my fadere loved the, If thou may come to the keys lese me out of bonde, And I wil part with the of my free londe.” Than seide Adam that was the spencere, “I have served thi brother this sixtene yere, Yif I lete the gone out of his boure, He wold saye afterwarde I were a traitour.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “so brouke I myn hals! Thow schalt finde my brother at the last fals; Therefore brother Adam lose me out of bondes, And I wil parte with the of my free londes.” “Up such forward,” seide Adam, “ywis, I wil do therto al that in me is.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn “as mote I the, I wil holde the covenaut and thou wil me.” Anoon as Adams lord to bed was goon, Adam toke the kayes and lete Gamelyn out anoon; He unlocked Gamelyn both hondes and fete, In hope of avauncement that he hym byhete. Than seide Gamelyn, “Thonked be Goddis sonde! Nowe I am lose both fote and honde; Had I nowe eten and dronken aright,</p>	<p>But he had no food or drink neither by day nor night. Then Gamelyn said, “Brother, by my own neck, Now I see that you are a false dealer. If I had known about the treason you planned, I would have beaten you before I was bound!” Gamelyn stood tied as still as any stone. For two days and two nights he had no food. Then Gamelyn, who stood tightly bound, said, “Adam Spencer, I think I’ve fasted long enough!²⁴ Adam Spencer, now I beg of you, For the great love my father showed you, If you go to the keys and release me from my bonds, I will divide up my free land with you.” Adam, who was the master of provisions, answered, “I have served your brother these sixteen years. If I let you go out of his chamber, He would say afterward that I am a traitor.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “by the nose on my face, You will find my brother false in the end. And so, brother Adam, free me from my chains, And I will share with you from my free lands.” “On those terms,” Adam answered, “certainly, I will do all that is in my power.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “as I have breath in my body, I will hold the agreement if you do the same with me.” As soon as Adam’s lord was gone to bed, Adam took the keys and immediately freed Gamelyn. He unlocked both Gamelyn’s hands and feet In hope of the advancement he was promised. Then Gamelyn said, “Thanks be to God’s providence! Now I am free in both hand and foot. If I could eat and drink my fill now,</p>
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²⁴ *Adam Spencere*: *Spencer* is here both a name and occupation; a spence was a room where provisions and wine were kept (Skeat, 42). There may also be a connection to another literary outlaw of the period, Adam Bell.

<p>420</p> <p>430</p> <p>440</p>	<p>Ther is noon in this hous shuld bynde me this nyght.” Adam toke Gamelyn as stille as eny stone, And ladde him into the spence raply anon, And sette him to soper right in a privey styde, He bad him do gladly and so he dide. Anoon as Gamelyn had eten wel and fyne, And therto y-dronken wel of the rede wyne, “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “what is nowe thi rede? Or I go to my brother and gerd of his heed?” “Gamelyn,” seide Adam, “it shal not be so. I can teche the a rede that is worth the twoo. I wote wel for soth that this is no nay, We shul have a mangerye right on Sondag; Abbotes and priours mony here shul be, And other men of holy chirch as I telle the; Thou shal stonde up by the post as thou were bounde fast, And I shal leve hem unloke that away thou may hem cast. Whan that thei han eten and wasshen her handes, Thow shalt biseche hem alle to bringe the oute of bondes; And if thei willen borowe the that were good game, Than were thou out of prisoun and out of blame; And if ecche of hem saye to us nay, I shal do another I swere by this day! Thow shalt have a good staf and I wil have another, And Cristes curs haf that on that failleth that other!” “Ye for God,” seide Gamelyn “I say it for me, If I faille on my side evel mot I thee! If we shul algate assoile hem of her synne, Warne me, brother Adam, whan we shul bygynne.” “Gamelyn,” seid Adam, “by Seinte Charité,</p>	<p>There is no one in this house who could bind me this night!” Adam took Gamelyn as quietly as any stone And hurriedly led him into the pantry, And gave him his supper in a private place. He gladly encouraged him to eat and so he did. After Gamelyn had eaten finely and fully, And had drunk the red wine deeply, “Adam,” he said, “what is your advice now? Shall I go to my brother and hack off his head?” “Gamelyn,” replied Adam, “it will not do. I can show you a plan that’s worth two of yours. I know for a fact that this is no lie, We will have a banquet on this Sunday. There will be many abbots and priors here, And other high men of the holy church, I tell you. You will stand up on the post as if you were chained fast, And I will leave them unlocked so that you can cast them off. When they have eaten and washed their hands, You will plead with them all to bring you out of bondage. And if they pledged your release that would be best.²⁵ Then you would be out of prison and free of blame. And if each of them says ‘no’ to us, I’ll take another course, I swear by this day. You will have a good staff and I will have another And Christ’s curse fall on him who fails the other!” “Yes, by God!” said Gamelyn. “I say for myself, If I fail on my part, foul fortune to me. If we are to absolve them of their sins, Warn me, brother Adam, when we are to begin.” “Gamelyn,” said Adam, “by Saint Charity,²⁶</p>
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²⁵ *Borowe*: As with *Amis and Amiloun* (870), a friend or interest could secure a prisoner’s release, either by literally taking the risk of punishment on themselves if they abscond (as Gamelyn’s brother Otis does later), or by being in a position of authority or trust to vouch for them. The practice later evolved into the modern bail system. Here Adam is hoping that the clerics will simply feel sorry for Gamelyn and clamor for his release.

<p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p>	<p>I wil warne the biforn whan it shal be; Whan I winke on the loke for to gone, And caste away thi fetters and come to me anone.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “blessed be thi bonys! That is a good counseill yeven for the nonys; Yif thei warne the me to bringe out of bendes, I wil sette good strokes right on her lendes.” Whan the Sunday was comen and folk to the feest, Faire thei were welcomed both leest and mest; And ever as thei at the haldore come inne, They casten her yen on yonge Gamelyn. The fals knyght his brother ful of trecherye, Al the gestes that ther were at the mangerye, Of Gamelyn his brother he tolde hem with mouthe Al the harme and the shame that he telle couthe. Whan they were yserved of messes two or thre, Than seide Gamelyn, “How serve ye me? It is not wel served by God that alle made! That I sitte fastinge and other men make glade.” The fals knyght his brother ther as he stode, Told to all the gestes that Gamelyn was wode; And Gamelyn stode stille and answerde nought, But Adames wordes he helde in his thought. Thoo Gamelyn gan speke doolfully withalle To the grete lordes that seton in the halle: “Lordes,” he seide “for Cristes passioun, Helpe to bringe Gamelyn out of prisoun.” Than seide an abbot, sorowe on his cheke, “He shal have Cristes curs and Seinte Maries eke, That the out of prison beggeth or borowe, And ever worth him wel that doth the moche sorowe.” After that abbot than speke another,</p>	<p>I will warn you when it shall be. When I wink at you, be ready to move And cast off your fetters and come to me at once.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “bless your bones! That is good advice you’ve given for this occasion. If they forbid you to release me from bondage, I will give them a good beating on their sides.” When Sunday arrived and people came to the feast, Both high and low were welcomed graciously. And as they all came through the hall door, They cast their eyes on young Gamelyn. His brother, the false knight, full of treachery, Told all the guests who were there at the banquet About his brother Gamelyn, making a show of telling them About all the harm and the shame that he could speak of. When they had been served two or three courses, Then Gamelyn cried, “How am I taken care of? It is not good service to God, who made all, That I sit fasting while other men make merriment.” As he stood there, his brother the false knight Told all the guests that Gamelyn was mad, And Gamelyn stood still and did not answer. But he held Adam’s words in his thoughts. Then Gamelyn made a mournful address To all the great lords that sat in the hall. “Lordings,” he said, “for the sake of Christ’s passion, Help to bring Gamelyn out of prison.” An abbot said, with a dour face, “He will have Christ’s curse and Saint Mary’s also Who pleads or pledges to have you out of prison, And good fortune to him who does you more correction.” After that abbot another spoke:</p>
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²⁶ *Seinte Charité*: This may be the Charity martyred as a girl along with her sisters Faith and Hope under Hadrian in AD 137. Sometimes the choice of saint is meaningful and at other times is likely only there to form the rhyme. See the note to *Amis and Amiloun*, 785.

480	<p>“I wold thine hede were of though thou were my brother! Alle that the borowe foule mot hem falle!” Thus thei seiden alle that were in the halle. Than seide a priour, evel mote he threve! “It is grete sorwe and care boy that thou art alyve.” “Ow!” seide Gamelyn, “so brouke I my bone! Now have I spied that frendes have I none Cursed mote he worth both flesshe and blood, That ever doth priour or abbot eny good!” Adam the spencere took up the clothe,</p>	<p>“I wish your head were off even if you were my brother. May evil befall all who secure your release!” So said all who were in the hall. Then a prior spoke—may he fare foully!— “It is great sorrow and pity, boy, that you are still alive.” “Oh!” said Gamelyn, “So much for my plea! Now I have seen that I have no friends. May the man be cursed, in both flesh and blood, Who ever does a prior or abbot any good!” Adam the spencer lifted up the curtain, And looked at Gamelyn and saw that he was angry. Adam thought little of the kitchen And brought two firm poles to the hall door. Adam winked at Gamelyn, and he was aware at once And cast away the fetters and began to move. When he came to Adam, he took one staff And got down to work and gave strong blows. Gamelyn came into the hall and the spencer as well And they looked about in their fury. Gamelyn sprinkled holy water with an oak rod²⁷ So that some standing upright fell into the fire. There was no low man who stood in the hall Who wanted to do Gamelyn anything but good. They stood aside and let both of them work, For they had no sympathy for men of the holy church. Abbot or prior, monk or canon, All that Gamelyn overtook he knocked down at once. There were none of them who met with his staff That he did not throw down to repay them their reward. “Gamelyn,” said Adam, “For Saint Charity,</p>
490	<p>And loked on Gamelyn and segh that he was wrothe; Adam on the pantry litel he thought, And two good staves to the halle door he brought, Adam loked on Gamelyn and he was warre anoon, And cast away the fetters and bygan to goon; Whan he come to Adam he took that on staf, And bygan to worch and good strokes yaf. Gamelyn come into the halle and the spencer bothe, And loked hem aboute as thei hadden be wrothe; Gamelyn spreth holy watere with an oken spire,</p>	
500	<p>That some that stode upright felle in the fire. Ther was no lewe man that in the halle stode, That wolde do Gamelyn enything but goode, But stoden bisides and lete hem both wirche, For thei had no rewthe of men of holy chirche; Abbot or priour, monk or chanoun, That Gamelyn overtoke anoon they yeden doun Ther was noon of alle that with his staf mette, That he ne made hem overthrowe to quyte hem his dette. “Gamelyn,” seide Adam, “for Seinte Charité,</p>	

²⁷ A series of blasphemous jokes follows which would have been enjoyed by the audience, where Gamelyn ‘ordains’ and ‘absolves’ the clerics with physical violence, making fun of the original church rituals. Here he ‘blesses’ the clerics with holy water by striking them with his staff. The churchmen here are mostly high-ranking and not Chaucer’s humble parsons. Skeat points out that much anticlerical sentiment in medieval literature was caused by the Normans stacking the church leadership with their own men (43-4).

510	<p>Pay good lyveré for the love of me, And I wil kepe the door so ever here I masse! Er they bene assoilled ther shal non passe.” “Doute the not,” seide Gamelyn “whil we ben ifere, Kepe thow wel the door and I wil wirche here; Bystere the, good Adam, and lete none fle, And we shul telle largely how mony that ther be.” “Gamelyn,” seide Adam, “do hem but goode; Thei bene men of holy churche drowe of hem no blode Save wel the crownes and do hem no harmes,</p>	<p>Show no mercy for my sake, And I will guard the door, as sure as I hear mass! Until they have been ‘absolved,’ none shall pass.” “Fear not!” said Gamelyn, “While we’re together. Guard the door well and I will work here. Brace yourself, good Adam, and let no one flee, And we will count in full how many there are.” “Gamelyn,” said Adam, “Do them only good. As they are men of the holy church, draw no blood. Spare their tonsured heads and do them no harm,</p>
520	<p>But breke both her legges and sithen her armes.” Thus Gamelyn and Adam wroughte ryght faste, And pleide with the monkes and made hem agaste. Thidere thei come ridinge joly with swaynes, And home ayein thei were ladde in cartes and waynes. Tho thei hadden al ydo than seide a grey frere, “Allas! sire abbot what did we nowe here? Whan that we comen hidere it was a colde rede, Us had be bet at home with water and breed.” While Gamelyn made orders of monke and frere,</p>	<p>But break both their legs and then their arms.” Thus Gamelyn and Adam worked together tightly, And played with the monks and made them terrified. They had come to the feast riding merrily with servants, And homeward they were laid in carts and wagons. When they were done, a Franciscan said to a fellow,²⁸ “Alas, sir abbot! What are we doing here? It was cold advice for us to come here. We would have been better off at home with bread and water.” While Gamelyn ordained new orders of monks and friars,</p>
530	<p>Evere stood his brother and made foule chere; Gamelyn up with his staf that he wel knewe, And girt him in the nek that he overthrewe; A litel above the girdel the rigge-boon he barst; And sette him in the fetters theras he sat arst. “Sitte ther, brother,” seide Gamelyn, “For to colen thi body as I did myn.” As swith as thei had wroken hem on her foon, Thei asked water and wasshen anon, What some for her love and some for her awe,</p>	<p>His brother continually stood by and made a sour face. Gamelyn took his staff, which his hand knew well, And struck him in the neck, throwing him down, Breaking his backbone a little above the waist. He set him in the fetters where he himself sat earlier. “Have a seat there, brother,” said Gamelyn, “To cool down your body as I did mine.” As soon as they had avenged themselves on their foes, They straightaway asked for water and washed. All the servants waited on them in the best manner, Some out of love for them and some out of fear.</p>
540	<p>The sherreve was thennes but fyve myle, And alle was tolde him in a lytel while,</p>	<p>The sheriff was only five miles away, And in a little while he was told everything,</p>

²⁸ *Grey frere*: The poet may simply mean an aged friar but probably refers to the Franciscans, who were known in England for wearing grey habits.

	<p>Howe Gamelyn and Adam had ydo a sorye rees, Boundon and wounded men ayeinst the kingges pees; Tho bygan sone strif for to wake, And the shereff about Gamelyn forto take.</p> <p>Fitt 5</p> <p>Now lithen and listen so God geve you good fyne! And ye shul here good game of yonge Gamelyne. 550 Four and twenty yonge men that helde hem ful bolde, Come to the shiref and seide that thei wolde Gamelyn and Adam fette by her fay; The sheref gave hem leve soth for to say; Thei hiden fast wold thei not lynne, To thei come to the gate there Gamelyn was inne. They knocked on the gate the porter was nyghe, And loked out atte an hool as man that was scleghe. The porter hadde bihold hem a litel while, He loved wel Gamelyn and was dradde of gyle, And lete the wikett stonde ful stille, 560 And asked hem without what was her wille. For all the grete company speke but oon, “Undo the gate, porter and lat us in goon.” Than seide the porter “So brouke I my chyn, Ye shul saie youre erand er ye come inne.” “Sey to Gamelyn and Adam if theire wil be, We wil speke with hem two wordes or thre.” “Felawe,” seide the porter “stonde ther stille, And I wil wende to Gamelyn to wete his wille.” Inne went the porter to Gamelyn anoon, 570 And saide, “Sir, I warne you here ben comen youre foon; The shireves men bene at the gate,</p>	<p>How Gamelyn and Adam had made a grievous assault Against the king’s peace, binding and wounding men. Then strife soon began to rage, And the sheriff came to arrest Gamelyn.</p> <p>Part 5</p> <p>Now pay attention and listen so God will give you a good end! And you will hear the adventures of young Gamelyn. Twenty-four young men, who considered themselves bold, Came to the sheriff and said that they would Seize Gamelyn and Adam, by their faith. To tell the truth, the sheriff gave them permission. They hastened quickly and did not delay Until they came to the gate where Gamelyn was inside. As they knocked on the wood the porter was near, And being a cautious man he peered out of a hole.²⁹ The porter looked at them for a little while. Gamelyn was dear to him and he was fearful of foul play, And so he left the small window fastened And asked those outside what they wanted. Only one spoke for all the great company, “Undo the gate, porter, and let us go in!” The porter answered, “By the hair on my chin, You will state your business before you come in.” “Tell Gamelyn and Adam, if they please, We will speak a few words with them!” “Fellow,” answered the porter, “stand there still, And I will go to Gamelyn to know his will.” The porter went in to Gamelyn at once And said, “Sir, I caution you that your foes have come. The sheriff’s men are at the gate</p>
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²⁹ *Scleghe*: *sly* did not always have a negative meaning in ME and could mean discreet or skillful. Here this second porter is simply cautious in his duties. See also *Bevis of Hampton* (579).

<p>580</p> <p>600</p>	<p>For to take you both ye shul not scape.” “Porter,” seide Gamelyn, “so mote I the! I wil allowe thi wordes when I my tyme se. Go ageyn to the gate and dwelle with hem a while, And thou shalt se right sone porter, a gile.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “hast the to goon; We han foo men mony and frendes never oon; It bene the shireves men that hider bene comen, Thei ben swore togidere that we shal be nomen.” “Gamelyn,” seide Adam, “hye the right blyve, And if I faile the this day evel mot I thrive! And we shul so welcome the shyreves men, That some of hem shal make her beddes in the fenne.” At a postern gate Gamelyn out went, And a good cartstaf in his hondes hent; Adam hent sone another grete staff For to helpen Gamelyne and good strokes yaf. Adam felled tweyn and Gamelyn thre, The other sette fete on erthe and bygan to flee. “What” seide Adam, “so evere here I masse! I have right good wyne drynk er ye passe!” “Nay, by God!” seide thei, “thi drink is not goode, It wolde make a mannys brayn to lyen on his hode.” Gamelyn stode stille and loked hym aboute, And seide “The shyref cometh with a grete route.” “Adam,” seyde Gamelyn “what bene now thi redes? Here cometh the sheref and wil have our hedes.” Adam seide to Gamelyn “My rede is now this, Abide we no lenger lest we fare amys: I rede we to wode gon er we be founde, Better is ther louse than in the toune bounde.” Adam toke by the honde yonge Gamelyn;</p>	<p>To take you both before you can escape.” “Porter,” said Gamelyn, “as I live and breathe, I will reward your warning when I see a good time. Go back to the gate and delay them a while, porter, And you will very soon see a trick.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “get ready to go. We have many men as enemies and not one friend. It’s the sheriff’s men who have come here. They are sworn together that we should be taken.” “Gamelyn,” answered Adam, “hasten quickly, And if I fail you this day may I fare evilly! And we will welcome the sheriff’s men in such a way That some of them will make their beds in the mud.” Gamelyn went out at the rear gate And seized a rugged cart shaft in his hand. Adam grabbed another great staff To help Gamelyn to give painful blows. Adam took down twenty and Gamelyn three. The other took to his feet and began to flee. “Where are you going?” said Adam. “As ever I hear mass, I have more fine wine for you to drink before you leave!” “No, by God,” they answered. “your drink is not good. It would make a man’s brain lie on its side.”³⁰ Gamelyn stood still and looked about him, And said, “The sheriff is coming with a large company. Adam,” said Gamelyn, “what is your advice now? Here comes the sheriff and he will have our heads.” Adam said to Gamelyn, “My counsel is this: We can stay no longer without coming to ruin. I advise that we go to the woods before we are found. Better to be free there than bound up in the town.” Adam took young Gamelyn’s hand,</p>
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³⁰ *A mannys brayn to lyen on his hode*: An idiom for a hangover (TEAMS). Here the joke is to compare the beatings to wine, and the sheriff’s men gripe that their heads hurt enough already from the ‘wine.’

<p>610</p> <p>630</p> <p>630</p>	<p>And every of hem dronk a draught of wyn, And after token her cours and wenten her way; Tho fonde the scherreve nyst but non aye. The shirrive light doune and went into halle, And fonde the lord fetred faste withalle. The shirreve unfetred hym right sone anoon, And sente aftere a leche to hele his rigge boon. Lat we now the fals knyght lye in hys care, And talke we of Gamelyn and of his fare. Gamelyn into the wode stalked stille, And Adam Spensere liked right ille; Adam swore to Gamelyn, "By Seint Richere, Now I see it is mery to be a spencere, Yit lever me were kayes to bere, Than walken in this wilde wode my clothes to tere." "Adam," seide Gamelyn, "dismay the right nought; Mony good mannys child in care is brought." As thei stode talkinge bothen in fere, Adam herd talking of men and right nyghe hem thei were. Tho Gamelyn under wode loked aright, Sevene score of yonge men he seye wel ydight; Alle satte at the mete compas aboute. "Adam," seide Gamelyn, "now have I no doute, Aftere bale cometh bote thorgh Goddis myght; Me think of mete and drynk I have a sight." Adam loked thoo under wode bough, And whan he segh mete was glad ynogh; For he hoped to God to have his dele, And he was sore alonged after a mele. As he seide that worde the mayster outlawe Saug Adam and Gamelyn under the wode shawe.</p>	<p>And each of them drank a draft of wine, And then planned their course and went their way. The sheriff found the nest but no eggs. He dismounted and went into the hall, And found the lord bound up tightly in fetters. The sheriff unchained him immediately And sent for a doctor to treat his backbone. For now we will let the false knight lie in his troubles, And talk about Gamelyn and how he fared. Gamelyn paced cautiously into the woods And Adam Spencer did not like it at all. Adam swore to Gamelyn, "By Saint Richard, Now I see it is a merry life to be a provisioner! I would rather carry keys Than walk in these wild woods and tear my clothes." "Adam," said Gamelyn, "don't be discouraged at all. Many a good man's child is reduced to sorrow." As the both of them stood talking together, Adam heard the talking of men who were close nearby. When Gamelyn looked closely about the forest, He saw seven score of well-armed young men. All sat in a circle around their dinner. "Adam," said Gamelyn, "now I have no doubt. Help comes after trouble through God's might. I think I have a sight of food and drink." Adam peered under a tree bough, And when he saw food he was glad enough, For he hoped to God to have a share As he was sorely longing for a meal. As Gamelyn said those words, the master outlaw³¹ Saw Adam and him under the forest cover.</p>
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³¹ *Mayster outlawe*: The 'master outlaw' is not named, although the obvious conclusion has been Robin Hood. In the seventeenth century ballad "Robin Hood and Will Scarlet" Robin Hood is Gamelyn's lost uncle. The popularity of Robin Hood folktales was attested by the early fifteenth century, but he is first named in literature only in *Piers Plowman* (B.V. 408). In early portrayals he is not noble (as in line 659) but a yeoman like the franklin.

<p>640</p> <p>650</p> <p>660</p> <p>670</p>	<p>“Yonge men,” seide the maistere “by the good Rode, I am ware of gestes God send us goode; Yond ben twoo yonge men wel ydight, And parenture ther ben mo whoso loked right. Ariseth up, yonge men and fette hem to me; It is good that we weten what men thei be.” Up ther sterten sevene from the dynere, And metten with Gamelyn and Adam Spencere. Whan thei were nyghe hem than seide that oon, “Yeeldeth up, yonge men your bowes and your floon.” Than seide Gamelyn that yong was of elde, “Moche sorwe mote thei have that to you hem yelde! I curs noon other but right mysilve; Thoo ye fette to you fyve than be ye twelve!” Whan they harde by his word that myght was in his arme, Ther was noon of hem that wolde do hym harme, But seide to Gamelyn myldely and stille, “Cometh afore our maister and seith to hym your wille.” “Yong men,” seide Gamelyn, “be your lewté, What man is youre maister that ye with be?” Alle thei answerd without lesing, “Our maister is crowned of outlawe king.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “go we in Cristes name; He may neither mete ne drink warne us for shame. If that he be hende and come of gentil blood, He wil yeve us mete and drink and do us som gode.” “By Seint Jame!” seide Adam, “what harme that I gete, I wil aventure me that I had mete.” Gamelyn and Adam went forth in fere, And thei grette the maister that thei fond there. Than seide the maister king of outlawes, “What seche ye, yonge men, under the wode shawes?” Gamelyn answerde the king with his croune, “He most nedes walk in feeld that may not in toune. Sire, we walk not here no harme to doo, But yif we mete a deer to shete therto, As men that bene hungry and mow no mete fynde,</p>	<p>“Fellows,” said the master, “by the holy Cross, I am aware of guests; may God send us good ones. Over there are two young men, well-armed, And perhaps whoever looked closer might see more. Rise up, lads, and bring them to me. It would be best to know what men they are.” Seven of them got up from their dinner And confronted Gamelyn and Adam Spencer. When they were close to them one said, “Turn over your bows and arrows, lads.” Gamelyn answered, who was young in years, “Great shame to anyone who yields them to you! I’d curse no one else but myself Even if you brought five more to make you twelve!” When they knew from his words that strength was in his arms, There were none of them who would do him harm, But they said to Gamelyn mildly and quietly, “Come to our master and tell him your will.” “Young man,” replied Gamelyn, “by your loyalty, Who is your master that you are with?” All of them answered without deceit, “Our master is crowned king of the outlaws.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “let’s go in Christ’s name. He won’t deny us food or drink out of shame. If he is gracious and comes from noble blood, He will give us meat and drink and do us some good.” “By Saint James!” said Adam. “whatever harm I get, I will risk it to have food.” Gamelyn and Adam went forth together, And they greeted the master that they met there. Then the master, the king of outlaws, spoke: “What are you searching for, lads, under the forest cover?” Gamelyn answered the king with his crown, “He must walk in the woods who can’t do so in town! Sir, we are out here not to do any harm But to shoot a deer if we meet up with one, Being men who are hungry and find no food,</p>
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<p>680</p> <p>690</p> <p>700</p>	<p>And bene harde bystad under wode lynde.” Of Gamelyns wordes the maister had reuthe, And seide, “Ye shul have ynow have God my truth!” He bad hem sitte down for to take rest; And bad hem ete and drink and that of the best. As they eten and dronken wel and fyne, Than seide on to another, “This is Gamelyne.” Tho was the maistere outlaw into counseile nome, And tolde howe it was Gamelyn that thider was come. Anon as he herd how it was byfalle, He made him maister under hym over hem alle. Withinne the thridde weke hym come tydinge, To the maistere outlawe that was her kinge, That he shuld come home his pees was made; And of that good tydinge he was ful glade. Thoo seide he to his yonge men soth forto telle, “Me bene comen tydinges I may no lenger dwelle.” Tho was Gamelyn anoon withoute taryinge, Made maister outlawe and crowned her kinge. Whan Gamelyn was crowned king of outlawes, And walked had a while under the wode shawes, The fals knyght his brother was sherif and sire, And lete his brother endite for hate and for ire. Thoo were his boond men sory and no thing glade, Whan Gamelyn her lord wolfeshede was made; And sente out of his men wher thei might hym fynde, For to go seke Gamelyne under the wode lynde, To telle hym tydinge the wynde was wente, And al his good reved and al his men shente. Whan thei had hym founden on knees thei hem setten, And adoune with here hodes and her lord gretten;</p>	<p>And are in hard straits out in the forest branches.” At hearing Gamelyn’s words the master felt pity, And said, “I vow to God you will have enough!” He invited them to sit down and take a rest, And had them eat and drink of their best. As they ate and drank sumptuously and in full, One said to the other, “This is Gamelyn.” Then the master outlaw was taken into their confidence And was told how Gamelyn had come there. As soon as he heard how things had happened, He made him second in command over them all. Within the third week, news came to him, To the master outlaw who was their king, That he should come home, as peace had been made. He was gladdened by that good news. Then he said to his young men, to tell the truth, “News has come to me that I need not stay longer!” Soon after then without delay, Gamelyn was made master outlaw and crowned their king. When Gamelyn was crowned king of outlawes, And had walked a while under the forest cover, His brother the false knight became sheriff and lord, And had his brother indicted, in hate and anger. His bonded tenants were sorry and had nothing to be glad of When a bounty was placed on Gamelyn, their lord.³² Some of his men were sent to where they might find him, To seek out Gamelyn in the cover of the woods, To tell him news of how the winds had changed And how his goods were robbed and his men mistreated. When they had found him, they set themselves on their knees And pulled down their hoods and greeted their lord:</p>
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³² *Wolfeshede*: This is not actually a bounty but meant that an outlaw’s head was worth no more than a wolf’s, and anyone could hunt him unless he surrendered. The modern equivalent would be ‘Wanted dead or alive.’ The pronouncement also means that Gamelyn’s lands are forfeit, a highly convenient situation for his brother. See Shannon, 460.

<p>710</p> <p>720</p> <p>730</p>	<p>“Sire, wreth you not for the good Rode, For we han brought you tyddyngges but thei be not gode. Now is thi brother sherreve and hath the bayly, And hath endited the and wolfesheed doth the crye.” “Allas!” seide Gamelyn, “that ever I was so sclak That I ne had broke his nek whan I his rigge brak! Goth, greteth wel myn husbondes and wif, I wil be at the nexte shyre have God my lif!” Gamelyn come redy to the nexte shire, And ther was his brother both lord and sire. Gamelyn boldely come into the mote halle, And putte adoun his hode amonge tho lordes alle; “God save you, lordinggs that here be! But broke bak sherreve evel mote thou thee! Whi hast thou don me that shame and vilenye, For to lat endite me and wolfeshede do me crye?” Thoo thoughte the fals knyght forto bene awreke, And lette Gamelyn most he no thinge speke; Might ther be no grace but Gamelyn atte last Was cast in prison and fettred faste. Gamelyn hath a brothere that highte Sir Ote, Als good an knyght and hende as might gon on foote. Anoon yede a massager to that good knyght And tolde him altogidere how Gamelyn was dight. Anoon whan Sire Ote herd howe Gamelyn was dight, He was right sory and no thing light, And lete sadel a stede and the way name, And to his tweyne bretheren right sone he came. “Sire,” seide Sire Ote to the sherreve thoo, “We bene but three bretheren shul we never be mo; And thou hast prisoned the best of us alle; Such another brother evel mote hym byfalle!” “Sire Ote,” seide the fals knyght, “lat be thi cors; By God, for thi wordes he shal fare the wors; To the kingges prisoun he is ynome, And ther he shal abide to the justice come.” “Par de!” seide Sir Ote, “better it shal be;</p>	<p>“Sir, for the holy Cross, do not be wrathful, For we have brought news but it is not good. Your brother is now sheriff and rules the county, And has indicted you and placed a bounty on your head.” “Allas!” cried Gamelyn, “That I was so slack To spare his neck when I broke his back! Go, greet well my bondsmen and their wives. I will be at the next shire meeting, God have my life!” Gamelyn came ready to the next gathering, And there was his brother, both lord and sire. Gamelyn boldly came into the meeting hall, And put down his hood among all the lords: “God save you, lordings who are here! But may you fare evilly, hunch-backed sheriff! Why have you done me that shame and villainy To indict me and put a bounty on me?” Then the false knight thought he would be avenged, And prevented Gamelyn from saying anything. There would be no grace, and in the end Gamelyn Was thrown into prison and chained tightly. Gamelyn had a brother who was named Sir Otis, As good a knight and courteous as anyone on foot. A messenger soon went to that noble knight And told him in full how Gamelyn was treated. As soon as Sir Otis heard how Gamelyn had fared, He was very sorry and in no way light-hearted. He had a steed saddled and took his way, And came right away to his two brothers. “Sir,” said Sir Otis to the sheriff, “We are but three brothers, and we will never be more. And you have imprisoned the best one of us. For such a brother as you, may evil befall him!” “Sir Otis,” said the false knight, “set aside your curse. By God, for your words he will fare all the worse. He has been taken to the king’s prison, And there he will wait until justice is done.” “By God!” said Sir Otis. “it will be amended.</p>
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740 I bid hym to maynprise that thou graunte me
 To the next sitting of delyveraunce,
 And lat than Gamelyn stonde to his chaunce.”
 “Brother, in such a forward I take him to the;
 And by thine fader soule that the bigate and me,
 But he be redy whan the justice sitte,
 Thou shalt bere the juggement for al thi grete witte.”
 “I graunte wel,” seide Sir Ote, “that it so be.
 Lat delyver him anoon and take hym to me.”
 Tho was Gamelyn delyvered to Sire Ote, his brother;
 750 And that nyght dwelled the oon with the other.
 On the morowe seide Gamelyn to Sire Ote the hende,
 “Brother,” he seide, “I mote forsoth from you wende
 To loke howe my yonge men leden her liff,
 Whedere thei lyven in joie or ellis in striff.”
 “By God” seyde Sire Ote, “that is a colde rede,
 Nowe I se that alle the carke schal fal on my hede;
 For whan the justice sitte and thou be not yfounde,
 I shal anoon be take and in thi stede ibounde.”
 “Brother,” seide Gamelyn, “dismay you nought,
 760 For by saint Jame in Gales that mony men hath sought,
 Yif that God almyghty holde my lif and witte,
 I wil be redy whan the justice sitte.”
 Than seide Sir Ote to Gamelyn, “God shilde the fro shame;
 Come whan thou seest tyme and bringe us out of blame.”

Fitt 6

Litheneth, and listeneth and holde you stille,
 And ye shul here how Gamelyn had al his wille.
 Gamelyn went under the wode-ris,
 And fonde ther pleying yenge men of pris.
 Tho was yonge Gamelyn right glad ynoughe,
 770 Whan he fonde his men under wode boughe.
 Gamelyn and his men talkeden in fere,
 And thei hadde good game her maister to here;
 His men tolde him of adventures that they had founde,

I demand his bail, that you secure him to me
 For the next sitting of the court,
 And then let Gamelyn stand the consequences.”
 “Brother, by such an agreement I commit him to you.
 But by your father’s soul that begot you and me,
 If he is not ready when the justices sit,
 You will bear the judgment, for all your great wit.”
 “I agree in full,” said Sir Otis, “that it be so.
 Have him released at once and bring him to me.”
 Then Gamelyn was released to Sir Otis, his brother,
 And that night the one stayed with the other.
 In the morning Gamelyn said to Sir Otis the gracious,
 “Brother,” he said, “I must leave you, in truth,
 To see how my young men are leading their lives,
 Whether they live in joy or else in strife.”
 “By God,” said Sir Otis, “that is cold advice.
 Now I see that all the sentence will fall on my head.
 For when the justices sit and you are not found,
 I will be taken at once and bound in your place.”
 “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “do not be disheartened,
 For by Saint James in Spain, who many men have sought,
 So long as God Almighty holds my life and wits,
 I will be ready when the justices sit.”
 Sir Otis replied to Gamelyn, “God shield you from shame.
 Come when you see the time and bring us out of blame.”

Part 6

Pay attention, and listen, and hold yourself still,
 And you will hear how Gamelyn had all his will.
 Gamelyn went under the forest branches,
 And found men of excellence playing there.
 Then young Gamelyn was cheered enough
 When he found his men under the wooden boughs.
 Gamelyn and his men talked together,
 And they had exciting things for their master to hear.
 His men told him of adventures they had found,

<p>780</p> <p>800</p> <p>810</p>	<p>And Gamelyn tolde hem agein howe he was fast bounde. While Gamelyn was outlawe had he no cors; There was no man that for him ferde the wors, But abbots and priours, monk and chanoun; On hem left he nought whan he myghte hem nome. While Gamelyn and his men made merthes ryve, The fals knyght his brother evel mot he thryve! For he was fast aboute both day and other, For to hiren the quest to hongen his brother. Gamelyn stode on a day and byheeld The wodes and the shawes and the wild feeld, He thoughte on his brothere how he hym byhette That he wolde be redy whan the justice sette; He thought wel he wold without delay, Come tofore the justice to kepen his day, And saide to his yonge men, “Dighteth you yare, For whan the justice sitte we most be there, For I am under borowe til that I come, And my brother for me to prison shal be nome.” “By Seint Jame!” seide his yonge men, “and thou rede therto, Ordeyn how it shal be and it shal be do.” While Gamelyn was comyng ther the justice satte, The fals knyght his brother forgate he not that, To hire the men of the quest to hangen his brother; Thoughe thei had not that oon thei wolde have that other Tho come Gamelyn from under the wode-ris, And brought with hym yonge men of pris “I see wel,” seide Gamelyn, “the justice is sette; Go afor, Adam, and loke how it spette.” Adam went into the halle and loked al aboute, He segh there stonde lordes grete and stoute, And Sir Ote his brother fetred ful fast; Thoo went Adam out of halle as he were agast. Adam seide to Gamelyn and to his felawes alle, “Sir Ote stont fetered in the mote halle.” “Yonge men,” seide Gamelyn, “this ye heeren alle: Sir Ote stont fetered in the mote halle.</p>	<p>And Gamelyn told them again how he was bound tightly. While Gamelyn was an outlaw he earned no curses; There was no man who fared the worse for him, Except for abbots and priors, monks and canons. On them, he left nothing when he could capture them. While Gamelyn and his men had great fun, His brother the false knight—may he have bad fortune!— Was out and about both day and night, To pay off the inquest in order to hang his brother. Gamelyn stood one day and beheld The woods and the groves and the wild field. He thought about his brother, how he promised Otis That he would be ready when the justices sit. He resolved that he would, without delay, Come before the justices to keep his day, And he said to his young men, “Get yourselves ready, For when the justices sit we must be there, For I am under a guarantor until I arrive, And my brother will be taken to prison for me.” “By Saint James,” said his young men, “if you counsel it, Give orders how it should be and it will be done.” While Gamelyn was traveling there the justices sat. His brother the false knight did not overlook anything To bribe the men of the inquest to hang his brother; If they did not have one, they would have the other. Gamelyn came from out of the forest cover And brought with him young men of distinction. “I see well,” said Gamelyn, “that the judge is sitting. Go before, Adam, and see what is happening.” Adam went into the hall and looked about. He saw lords standing there, great and well-built, And Sir Otis his brother fettered tightly. Adam went out of the hall as if he were in dread. Adam said to Gamelyn and to all his company, “Sir Otis stands chained in the meeting hall.” “Lads,” said Gamelyn, “hear you all this: Sir Otis stands fettered in the meeting hall.</p>
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<p>820</p> <p>830</p> <p>840</p>	<p>If God geve us grace well forto doo, He shal it abigge that it broughte thertho.” Than seide Adam that lockes had hore, “Cristes curs mote he have that hym bonde so sore! And thou wilt, Gamelyn, do after my rede, Ther is noon in the halle shal bere away his hede.” “Adam,” seide Gamelyn, “we wil not do soo, We wil slee the giltif and lat the other go. I wil into the halle and with the justice speke; Of hem that bene giltif I wil ben awreke. Lat no skape at the door take, yonge men, yeme; For I wil be justice this day domes to deme. God spede me this day at my newe werk! Adam, com with me for thou shalt be my clerk.” His men answereden hym and bad don his best, “And if thou to us have nede thou shalt finde us prest; We wil stonde with the while that we may dure; And but we worchen manly pay us none hure.” “Yonge men,” seid Gamelyn, “so mot I wel the! A trusty maister ye shal fynde me.” Right there the justice satte in the halle, Inne went Gamelyn amonges hem alle. Gamelyn lete unfetter his brother out of bende. Than seide Sire Ote his brother that was hende, “Thow haddest almost, Gamelyn, dwelled to longe, For the quest is out on me that I shulde honged.” “Brother,” seide Gamelyn, “so God yeve me good rest! This day shul thei be honged that ben on the quest; And the justice both that is the juge man, And the sherreve also thorgh hym it bigan. Than seide Gamelyn to the justise, “Now is thi power don, the most nedes rise;</p>	<p>If God gives us grace to do our best, He who brought things to this will pay for it.” Then Adam, with his locks of grey, said,³³ “Christ’s curse on him who bound him so sorely! If you will, Gamelyn, do according to my plan, There is no one in the hall who will bear away his head.” “Adam,” said Gamelyn, “we will not do so. We will slay the guilty and let the others go. I will march into the hall and speak with the justices. I will be avenged on those who are guilty. Let no one escape by the door, men, take heed! For I will be the judge this day to hand down verdicts. God give me success today in my new work! Adam, come with me, for you will be my clerk.” His men answered and encouraged him to do his best: “If you are in need of us, you will find us ready. We will stand with you while we can go on. If we don’t work like men, pay us no wages!” “Lads,” said Gamelyn, “as I live or die, You will find me a trustworthy master.” Right where the justices sat in the hall, In went Gamelyn among them all. Gamelyn had his brother released from his bonds. Then Sir Otis his brother graciously said, “Gamelyn, you had almost waited too long, For the verdict is out on me that I should hang.” “Brother,” said Gamelyn, “God rest my soul, This day those who are on the jury will be hanged, As well as the justices, both the judge And the sheriff, as this all began through him.” Then Gamelyn said to the judge, “Now your duties are finished and you must rise.</p>
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³³ *Lockes had hore*: This is the first indication of Adam’s age, and the suggestion of grey-haired wisdom explains Gamelyn’s usual willingness to follow his advice, excepting this situation.

<p>850</p> <p>860</p> <p>870</p>	<p>Thow hast yeven domes that bene evel dight, I will sitten in thi sete and dresen hem aright.” The justice satte stille and roos not anon; And Gamelyn cleved his chekebon; Gamelyn toke him in his armes and no more spake, But threwe hym over the barre and his arme brake. Dorst noon to Gamelyn seie but goode, Forfeerd of the company that without stooede. Gamelyn sette him down in the justise sete, And Sire Ote his brother by him and Adam at his fete. Whan Gamelyn was sette in the justise stede, Herken of a bourde that Gamelyn dede. He lete fetter the justise and his fals brother, And did hem com to the barre that on with that other. Whan Gamelyn had thus ydon had he no rest, Til he had enquired who was on his quest Forto demen his brother Sir Ote for to honge; Er he wist what thei were hym thought ful longe. But as sone as Gamelyn wist where thei were, He did hem everechon fetter in fere, And bringgen hem to the barre and setten in rewe; “By my feith!” seide the justise, “the sherrive is a shrewe!” Than seide Gamelyn to the justise, “Thou hast yove domes of the worst assise; And the twelve sesoures that weren on the quest, Thei shul be honged this day so have I good rest!” Than seide the sheref to yonge Gamelyn, “Lord, I crie thee mercie brother art thou myn.” “Therfor,” seide Gamelyn, “have thou Cristes curs, For and thow were maister I shuld have wors.” For to make shorte tale and not to longe, He ordeyned hym a quest of his men stronge;</p>	<p>You have given verdicts that were made in evil. I will sit in your chair and redress things rightly.” The justice sat still and would not rise, And Gamelyn split his cheekbone. Gamelyn took him in his arms and said no more, But threw him over the rail and broke his arm. No one dared say anything but good to Gamelyn, For dread of the company that stood outside. Gamelyn sat himself down in the judge’s seat, With Sir Otis his brother by him and Adam at his feet. When Gamelyn was set in the judge’s place, Listen to a jest that Gamelyn did! He chained up the judge and his false brother, And had them come to the bar, the one with the other. When Gamelyn had done this, he had no rest Until he had found out who was on the jury That had ordered his brother, Sir Otis, to hang. Until he knew who they were he deliberated a long time. But as soon as Gamelyn discovered where they were, He had each of them fettered together And brought them to the bar and set in a row.³⁴ “By my faith!” pleaded the judge, “the sheriff is a crook!” Then Gamelyn said to the judge, “You have given judgments from the foulest court. And as for the twelve jurors that were on the inquest, They will be hanged this day, before I can rest easily.” Then the sheriff pleaded to young Gamelyn, “Lord, I cry for mercy, for you are my brother.” “For that,” answered Gamelyn, “may you have Christ’s curse, For if you were my master I would have all the worse.” To make the story short and not prolong it, He appointed a jury from his strong men.</p>
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³⁴ Chaining men together in a row seems to be a special form of medieval humiliation. Gamelyn’s parody of the court is reminiscent of the *Summoner’s Tale*, where the squire proposes that twelve friars be forced to line up with their noses in cartwheel spokes to equally share a burst of flatulence.

<p>880</p> <p>890</p> <p>898</p>	<p>The justice and the shirreve both honged hie, To weyven with the ropes and the winde drye; And the twelve sisours (sorwe have that rekke!) Alle thei were honged fast by the nekke. Thus endeth the fals knyght with his trecherye, That ever had lad his lif in falsnesse and folye. He was honged by the nek and not by the purs, That was the mede that he had for his faders curs. Sire Ote was eldest and Gamelyn was yenge, Wenten to her frendes and passed to the kinge; Thei maden pees with the king of the best sise. The king loved wel Sir Ote and made hym justise. And after, the king made Gamelyn in est and in west, The cheef justice of his free forest; Alle his wight yonge men the king foryaf her gilt, And sithen in good office the king hath hem pilt, Thus wane Gamelyn his land and his lede, And wreke him on his enemyes and quytte hem her mede; And Sire Ote his brother made him his heire, And sithen wedded Gamelyn a wif good and faire; They lyved togidere the while that Crist wolde, And sithen was Gamelyn graven under molde. And so shull we alle may ther no man fle: God bring us to that joye that ever shal be!</p>	<p>The judge and the sheriff were both hanged high, To wave with the ropes and the dry wind. And as for the twelve jurors—curse anyone who cares! All of them were hung by the neck. Thus ended the false knight with his treachery, Who had led his entire life in deceit and perversity. He was hanged by the neck and not with a purse. That was the payment he had for his father’s curse! Sir Otis was now oldest and Gamelyn was young. They went to their friends and met with the king. They made peace with the king of the truest court. The king loved Sir Otis warmly and made him a justice. And afterward, the king appointed Gamelyn The chief justice of his free forest, from east to west. The king forgave the misdeeds of all his rugged young men, And later put them in good offices. In this way Gamelyn won back his land and his people, And had revenge on his enemies and gave them their reward. Sir Otis his brother made him his heir, And then Gamelyn married a wife who was good and fair.³⁵ They lived together for the time that Christ permitted them, And then Gamelyn was buried under the earth. And so we all shall go there; no man can flee it. May God bring us to the joy that will forever be!</p>
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³⁵ Skeat notes that, apart from saints, this is the only woman in the poem (xxxvii). Although there are romantic elements this is not a conventional love story but one of adventure. Rosalind is added as a love interest in the story’s later analogue in Thomas Lodge’s *Euphues’ Golden Legacy* (1558), which would in turn form the basis of Shakespeare’s *As You Like It*.

Gamelyn and Chaucer's Yeoman's Tale?

The *Tale of Gamelyn* defies easy categorization. It does not seem very 'romantic' in that it has no love story beyond an obligatory marriage at the end, and thus the tale has variously been categorized as ballad, as "popular epic,"¹ as a "Lady Meed" satire,² or as a sort of proto-outlaw romance. Skeat suggested that the story was Anglo-French in origin,³ but no clear sources or originals have been identified. The text survives in twenty-five early manuscripts, all ones of *The Canterbury Tales*.⁴ Scholars have generally surmised that Chaucer perhaps intended to rework the romance into one of his tales, and the text almost invariably follows the Cook's abortive segment. Skeat also notes that the line "by seynt Jame of Gales that mony man hath sought," repeated in *Gamelyn* twice (277 and 764), is identical to one in "Be Simonie" (475) in the Auchinleck manuscript, along with numerous other textual matches.⁵ If Chaucer did consult Auchinleck for *The Canterbury Tales*, one of its lost texts might well have been *Gamelyn*, although critics have generally placed the poem's composition as slightly later, around 1350.

Gamelyn survives in the early manuscripts of Corpus Christi 198, Petworth MS 7, and Harley MS 7334. Although not in Hengwrt or Ellesmere, both manuscripts have blank pages for its possible inclusion, and the scribe seems to have inserted the poem in

¹ TEAMS cites Francis Child's term. Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren, ed., "*The Tale of Gamelyn*: Introduction," in *The Tale of Gamelyn. Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/gamelyn.htm>

² Richard W. Kaeuper, "An Historian's Reading of the *Tale of Gamelyn*," *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983): 59.

³ Walter William Skeat, ed., *The Tale of Gamelyn: From the Harleian Ms. No. 7334* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1884), vii.

⁴ For a complete list see Franklin Rogers, "The *Tale of Gamelyn* and the Editing of *The Canterbury Tales*," *JEGP* 43 (1959): 49.

⁵ Skeat, xii-xiii.

Harley with uncertainty, perhaps also believing it noncanonical.⁶ What business *Gamelyn* has in Chaucer's manuscripts has provoked disagreement. Since the early conclusion that it was not Chaucerian the poem has been tarred as "spurious" and its study has largely been confined to situating its relation to the manuscripts and the *Cook's Tale*. The *Cook's Tale's* brevity and abrupt ending have produced two broad conjectures apart from the simple one that Chaucer considered it finished.⁷ The first is that the tale was cut out by others because of its 'scurrilous' content, or that quires were lost. Yet Scattergood notes that the *Miller's Tale* is hardly more uplifting but survives.⁸ The second sees the fragment as an authorial decision to abandon the tale and replace it with *Gamelyn*. The poem was perhaps found among Chaucer's papers,⁹ leading to such editorial uncertainty, although a few scholars posit that Hengwyr was written in his lifetime and that Chaucer possibly wavered over its inclusion,¹⁰ explaining the blank pages. Harley has "icy comencera le fable de Gamelyn" before the text. Might the future tense of the note imply the poem was not yet located or even written by its ailing author?

⁶ N.F. Blake, "Chaucer, Gamelyn and the Cook's Tale," in *The Medieval Book and a Modern Collector: Essays in Honour of Toshiyuki Takamiya*, ed. Takami Matsuda, Richard A. Linenthal, and John Scahill (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 87-98.

⁷ Jim Casey, "Unfinished Business: The Termination of Chaucer's *Cook's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 41:2 (2006): 191.

⁸ V.J. Scattergood, "Perkyn Revelour and the *Cook's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 19:1 (1984): 15. For the view that quires of the *Cook's Tale* were lost, see M.C. Seymour, "Of This Cokes Tale," *Chaucer Review* 24:3 (1990): 259.

⁹ See also J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Canterbury Tales in 1400," *PMLA* 50:1 (1935): 112 and John M. Bowers, "Chaucer's Canterbury Tales – Politically Corrected," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, ed. Thomas A. Prendergast and Barbara Kline (Columbus: Ohio State Press, 1999), 29. Bowers also conjectures that Chaucer passed away before he could work on *Gamelyn* (29).

¹⁰ Blake, 89. Mooney asserts that Hengwyr and Ellesmere were written by Adam Pinkhurst, who might have done so under authorial supervision. Linne R. Mooney, "Chaucer's Scribe," *Speculum* 81 (2006): 97-138. Stanley believes that Chaucer had other works "which reached the scribes before they were complete." E.G. Stanley, "Of This Cokes Tale Maked Chaucer Na Moore," *Poetica* 5 (1976): 36.

In several manuscripts *Gamelyn* ends with such scribal notes as “Here endeth the tale of the Coke,” and the poem has been read as the Cook’s continuation of or replacement for his tale. Chaucer lived in a litigious time and abrupt endings needed to be accounted for lest a confused buyer believe the book was incomplete.¹¹ BL Lansdowne 851 has a counterfeit link where “for schame of the harlotrie” (7) the Cook halts and segues into *Gamelyn*,¹² much as Chaucer the Pilgrim stops *Sir Thopas* when the Host protests and substitutes *Melibee*. Yet Skeat objects that rubricators and scribes were usually different people, and he laments “the stupidity of the botcher”¹³ who adds the title “The Cokes Tale of Gamelyn” in Harley 7334. Giving the precedent of Urry’s edition in 1721,¹⁴ Skeat argues that *Gamelyn* would better fit the Knight’s Yeoman, who otherwise receives no tale. Crawford claims that Skeat’s view prevails but follows precedent in giving the story to the Cook.¹⁵

A few critics such as Shippey do favor the Yeoman,¹⁶ but little more has been said beyond pointing out fairly surface correspondences. The assignment of *Gamelyn* in *The Canterbury Tales*, if Chaucer intended to use it at all, must necessarily be speculative. Yet I see its analysis as important in establishing Chaucer’s interest in and respect for the

¹¹ George Haven Putnam, *Books and Their Makers During the Middle Ages* (New York: Putnam, 1896), 259, quoted in J. S. P. Tatlock, “*The Canterbury Tales* in 1400,” *PMLA* 50:1 (1935): 110.

¹² John M. Bowers, ed., “Spurious Links,” in *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992).

¹³ Skeat, xiv.

¹⁴ John Urry, *The Poetical Works of Geoffrey Chaucer: The Miscellaneous Pieces*, Vol. VI (1721) (Edinburgh, 1782), 5.

¹⁵ Donna Crawford, “Revel and Youth in *The Cook’s Tale* and *The Tale of Gamelyn*,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 243:1 (2006): 35.

¹⁶ T. A. Shippey, “*The Tale of Gamelyn*: Class Warfare and the Embarrassments of Genre,” in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert Jane (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 79.

poem and for English romance generally. Rather than seeing the issue as one of manuscript paleology, I would like to focus on the text of *Gamelyn* and its correlations to the Yeoman's portrait in the *General Prologue*. In doing so, *Gamelyn*'s themes of rural life, legal conservatism, and bourgeois values seem more appropriate for the Yeoman rather than the Cook.

The *Cook's Tale* is set "in our citee" (l.4365), and "Roger of Ware" sets the story in a clearly urban milieu with its realistic references to shops, streets, and London placenames such as Cheapside and Newgate. Conversely, *Gamelyn* occupies a wholly rural setting with a corresponding lexicon; the sheriff finds "nyst but non aye" ("the nest but no eggs," 606). The poem's actors are country gentry and yeomen, men who might be minor knights or landowners "but whose horizons are essentially local."¹⁷ The countryside in the poem does not suggest a pastoral idyll but rather a violently masculine world of wrestling for rams, oaken staves, and broken bones. Yet the poet praises the values of its folk. The supposedly unrefined wrestling match with its commoner's prizes is a model of genteel speech, and even the insults obey the etiquette of a *flyting*. The Champion plays by the rules and concedes defeat by calling Gamelyn the "alther maister" (256)¹⁸ before "two gentile men" (267) award Gamelyn his prize.

Hoffman reads the poem as having a structural symmetry, and one of *Gamelyn*'s binaries consists of its urban/rural opposition.¹⁹ A medieval *forest* was not hostile

¹⁷ Kaeuper, 53.

¹⁸ Colleen Donnelly, "Aristocratic Veneer and the Substance of Verbal Bonds in *The Weddyng of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell* and *Gamelyn*," *Studies in Philology* 94:3 (1997): 338.

¹⁹ Dean A. Hoffman, "'After Bale Come Boote': Narrative Symmetry in the *Tale of Gamelyn*," *Studia Neophilologica* 60:2 (1988):163.

wilderness but the trees, pasture, and hamlets which lay outside urban limits and the reach of common law.²⁰ The poet's sympathies clearly rest with the farmers and outlaws of the countryside, who help those in need in contrast to the callous abbots and priors who hail from important places. The duality is emphasized in John's identification with the civic world. The manor functions more like an urban space with its gates and guards "on the model of a castle or walled city."²¹ In contrast, the forest in which Gamelyn takes refuge, "although ostensibly lawless, is marked by allegiance and generosity, whereas the supposedly civilized manor is acquired and maintained through duplicity and brutality."²² Though initially Adam and Gamelyn are reluctant to "walken in this wilde wode my clothes to tere" (618), they eventually find the non-civic space a self-actualizing zone of liberty and community rather than exile.

Crawford reads the *Cook's Tale* as a possible contest between a youthful protagonist and a dour elder and assigns *Gamelyn* to the Cook on the basis of *Gamelyn's* parallel theme of young rebellion.²³ Interestingly, in his first skirmish Gamelyn tells his brother that "I wil not be thi coke!" (92). Yet the motives of Gamelyn and Perkyn are too dissimilar for such a thematic comparison. Gamelyn has been cheated out of his legacy and Perkyn, however lovable a rascal the fabliaux might intend him to be, robs his employer (I.4390). Far from being grudging and devious, the kindly master treats Perkyn

²⁰ William B. McColly, "Chaucer's Yeoman and the Rank of His Knight," *Chaucer Review* 20:1 (1985): 18.

²¹ Hoffman, 166.

²² Hoffman, 163.

²³ Crawford, 34.

with extraordinary indulgence.²⁴ Perkyn's time in Newgate prison is whimsical but deserved, whereas Gamelyn suffers from his brother's malice and the perversion of justice. Chiefly, Perkyn's progress is toward an evasion of the law. After his master presents a properly legal *papir* of release from his apprenticeship (I.4404), he enters a final downward spiral into criminality. The wooden and moralizing false end attached to the *Cook's Tale* in late manuscripts, evidently composed by scribes who overlook the Cook's usual inebriation, entirely deflates the fun of Perkyn's carnival vulgarity but does conform to his disdain for laws and authority.²⁵

In comparison, *Gamelyn* critics have noted the legal conservatism of the poem. While Gamelyn doles out extrajudicial acts of violence and not law to his brother and the stacked inquest, he does so in court.²⁶ Fundamentally, he seeks not a ducking of the law but its rehabilitation in order to obtain his legitimate inheritance. Gamelyn revolts against the court because of its fraudulent pose of justice, telling the judge "thou hast yove domes of the worst assise" (866), but does not question the necessity for such institutions. Although some defiant parody of the inquest is surely intended, Gamelyn affirms its legitimacy in principle when he forms "a quest of his men stronge" (874) to replace the bribed one. Similarly, Gamelyn's humorous and violent re-ordination of new "orders of

²⁴ Bowers notes that historically a thieving apprentice was more likely to be flogged and expelled ("Politically Corrected" 31).

²⁵ As an example, in Chicago and Rawlinson 141 Perkyn and his companion are hanged: "and þus with hordam and briberie / togeder þei used tyl hanged hye / for who so evel byeth shal make a sory sale / and þus I make an ende of my tale." Quoted in Stephen Partridge, "Minding the Gaps: Interpreting the Manuscript Evidence of the *Cook's Tale* and the *Squire's Tale*," in *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths*, ed. Jeremy Griffiths, Vincent Gillespie, A. S. G. Edwards, and Ralph Hanna (London: British Library, 2000), 60.

²⁶ Donnelly, 343.

monke and frere” (529) has a blasphemous tinge but also suggests a sort of cleansing of the temple. While the servants have no sympathy for the proud, compromised clerics (504), the text is not antireligious. Gamelyn tells Adam to “do hem but goode / thei bene men of holy churche” (517-8). Much as Robin Hood reveres the Virgin, Gamelyn has a broad religious reverence underlying his righteous anger at men who will not give “to one of these little ones a cup of cold water” (Matt. 10:42).

Romance often offers a marginalized audience such a revenge fantasy, and possible frustration over perverted justice by wealthy insiders or brigands has historical justification. The writers of both popular tales and legal petitions in the fourteenth century evidently saw royal justice as having failed, and court records abound with complaints of juries either bought or threatened.²⁷ Sheriffs were known for graft and abusing their offices to harass personal enemies, and Langland depicts Lady Meed riding a newly-shod sheriff to Westminster (B II.166). Earlier centuries may have been no more circumspect, and Stephen’s reign is chronicled as a notoriously lawless era, but the fourteenth saw an expanding application of royal law into the countryside which was apparently both welcomed and deplored for its scope for abuse.²⁸ The sheriff’s office preceded the conquest but seems to have deteriorated into a cash cow for powerful local families.²⁹ Edwardian and Ricardian England was a litigious and dangerous time, and Chaucer’s Canterbury pilgrims carry weapons not only for adornment but for personal protection. The prevalence of violence and banditry implies that “far from despairing of

²⁷ Kaeuper, 55.

²⁸ Kaeuper, 59.

²⁹ Edgar F. Shannon Jr., “Mediaeval Law in the *Tale of Gamelyn*,” *Speculum* 26:3 (1951): 459.

the King's justice, men wanted more of it"³⁰ while they also regretted the venality of those sent to bring order.

Chaucer himself was attacked by highwaymen in 1390, lending weight to the argument that he had reservations about writing a virtuous outlaw into the *Canterbury Tales*. Nothing indicates that Chaucer had any sympathy for the rebels of 1381 who terrorized London. Yet Gamelyn does not molest his countrymen or tenants. The poet forestalls such a conclusion by stating that "there was no man that for him ferde the wors / but abbots and priours, monk and chanoun" (776-7), who presumably deserve it. Gamelyn's actions validate rule by law. He dutifully shows up for his summons and trial, hoping for legitimate proceedings. The forest band which he joins conforms to feudal concepts of order and hierarchy with its lord and loyal retainers.³¹ After moving to "slee the giltif" (818), he reconciles with the king, the ruler "of the best sise" (895). Gamelyn himself becomes a justice, and "order is reestablished within the social hierarchy; the aristocracy has simply been forced to clean house."³² Thus even calling Gamelyn an *outlaw* contradicts his basic objective, which is not brigandage but redressal of the infractions against his tenants and his father's bequest. The poem resounds with principles of legal procedure such as inquests, surety, and *wolfshede*. The poet knows his law in a way a city cook is highly unlikely to.

Gamelyn's "outlaw" identification has also been problematized by reading it from within modern national narratives. The American outlaw usually stresses his everyman

³⁰ Kaeuper, 60.

³¹ Donnelly, 341.

³² Donnelly, 343.

breeding and disdain for established elites, but Simeone's statement that "sooner or later most outlaws, historical or legendary, are highborn"³³ applies well to medieval English romance. Although Robin Hood's social rank in early iterations was ambiguous, making him genteel validates him as a corresponding lord of his outlaw domain and makes his fall from grace additionally dramatic and sympathetic.³⁴ *Gamelyn's* earthy humor has marked it as low-class minstrelsy, and Gamelyn is nowhere identified as explicitly noble. Sir John's purchased holdings argue that the family belongs to the gentry but not the peerage.³⁵ Yet Gamelyn holds enough land and tenants to offer a liveable and attractive share to Adam, and in asserting his social dignity he protests to brother John that he was "born of a lady and gete of a knyght" (108). Shippey posits that Gamelyn is literally a bastard as John may have enjoyed too "mochel game" (4) with other women, resulting in *Game + lyn*,³⁶ but more likely the text plays out contemporary problems with primogeniture among the noble landed.

Yet one of the critical themes for the poet is Gamelyn's natural refinement as opposed to the debased breeding of his brother John and the high-ranking clerics. The verbal bonds of *treuwe* which were so fundamental to the chivalric code are upheld among the wrestlers, who keep their word, in comparison to brother John's cynical lies and perhaps the sanctimonious men of God who defile their oaths of service in stuffing

³³ W.E. Simeone, "Robin Hood and Some Other Outlaws," *Journal of American Folklore* 71:279 (1958): 30.

³⁴ Simeone, 31.

³⁵ Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 58 and 69-71, quoted in Donnelly, 335.

³⁶ Shippey, 87.

themselves with multiple courses (463) while denying food to the famished Gamelyn. In holding to his word Gamelyn gains Adam's faithful service while brother John's craven falsehoods result in unreliable and corrupt supporters.³⁷ The master outlaw similarly has a loyal retinue drawn to his noble generosity and fidelity, and his band correspondingly addresses Gamelyn "myldely and stille" (651) with courtly deportment. The master vows that Gamelyn will "have ynow" (674) to eat without knowing his name, and when amnesty is made, he returns home peaceably and makes provision for a new leader for his men by promoting Gamelyn.

The rural/urban opposition consequently forms a moral distinction between the empty social rank of brother John's "civilized" manor and the authentic chivalry of Gamelyn's sphere in the forest. At one point Gamelyn breaks the divide, literally, by crashing the gate of the manor and holding a feast. What could be an occasion for slapstick and earthy humor is instead a scene of wrestlers and friends acting in a conspicuously refined manner. The poet stresses that "with moche solace was ther noon cheest" (326)—"no quarreling troubled the great merriment." Much like a royal wedding, the guests stay an appropriate time and politely take their leave (330-6). The episode is an advance and not a victory as brother John soon takes revenge, but during the feast the mood is less carnivalesque and more a performance of courtly generosity juxtaposed against John's ill-mannered parsimony.

The sentiment that true gentility comes from conduct and not merely rank is of course a very bourgeois one which reflects its author's and audience's aspirations. The

³⁷ Donnelly, 340.

hardening of class divisions in Ricardian England was a rearguard action against their actual muddying after the dislocations and innovations following the plagues and war with France. Chaucer and his peers enjoyed unprecedented opportunities for advancement in royal service as landless esquires,³⁸ and Chaucer himself was recorded as a *valet*, a term etymologically equivalent to *yeoman* as a person providing royal service.³⁹ The Black Prince's records list stewards, attorneys, and bureaucrats as yeomen and valets,⁴⁰ and as participants in the "Bastard Feudalism" of their era they attained quasi-rank for their performance in war and peace.

Richard II surrounded himself with a bodyguard of Cheshire yeomen who were deplored as common thugs and "unruly men."⁴¹ If Chaucer's position at court was endangered by such hotheads, he may have had reason to scorn them, as evinced in his odious *Symkyn* who marries to preserve his "yomanrye" (I.3949).⁴² Yet the title of yeoman seems to have indicated function more than class, and Chaucer was nominally a part of their broad ranks. Chaucer also gives a moral tale to the Canon's Yeoman. More inescapably, *Gamelyn's* depiction is positive, as he transcends his class as a courtly protagonist. His show of knightly generosity and valor to the Franklin parallels that of Guy of Warwick to Earl Jonas, with the Champion not much less perilous than dragons and Saracens.

³⁸ Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 11.

³⁹ McColly, 17.

⁴⁰ McColly, 17. McColly's source is M.C.B. Dawes, ed., *Register of Edward the Black Prince*, 4 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1930-33).

⁴¹ Adam of Usk, *The Chronicle, A.D. 1377-1421*, ed. Edward Maunde Thompson (1904) (Dyfed, Wales: Llanerch, 1990), 39, quoted in Bowers, "Politically Corrected," 20.

⁴² Shippey, 81. See also Bowers, "Politically Corrected," 17-18.

All this may serve to illuminate Chaucer's portrait of the Knight's Yeoman in the *General Prologue*. Pearsall claims that he is merely a token peasant for Chaucer,⁴³ but the Yeoman has enough status for the Knight to ride out with "servantz namo" (I.101). The Yeoman may simply be another useful bodyguard-attendant as no weapons are mentioned for the Knight whereas the Yeoman is armed to the teeth. Yet among his arms he has a sword, a rather lavish accessory for a commoner,⁴⁴ and a certain sartorial affluence in appearing "gay" (I.111, 113) whereas the Knight is notably "nat gay" (I.74) in his military austerity.⁴⁵ The Yeoman wears green and carries a bow and peacock arrows. He knows "wodecraft" (I.110) and bears a horn. The Yeoman so perfectly fits the role of forester that the narrator's "I gesse" (I.117) seems an ironic understatement of the fact. Foresters at times arranged hunts for their lords but were primarily enforcement officers guarding against illegal loggers and poachers who might be warned or halted with a horn blast. The Knight's custody of enough land and wealth to retain a forester marks him as almost aristocratic.⁴⁶

Put together, Gamelyn seems an ideal avatar for the Yeoman's values, interests, and aspirations. Like Gamelyn, the Yeoman identifies with rural life, and his "broun visage" (I.109) suggests he prefers the outdoors. The two share the same occupation as justices of the forest under aristocratic appointment (888), an office which requires both

⁴³ Derek Pearsall, *The Canterbury Tales* (Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1985), 26–27, quoted in Kenneth J. Thompson, "Chaucer's Warrior Bowman: The Roles and Equipment of the Knight's Yeoman," *Chaucer Review* 40:4 (2006): 387.

⁴⁴ Thompson, 392.

⁴⁵ Thompson, 401.

⁴⁶ McColly suggests the Knight belongs to the peerage or the baronage (25).

physical strength for dealing with violent offenders and familiarity of legal practice and enforcement. Most importantly, the poem's ethos in which true gentility lies in holding to one's word, aiding the weak, and remediating injustice rather than birth rank dovetails into the Yeoman's social aspirations. Gamelyn performs an ideal for the Yeoman, unless Chaucer intended some serious editorial shifts in changing the story to a fabliaux—which is improbable as Chaucer himself was deputy forester for Somerset in royal service. In the extant text the story of a virtuous outlaw's exile and return after a familial struggle has little resonance with a tale of thieves and prostitutes. The sense of humor both share is of a different nature.

All this presumes that Chaucer might have intended his Yeoman to represent a desideratum of himself. Some of the pilgrims are primarily concerned with *requiting* other tellers without any lofty agendas, and a cook-innkeeper rivalry might have suited the progress of the tales. Yet the Wife of Bath's loathly lady nicely shores up her own program as a fading flower, and the Franklin has a social-climbing agenda much like *Gamelyn* in depicting the natural gentility of his characters. Even the Prioress' "litel clergeon" has a sentimental, safe nature agreeable to the teller's ideals. The Knight praises courtly love and knightly refinement, and for the Yeoman to qualify the message by stressing its applicability to all who choose to be *fre* would be a fitting response.

As long as we are so troubled by the order of the fragments in *The Canterbury Tales*, these arguments are as conjectural as the assumption that Chaucer had any plans for *Gamelyn* at all. But a hypothetical *Yeoman's Tale of Gamelyn* both complements and answers the Knight and thematically conforms to Kittredge's "marriage group." Chaucer the son of a wine merchant, the Wife of Bath's loathly lady, and Gamelyn the young (and

possibly the bastard) would all likely assent to the sentiment that “am I gentil, whan that I bigynne / to lyven vertuously and weyve synne” (III.1175-6). Gamelyn acts rather unknighly in disrobing to wrestle over a ram, but in doing so to give help to a stranger the poet illustrates “that such trappings are no measure or proof of a knight’s true character.”⁴⁷ In Chaucer’s literary period, one with less rigid expectations of conformity of style, the mixing of serious matters and slapstick humor adds to rather than detracts from Gamelyn’s earnestness.

⁴⁷ Donnelly, 338.

CHAPTER 6

Guy of Warwick (Stanzaic)

The stanzaic *Guy of Warwick*, along with the couplet *Guy* which forms the first half of the story, survives in one unique manuscript, Auchinleck (c. 1330). Redacted versions include Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Ff.2.38 (c. 1450) and Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 107/176 (c. 1475). I take as my text source Alison Wiggins, ed. *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/guywfrm.htm>. No modern editions predominate other than Julius Zupitza, ed., *The Romance of Guy of Warwick* (1883).

Main characters

Guy
Felicia, Guy's wife
Earl Jonas, Guy's friend
Earl Terry, Guy's friend
Herhaud, Guy's friend
King Athelstan
Reinbroun, Guy's son

1	God graunt hem heven-blis to mede That herken to mi romaunce rede Al of a gentil knight; The best bodi he was at nede That ever might bistriden stede And freest founde in fight. The word of him ful wide it ran Over al this warld the priis he wan, As man most of might.	May God grant Heaven's bliss to reward Those who listen to me read my romance, All about a noble knight. He was the best person in need That might ever ride a steed, And the bravest to be found in a fight. Word of him spread wide; All over this world he won a reputation As a man greatest in might.
10	Balder bern was non in bi, His name was hoten Sir Gii Of Warwike wise and wight. Wight he was for sothe to say And holden for priis in everi play As knight of gret boundé. Out of this lond he went his way Thurth mani divers cuntray	There was no bolder man around. His name was called Sir Guy Of Warwick, wise and fearless. He was manly, to say the truth, And respected highly in every contest As a knight of great valor. He traveled out of this land, Through many different countries

20	<p>That was biyond the see. Sethen he com into Inglond And Athelston the king he fond That was bothe hende and fre. For his love ich understond He slough a dragoun in Northhumberlond Ful fer in the north cuntré. He and Herhaud for sothe to say To Wallingforth toke the way That was his faders toun. Than was his fader sothe to say</p>	<p>That were beyond the sea. Then he came into England And met with Athelston the king, Who was both gracious and generous.¹ For his love, as I understand, He killed a dragon in Northumberland,² Far up in the north country. He and Herhaud, to say the truth, Made their way to Wallingford,³ Which was his father's town. Then his father, in truth as well, Died and was buried in the clay.</p>
30	<p>His air was Sir Gioun. Alle that held of him lond or fe Deden him omage and feuté And com to his somoun. He tok alle his faders lond And gaf it hende Herhaud in hond Right to his warisoun. And alle that hadde in his servise be He gaf hem gold and riche fe Ful hendeliche on honde</p>	<p>His heir was Sir Guy.⁴ All who held land or property from him Pledged their homage and loyalty And came at his summons. He took all his father's own land And gave it into noble Herhaud's hand, As a fitting reward. And for all who had been in his service, He gave them gold and rich properties Graciously into their hands, And then he went with his attendants</p>
40	<p>And sethen he went with his meyné To th'eryl Rohaud that was so fre, At Warwike he him fond. Alle than were thai glad and blithe And thonked God a thousand sithe That Gii was comen to lond. Sethe on hunting thai gun ride With knightes fele and miche pride As ye may understond.</p>	<p>To Earl Rohaud, who was so courteous,⁵ Finding him at Warwick. All were then glad and at ease And thanked God a thousand times That Guy was coming to their land. Then they rode out hunting With many knights and stately pride, As you may understand.</p>
50	<p>On a day Sir Gii gan fond And feir Felice he tok bi hond And seyde to that bird so blithe</p>	<p>One day, Sir Guy set out And took fair Felicia by the hand And said to that lady so fair,</p>

¹ *Hende and fre*: This formula often reoccurs in the text, reflecting the oral nature of romance recitation. *Hende* can mean various attributes of courtly refinement or graciousness. *Free* can have the sentimental nuance of 'adventurous' but more properly meant 'generous' or noble in rank, i.e. 'free-born.' Chaucer's Franklin likely has this meaning in mind when he asks, "which was the mooste fre?" (V.1622).

² An episode from the couplet *Guy of Warwick*, which precedes this story. Guy's slaying of the dragon is also mentioned in *Bevis of Hampton* (2607-8).

³ Wallingforth: This is perhaps Wallingford, south of Oxford. Warwick is further north, near Coventry.

⁴ *Sir Gioun*: Why the Auchinleck scribe distinctly uses a different spelling here is a mystery, but it this is not a different person. In the following *Reinbroun*, also in Auchinleck, the hero refers to his father both as *Guy* and *Gioun* (751-4). See also line 232.

⁵ *Th'eryl Rohaud*: Millward notes that "by ME, titles used with a proper name usually preceded the name; titles of foreign personages often were preceded by a definite article." Thus *kyng Richard* but *þe king Alexander*. Evidently practices were in flux during the time of Guy's writing, as Rohaud is ostensibly English. Celia M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988), 157.

60	<p>“I have,” he seyde, “thurth Godes sond Won the priis in mani lond Of knightes strong and stithe And me is boden gret anour, Kinges douhter and emperour, To have to mi wive. Ac swete Felice,” he seyde than, “Y no schal never spouse wiman Whiles thou art olive.”</p>	<p>“I have,” he said, “through God’s grace, Won the respect in many lands Of knights, strong and sturdy, And a great honor has been offered to me: The daughter of the king and emperour, To have as my wife. But sweet Felice,” he said then, “I will never marry another woman While you are alive.”</p>
70	<p>Than answerd that swete wight And seyde ogain to him ful right “Bi Him that schope mankinne, Icham desired day and night Of erl, baroun, and mani a knight; For nothing wil thai blinne. Ac Gii,” sche seyde, “hende and fre, Al mi love is layd on thee, Our love schal never tunne; And bot ich have thee to make Other lord nil Y non take For al this warld to winne.”</p>	<p>Then that sweet lass answered And replied to him at once, “By He who created mankind, I am pursued, day and night, By earl, baron, and many a knight. They will not stop for anything. But Guy,” she said, “gentle and noble, All my heart is set on you. Our love will never fail. And if I cannot have you as mine, I will have no other lord, Even for all this world with it.”</p>
80	<p>Anon to hir than answerd Gii, To fair Felice that sat him bi That semly was of sight, “Leman,” he seyde, “gramerci.” With joie and with melodi He kist that swete wight. Than was he bothe glad and blithe, His joie couthe he no man kithe For that bird so bright. He no was never therbiforn Half so blithe sethe he was born For nought that man him hight. On a day th’erl gan fond And fair Felice he tok bi hond And hir moder biside, “Douhter,” he seyde, “now understand Why wiltow have non husbond That might thee spouse with pride? Thou has ben desired of mani man And yete no wostow never nan For nought that might bitide. Leve douhter hende and fre Telle me now <i>par charité</i> What man thou wilt abide.”</p>	<p>Guy immediately replied to her, The fair Felice who sat by him, Who was beautiful to behold: “Darling,” he said, “my kind thanks.” With joy and with melody He kissed that sweet girl. Then he was both glad and happy; He could express his joy to no one For that woman shining so bright. He was never before Half so happy since he was born, For anything that men had given him. One day the earl set out And took fair Felicia by the hand And her mother beside her. “Daughter,” he said, “now hear me: Why you will not have a husband Who would marry you with pride? You have been wanted by many men And yet you’ve never taken one For anything that might happen. Dear daughter, gracious and free, Tell me now, for charity’s sake, What man you will accept.”</p>
90	<p>Felice answerd ogain “Fader,” quath hye, “ichil thee sain With wordes fre and hende. </p>	<p>Felicia answered in reply, “Father,” she said, “I will tell you With free and courteous words.” </p>
Gui	<p>Li quons apele par grant amur</p>	<p>With tender affection he asked</p>

--	Felice sa fille qui tant ert sage:	Felicia his daughter, who was so wise,
--	“Fille, di mei tun corage.”	“Daughter, tell me your heart.” ⁶

100	Fader,” quath sche, “ichil ful fayn Tel thee at wordes tuain Bi Him that schop mankende. Opon Sir Gii that gentil knight, Ywis, mi love is alle alight In warld where that he wende And bot he spouse me, at o word, Y no kepe never take lord, Day withouten ende.”	“Father,” she said, “I will gladly Tell you in two words, By He who created mankind. In truth, all my love is set On Sir Guy, that noble knight, Wherever he may go in the world. And unless he weds me, in a word, I will never accept or obey a lord, For days without end.
110	Than seyð th’erl with wordes fre, “Douhter, yblisced mot thou be Of Godes mouthe to mede. Ich hadde wele lever than al mi fe With than he wald spousy thee, That douhti man of dede. He hath ben desired of mani woman And he hath forsaken hem everilcan, That worthy were in wede. Ac natheles ichil to him fare For to witen of his answare, That douhti man of dede.”	Then the earl spoke with generous words, “Daughter, may you be blessed From God’s hand as a reward. I would rather have him marry you Than all of my possessions, That valiant man of deeds! But he has been sought by many women And he has declined each one of them, Who were so noble in their attire. But nonetheless, I will go to him To find out the answer from That rugged man of deeds.”
120	On a day withouten lesing Th’erl him rode on dere hunting And Sir Gii the conquerour, Als thai riden on her talking Thai speken togider of mani thing, Of levedis bright in bour. Th’erl seyð to Sir Gii hende and fre, “Tel me the sothe <i>par charité</i> Y pray thee, <i>par amoure</i> ,	One day, without lying, The earl rode out deer hunting With Sir Guy the conqueror. As they rode out, in their talking They spoke together of many things, Of beautiful ladies in their bowers. The earl said to Sir Guy, gracious and free, “Tell me the truth, for charity’s sake. I am asking you, for the sake of love, Do you ever intend during your life To take any woman to be your wife Who reaches to your high rank?”
130	Hastow ment ever in thi live Spouse ani wiman to wive That falleth to thine anour?” Sir Gii answerd and seyð than “Bi Him,” he seyð, “that this warld wan To saven al mankende, Bi nought that Y tel can Y nil never spouse wiman Save on is fre and hende.”	Sir Guy then answered and said, “By He,” he said, “Who won this world To redeem all mankind, I can say no more than that I will never marry a woman Except one who is noble and courteous.”
140	“Sir,” quath th’erl, “listen nou to me: Y have a douhter bright on ble, Y pray thee leve frende, To wive wiltow hir understand Y schal thee sese in al mi lond To hold withouten ende.” “Gramerci,” seyð Gii anon,	“Sir,” confided the earl, “listen now to me. I have a daughter with a pretty face. I hope that you, dear friend, Will accept her as your wife. I will endow you with all my land To hold without end.” “My richest thanks,” said Guy at once.

⁶ Lines from *Gui de Warewic*, 7464-66. As TEAMS points out, Felicia replies twice in an awkward way in the English MS, as the scribe has compressed a slightly longer conversation in the original source.

150	<p>“So help me Crist and Seyn Jon And Y schuld spouse a wive Ich hadde lever hir bodi alon Than winnen al this warldes won With ani woman o live.”</p>	<p>“So help me Christ and Saint John, If I were to marry a wife, I would rather have her alone Than win all this world’s riches With any other woman alive!”</p>
	<p>Than seyde th’erl, “Gramerci,” And in his armes he kist Sir Gii And thoked him mani a sithe. “Sir Gii,” he seyde, “thou art mi frende, Now thou wilt spouse mi dohter hende Was Y never are so blithe.”</p>	<p>The earl then said, “My deepest gratitude,” And in his arms he kissed Sir Guy And thanked him many times. “Sir Guy,” he said, “you are my friend. Now that you will wed my gracious daughter, I was never before so merry. But to be sure,” said the earl so courteously, “Sir Guy, if you will put your trust in me, You will not wait any longer.</p>
160	<p>Now for fourtenight it schal be The bridal hold with gamen and gle At Warwike in that tyde.” Than was Sir Gii glad and blithe His joie couthe he no man kithe, To his ostel he gan ride. And tho Gii com hom to his frende He schuld spouse his douhter hende He teld Herhaud that tide.</p>	<p>A fortnight from now there will be The bridal feast with entertainment and joy At Warwick in that time.” Then Sir Guy was glad and pleased. His joy was inexpressible to any man. He turned to ride to his lodgings. And when Guy came home to his friend, He told Herhaud the news That he would wed the earl’s beautiful daughter.</p>
170	<p>Th’erl Rouhaud as swithe dede sende After lordinges fer and hende That pris wel told in tour, When the time was comen to th’ende To chirche wel feir gun thai wende With mirthe and michel anour. Miche semly folk was gadred thare Of erls, barouns, lasse and mare, And levedis bright in bour. Than spoused Sir Gii that day Fair Felice that miri may</p>	<p>Just as swiftly, earl Rouhaud Sent for nobles from near and far Whose reputations were well known in court. When the time had come to the end, They elegantly made their way to church With joy and great honor. Many distinguished people were gathered there, Earls, barons, low and great And ladies beautiful in their bedrooms. Then that day Sir Guy wedded Fair Felicia, that merry maid, With joy and high spirits.</p>
180	<p>With joie and gret vigour. When he hadde spoused that swete wight The fest lasted a fourtenight That frely folk in fere With erl, baroun, and mani a knight And mani a levedy fair and bright The best in lond that were. Ther wer giftes for the nones, Gold and silver and precious stones And druries riche and dere.</p>	<p>When he had married that sweet lass, The feast lasted fourteen nights, Those noble people together With earls, barons, and many a knight And many a lady, fair and bright, The finest that were in the land. There were gifts for the occasion, Gold and silver and precious stones, And lavish and expensive tokens.</p>
190	<p>Ther was mirthe and melody And al maner menstracie As ye may fortheward here. Ther was trumpes and tabour, Fithel, croude, and harpour</p>	<p>There was revelry and song And all kinds of music played, As you will now hear about. There were horn players and drummers, Fiddlers, guitarists, and harpists,⁷</p>

⁷ *Croude*: A croude (Welsh *crwth*) is a sort of early violin derived from the lyre which was popular with folk musicians. *Organisters* (196) might have played small handheld pipe organs closer to a panflute.

200	<p>Her craftes for to kithe; Organisters and gode stivours, Minstrels of mouthe and mani dysour To glade tho bernes blithe. Ther nis no tong may telle in tale The joie that was at that bridale With menske and mirthe to mithe, For ther was al maner of gle That hert might thinke other eyghe se As ye may list and lithe. Herls, barouns, hende and fre That ther war gadred of mani cuntré That worthliche were in wede, Thai goven glewemen for her gle Robes riche, gold and fe,</p>	<p>With their skill on full display. Organists and good bagpipers, Storytellers and many entertainers, To gladden those happy people. There is no tongue which can describe The joy that was at that wedding, With hospitality and fun, as was fitting,⁸ For there were all sorts of amusements That heart could imagine or eye see, As you may listen and hear about. Earls, barons, gracious and noble, Were gathered there from many lands, Who were stately in their clothing; They rewarded the entertainers for their craft With rich robes, gold, and goods.</p>
210	<p>Her giftes were nought gnede. On the fiftenday ful yare Thai toke her leve for to fare And thonked hem her gode dede. Than hadde Gii that gentil knight Feliis to his wil day and night In gest also we rede. When Gii hadde spoused that hendy flour, Fair Feliis so bright in bour That was him leve and dere,</p>	<p>Their gifts were not stingy! On the fifteenth day, early on, They made their goodbyes to leave And thanked them for their kindness. Then Guy, that gentle knight, Had Felicia at his pleasure day and night, As we read in the story. When Guy had wedded that graceful flower, The fair Felicia, so beautiful in her bedroom, Who was so beloved and dear to him, In truth, in that tower in Warwick, For fifteen days they were together With joy and honor.</p>
220	<p>Ywis, in Warwike in that tour Fiftendays with honour With joie togider thai were. So it bifel that first night That he neyghed that swete wight A child thai geten yfere And sethen with sorwe and sikeing sare Her joie turned hem into care As ye may forward here.</p>	<p>It so happened on the first night, When he slept with that sweet lass, That they conceived a child together. But later, with sorrow and mournful sighing, Their joy changed into sadness, As you may from here on learn. Sir Guy was of great renown then, And respected as lord of many a town, A prince magnificent in pride.</p>
230	<p>Than was Sir Gii of gret renoun And holden lord of mani a toun As prince proude in pride. That Erl Rohaut and Sir Gyoun In fretthe to fel the dere adoun On hunting thai gun ride. It bifel opon a somers day That Sir Gii at Warwike lay - In herd is nought to hide - At night in tale as it is told To bedde went tho bernes bold</p>	<p>Earl Rohaud and Sir Guy Would ride out hunting In the woodlands to take the deer. It so happened one summer's day When Sir Guy lay at Warwick— There is no reason to hide anything— That at night, in the tale as it is told, The valiant couple went to bed At their time, to rest the night.</p>
240	<p>Bi time to rest that tide. To a turet Sir Gii is went And biheld that firmament That thicke with steres stode,</p>	<p>But Sir Guy went to a turret And beheld the heavens That stood crowded with stars.</p>

⁸ *Mithe*: TEAMS notes that this orphan word is not in the MED and appears nowhere else. OE *mīðan*, ‘conceal,’ does not fit the context. A misspelling or variant of *meet*, ‘proper’?

	<p>On Jhesu omnipotent That alle his honour hadde him lent He thought with dreri mode, Hou he hadde ever ben strong werrour, For Jhesu love, our Saveour, Never no dede he gode.</p>	<p>He thought with a downcast mood of Christ the omnipotent, Who had lent him all his glory, And how he had always been a strong warrior. But for Jesus' love, our savior, He had never done any good works.</p>
250	<p>Mani man he hadde slayn with wrong; "Allas, allas!" it was his song, For sorwe he yede ner wode. "Allas," he seyde, "that Y was born, Bodi and soule icham forlorn, Of blis icham al bare For never in al mi liif biforn For Him that bar the croun of thorn Gode dede dede Y nare.</p>	<p>He had slain many men with injustice. "Alas, alas!" was his refrain, For he was nearly crazed with regret. "Alas," he cried, "that I was ever born! I am lost in body and soul. I am stripped of all joys, For never in all my life before Have I done any good deed For Him who wore a crown of thorns.</p>
260	<p>Bot wer and wo ichave don wrought And mani a man to grounde ybrought, That rewes me ful sare. To bote min sinnes ichil wende Barfot to mi lives ende To bid mi mete with care." As Gii stode thus in tour alon In hert him was ful wo bigon, "Allas!" it was his song. Than com Feliis sone anon And herd him make rewely mon</p>	<p>I have left nothing but war and woe And have brought many a man to the earth, Which grieves me sorely! To atone for my sins I will go Barefoot to my life's end, To beg for my food with toil." As Guy stood so, alone in the tower, He was overcome in his heart by grief. "Alas!" was his continual song. Soon Felicia came And heard him make his pitiful cries</p>
270	<p>With sorwe and care among. "Leman," sche seyde, "what is thi thought? Whi artow thus in sorwe brought? Me thenke thi pain wel strong. Hastow ought herd of me bot gode That thou makes thus dreri mode? Ywis, thou hast gret wrong." "Leman," seyde Gii ogain, "Ichil thee telle the sothe ful fain Whi icham brought to grounde.</p>	<p>With constant sorrow and pain. "Lover," she said, "what is your trouble? Why are you brought into such sorrow? It seems to me the grief is severe. Have you heard anything of me besides good That has put you in such a gloomy mood? Truly, someone has done you great injustice!" "Dear heart," said Guy in return, "I will tell you the truth willingly Why I am brought to the earth.</p>
280	<p>Sethen Y thee seyge first with ayn - Allas the while Y may sayn - Thi love me hath so ybounde That never sethen no dede Y gode Bot in wer schadde mannes blode With mani a griseli wounde. Now may me rewe al mi live That ever was Y born o wive Wayleway that stounde!" "Ac yif ich hadde don half the dede</p>	<p>Since I first saw you with my eyes— Alas, that time, I may say— Your love has so bewitched me That I have never after done any good But to shed men's blood in war With many a grisly wound. Now I might regret all my life That I was ever born of a woman. Alas for that moment! But if I had done half my best For Him who bled on the Cross With grim and painful wounds, He would have rewarded me in Heaven To live in joy with angels' clothes, Forevermore without worry.</p>
290	<p>For Him that on Rode gan blede With grimly woundes sare, In Hevene He wald have quit mi mede In joie to won with angels wede Evermore withouten care. Ac for thi love ich have al wrought, For His love dede Y never nought; Jhesu amende mi fare.</p>	<p>But I have done all for your love, And for His love I never did anything. Jesus, put right my ways!</p>

300	<p>Therefore ich wot that icham lorn. Allas the time that Y was born, Of blis icham al bare. “Bot God is curteys and hende And so dere he hath bought mankende For no thing wil hem lete. For His love ichil now wende Barfot to mi lives ende Mine sinnes forto bete That whoreso Y lye anight Y schal never be seyn with sight Bi way no bi strete.</p>	<p>For this I know that I am lost. Alas the time that I was born! My life is barren of joy. But God is gracious and kind And has redeemed mankind so dearly That He will not abandon it for anything. For His love I will now go Barefoot to my life’s end, To atone for my sins, So that wherever I lie at night I will not be recognized by sight, Not along any path or street.</p>
310	<p>Of alle the dedes Y may do wel, God graunt thee, lef, that halvendel And Marie His moder swete.” Than stode that hende levedi stille And in hir hert hir liked ille And gan to wepe anon. “Leman,” sche seyde, “what is thi wille? Ywis, thi speche wil me spille. Y not what Y may don.</p>	<p>Of all the deeds that I may do well, God grant you, dear, the benefit of half, And Mary, His sweet mother as well.” Then that gentle lady stood still And was distraught at heart And immediately began to weep. “Sweetheart,” she said, “what is your will? Truly, your words are killing me! I do not know what I will do.</p>
320	<p>Y wot thou hast in sum cuntré Spoused another woman than me That thou wilt to hir gon And now thou wilt fro me fare. Allas, allas, now cometh mi care! For sorwe ichil me slon. “For wer and wo thatow hast wrought God that al mankende hath bought, So curteys He is and hende, Schrive thee wele in word and thought And than thee tharf dout right nought</p>	<p>Married another woman beside me; That you will go to her, And you will abandon me now. Alas, alas, now my sorrows have come! I will slay myself for grief. For the war and woe that you have caused, God, who has redeemed all mankind, And is so gracious and kind, Will forgive you in full in word and thought.</p>
330	<p>Ogaines the foule fende. Chirches and abbays thou might make That schal pray for thi sake To Him that schope mankende. Hastow no nede to go me fro; Save thou might thi soule fram wo In joie withouten ende.” “Leve leman,” than seyde Sir Gii, “Lete ben alle this reweful cri; It is nought worth thi tale.</p>	<p>And then you need not have any fears In the presence of the foul fiend. You could found churches and abbeyes That would pray for your sake To Him that created mankind. You have no need to go from me. You may save your soul from suffering, In joy without end.” “Dear heart,” said Sir Guy, “Let go all this pitiful crying! It is not worth your concern.</p>
340	<p>For mani a bern and knight hardi Ich have ysleyn sikerly And strued cites fale And for ich have destrued mankin Y schal walk for mi sinne Barfot bi doun and dale. That ich have with mi bodi wrought, With mi bodi it schal be bought To bote me of that bale.</p>	<p>For I have slain, certainly, Countless men and hardy knights, And have destroyed many cities, And because I have plagued mankind, I will walk for my sin, Barefoot on hill and valley. What I have caused with my body, I will pay for with my body, To relieve me of that foulness.</p>
350	<p>“Leman,” he seyde, “<i>par charité</i>, Astow art bothe hende and fre O thing Y thee pray:</p>	<p>Darling,” he said, “for charity’s sake, If you are both noble and gracious, I ask one thing of you.</p>

<p>360</p>	<p>Loke thou make no sorwe for me Bot hold thee stille astow may be Til tomorwe at day. Gret wele thi fader that is so hende And thi moder and al thi frende Bi sond as Y thee say; Grete wele Herhaud Y thee biseche; Leman, God Y thee biteche, Y wil fare forth in mi way. “Leman, Y warn thee biforn With a knave child thou art ycorn That douhti beth of dede. For Him that bar the croun of thorn, Therefore, as sone as it is born Pray Herhaud wight in wede He teche mi sone as he wele can Al the thewes of gentil man And helpe him at his nede.</p>	<p>See that you make no sorrow over me But keep yourself as silent as you can Until tomorrow at daylight. Greet your father well, who is so gracious, And your mother and all your friends. Be sound, as I ask you to do. Greet Herhaud kindly, I implore you. My love, I entrust you to God; I will go forth on my way. Dear heart, I caution you in advance That you will be favored with a baby boy Who will be valiant in deeds.⁹ For Him who bore the crown of thorns, Therefore, as soon as he is born, Ask Herhaud, so manly in his ways, To teach my son as well as he can All the customs of a refined man And to help him in times of need.</p>
<p>370</p>	<p>For he is bothe gode and hende And ever he hath ben trewe and kende, God quite him his mede. “Leman,” he seyde, “have here mi brond And take mi sone it in his hond Astow art hende and fre, He may therwith ich understond Winne the priis in everi lond For better may non be. Leman,” he seyde, “have now godeday.</p>	<p>For he is both good and gracious And has always been faithful and kind; God give him his reward. My dear,” he said, “take my sword here, And if you are noble and good, Give it into his hand as soon as it is time. With it he will, I know, Win victory in every land, For there can be none better. Darling,” he said, “now farewell.</p>
<p>380</p> <p>390</p>	<p>Ichil fare forth in mi way And wende in mi jurné.” Thai kist hem in armes tuo And bothe thai fel aswon tho - Gret diol it was to se. Gret sorwe thai made at her parting And kist hem with eyghen wepeing, Bi the hond sche gan him reche “Leman,” sche seyde, “have here this ring; For Jhesus love heven-king A word Y thee biseche: When thou ert in fer cuntré Loke heron and thenk on me And God Y thee biteche.” With that word he went hir fro Wepeand with eyghen to Withouten more speche. Now is Gii fram Warwike fare, Unto the se he went ful yare And passed over the flod.</p>	<p>I will go forth on my way And set off on my journey.” They kissed each other with open arms And then both of them were overcome. It was a tearful sight to see. They made great sorrow at their parting And kissed each other with weeping eyes. She grasped him by the hand And said, “Darling, take this ring here; For Jesus’ love, Heaven’s king, I beg a word with you: When you are in a faraway country, Look upon it and think of me, And God be with you.” With those words he went from her, Weeping with both eyes, Without any more speech. Guy then departed from Warwick And went straightaway to the sea And passed over the ocean.</p>

⁹ The boy Sir Guy refers to will be Reinbroun, who also receives his own romance in Auchinleck. The adventures of Reinbroun are also included in the French *Gui de Warewic*, which is much longer than the English version at nearly 13,000 lines, and in other redactions of the story.

Gui	En Jerusalem puis aler voldra	He intended to travel to Jerusalem.
--	Desore d'errer ne finera,	Thus he would not cease from wandering
--	En Jerusalem si vendra	Until he had reached Jerusalem,
--	E en meinte estrange terre	After crossing many strange lands,
--	U les sainz Deu purra require.	Where he could see God's holy relics. ¹⁰

400	The levedy bileft at hom in care	The lady was left at home in grief,
	With sorwe and wo and sikeing sare;	With sorrow and woe and bitter sighs;
	Wel drery was hir mode.	Her mood was dark and dreary.
	"Allas, allas," it was hir song,	"Alas, alas!" was her refrain;
	Hir here sche drough, hir hond sche wrong,	She tore her hair, she wrung her hands,
	Hir fingres brast o blode.	Her fingers ran with blood.
	Al that night til it was day	All that night until it was day
	Hir song it was, "wayleway,"	Her lament was "Woe is me!"
	For sorwe sche yede ner wode.	She nearly went mad from sorrow.
	Hir lordes swerd sche drough biforn	She drew her lord's sword before her
410	And thought have slain himself for sorn	And thought to slay herself out of grief
	Withouten more delay.	Without any more delay.
	To sle hirselves er the child wer born	But in killing herself before the child was born
	Sche thought hir soule it wer forlorn	She thought her soul would be lost
	Evermore at Domesday,	Forevermore on Judgment Day,
	And that hir fader hir frendes ichon	And that her father and all of her friends
	Schuld seyn hir lord it hadde ydon	Would say her lord had done it
	And were so fled oway.	And had flown away because of it.
	Therefore sche dede his swerd ogain	Therefore she put his sword back,
	Elles for sorwe sche hadde hir slain	For fear that she slay herself in sorrow,
420	In gest as Y you say.	In the story as I tell you.
	Arliche amorwe when it was day	Early in the morning when it was daylight,
	To chaumber ther hir fader lay	She came wringing her hands
	Sche com wringand hir hond.	To the chamber where her father lay.
	"Fader," sche seyde, "ichil thee say	"Father," she said, "I must tell you
	Mi lord is went fro me his way	My lord has gone from me
	In pilgrimage to fond.	To undertake a pilgrimage.
	He wil passe over the se,	He will pass over the sea;
	Schal he never com to me	He will never come back to me
	Ogain into Inglond."	Again in England."
430	For sorwe that sche hadde that stounde	For the anguish she had at that moment
	Aswon sche fel adoun to grounde,	She swooned down to the ground;
	O fot no might sche stonde.	She could not stand on foot.
	"Douhter," seyde hir fader, "lat be,	"Daughter," said her father, "let this go.
	Y trowe nought that Sir Gii the fre	I do not think that gracious Sir Guy
	Is thus fram thee fare.	Has traveled far from you.
	Ywis, he nis nought passed the se;	Truly, he has not passed the sea.
	He ne doth nought bot forto fond thee	He is doing no more than testing you,
	Hou trewe of hert thou ware."	To see how true your heart is."
	"Nay, sir," sche seyde, "so God me spede,	"No, sir," she said, "so help me God,
440	He is walked in pouer wede	He is walking in tattered clothing
	To beggen his mete with care	To beg for his food in toil.
	And therefore now singen Y may	And for this I can sing

¹⁰ Lines from the French *Gui de Warewic*, 7732-36. Excerpted in TEAMS.

<p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>Allas the time and wayleway That mi moder me bare.” Th’erl ros up with sikeing sare For Sir Gii was fram him fare, In hert him was ful wo And alle his frendes, lesse and mare, For Sir Gii thai hadde gret care For he was went hem fro. Thai sought him than al about Within the cité and without Ther he was won to go. And when thai founde him nought that day Ther was mani a “wayleway” Wringand her hondes tuo. And when Gii was fram hem gon Herhaud and his frendes ichon And other barouns him by To th’erl Rohaut thai seyden anon, “The best rede that we can don Smertliche and hastily, Messangers we schul now sende Over alle this lond fer and hende To seche mi lord Sir Gii And yif he be nought in this lond He is in Loreyn ich understond With his brother Tirry.” Menssangers anon thai sende Over al this lond fer and hende Fram Londen into Louthe Over al biyonde Humber and Trent And est and west thurthout al Kent To the haven of Portesmouthe. Thai sought him over al up and doun Over alle the lond in everich toun Bi costes that wer couthe And sethen to Warwike thai gan wende And seyde thai might him nowhar fende Bi north no bi southe. Herhaud was wele understond That Gii was fer in uncouthe lond. Ful hende he was and fre, Palmers wede he tok on hond To seche his lord he wald fond Unto the Grekis See. To th’erl Rohaut he seyde anon To seche his lord he most gon</p>	<p>‘Alas the day’ and ‘woe is me’ That my mother gave birth to me.” The earl rose up, sighing bitterly, For Sir Guy had departed from him. He was greatly saddened at heart, Along with all his friends, low and high. They had great concern for Sir Guy, For he had gone from them. They looked for him all about, Within the city and outside, Where he was accustomed to go. And when they did not find him that day There was many a ‘woe is us!’, Wringing both of their hands. And when Guy was gone from them, Herhaud and each of his friends, And other barons near him, Said straightaway to Earl Rohaut, “The best plan that we can act on, Swiftly and hastily, Is that we will send messengers now Over all this land, near and far, To seek out my lord, Sir Guy. And if he is not in this land, We will conclude he is in Lorraine With his brother Thierry.”¹¹ At once they sent messengers Over all this land, near and far, From London into Louth, Over all beyond the Humber and Trent, And east and west, throughout all Kent, To the harbor of Portsmouth.¹² They searched for him everywhere, up and down, Over all the land in every town, Along coasts that were known to them. And then they turned back to Warwick And said they could find him nowhere, Not by north or by south. Herhaud clearly surmised That Guy was far away in unknown lands. He was gentlemanly and noble. He took on himself pilgrims’ clothing; He would attempt to find his lord As far as the Aegean Sea. He said without delay to Earl Rohaut That he must go to seek his lord</p>
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¹¹ *Brother Tirry*: As with Sirs Amis and Amiloun, Guy and Thierry have sworn an oath of brotherhood in the preceding narrative and are not literal siblings. Actual brothers seem rare in medieval romance, with Havelock’s step-brothers only a partial exception.

¹² TEAMS notes that there is no list of places here in the French source. They are perhaps meant to add local flavor.

490	<p>Thurth alle Cristianté. When th'eryl seye him thus ydight "Thou art," he seyde, "a trewe knight, Yblisced mot thou be." Tho went Herhaud so trewe in tale To seche his lord in londes fale, For nothing he nold abide; He yede over alle bi doun and dale To everi court and kinges sale Bi mani a lond side.</p>	<p>Throughout all Christendom. When the earl saw him dressed so, "You are," he said, "a true knight. May you be blessed!" Then Herhaud, so faithful in speech, Went to seek his lord in many lands And would delay for nothing. He went all over, by hill and valley, To every court and king's hall Across many a country's border.</p>
500	<p>Thurth Normondye and alle Speyne Into Fraunce and thurth Breteyne He yede bothe fer and wide; Thurth Lorain and thurth Lombardy And never no herd he telle of Gii For nought that might bitide. When Herhaud had sought him fer and hende And he no might him nowhar fende, Noither bi se no sond, Into Ingland he gan wende And th'eryl Rohaut and al his frende</p>	<p>Through Normandy and all Spain, Into France and through Brittany, He traveled both far and wide, Through Lorraine and through Lombardy. But he never heard any mention of Guy For anything that might happen. When Herhaud had searched far and wide, And could not find him anywhere, Neither by the sea nor on the sand, He turned back for England And Earl Rohaut and all his friends.</p>
510	<p>At Warwike he hem fond, And told he hadde his lord sought And that he no might finde him nought In nonskinnes lond. Mani a moder child that day Wepe and gan say, "waileway," Wel sore wringand her hond. Now herken and ye may here In gest yif ye wil listen and lere Hou Gii as pilgrim yede.</p>	<p>He found them in Warwick, And said how he had searched for his lord And that he could not find him In any kind of land. Many a mother's child that day Wept and cried out, "woe is us!" They wrung their hands bitterly. Now take note and you will hear In the story, if you listen and learn, How Guy traveled as a pilgrim.</p>
520	<p>He welke about with glad chere Thurth mani londes fer and nere Ther God him wald spede. First he went to Jerusalem And sethen he went to Bedlem Thurth mani an uncouthe thede. Yete he bithought him sethen tho Forto sechen halwen mo To winne him heven-mede. Tho he went his pilgrimage</p>	<p>He walked about with cheerful spirits Through many lands, near and far, Wherever God might guide him. First he went to Jerusalem And then he went to Bethlehem, Through many a foreign soil. And still he decided then To seek out more holy places To win for himself Heaven's joys. He continued his pilgrimage then Toward the court of Antioch.</p>
530	<p>Toward the court of Antiage, Bi this half that cité He mett a man of fair parage, Ycomen he was of heyghe linage And of kin fair and fre. Michel he was of bodi ypight, A man he semed of michel might And of gret bounté With white hore heved and berd yblowe As white as ani driven snowe;</p>	<p>On the near side of that city He met a man of high peerage, Who was born from noble ancestry And of a fair and free family. He was well-built in body; He seemed a man of immense might And of great prowess, With grayish-white hair and flowing beard As white as the driven snow.</p>
540	<p>Gret sorwe than made he. So gret sorwe ther he made Sir Gii of him rewthe hade</p>	<p>He was in great sorrow. He made such great mourning there That Sir Guy had pity on him.</p>

550	<p>He gan to wepe so sare. His cloth he rent, his here totorn, And curssed the time that he was born Wel diolful was his fare; More sorwe made never man. Gii stode and loked on him than And hadde of him gret care. He seyde, "Allas and walewo, Al mi joie it is ago, Of blis icham al bare." "Gode man, what artow," seyde Gii, "That makest thus this reweful cri And thus sorweful mone? Me thenke for thee icham sori For that thine hert is thus drery, Thi joie is fro thee gon.</p>	<p>He began to cry so bitterly That he ripped his clothes and tore his hair And cursed the time that he was born. His manner was full of anguish; No man ever made such a lament. Guy stood and looked on him And had great concern for him. He said, "Alas! Woe is me! All my joy is gone. I am bereft of all bliss." "Good man, who are you," said Guy, "That you make this pitiful cry And moan so sorrowfully? I feel sorry for your sake, For your heart is so downcast; Your joy is gone from you. Tell me the truth, I ask you, For God's love in Trinity, Who lived in this world. For Jesus is of such great might He may make your heart light At a time you do not expect it." "Young man," replied the pilgrim, "You have asked me by your God To tell you about my troubles And all the truth without lying. I will tell you how it happened, How I am barren of joys. So much grief has afflicted me That my heart will break from it With sorrow and tearful sighs. All of my happiness is lost! I will never have joy, truly. I wish I were in my grave! I was once a man of stately rank And respected as a lord of great authority And as earl of all Durrës.¹³ I had fifteen fair sons And all were knights, strong and keen. Men called me Earl Jonas. I am sure there is no man in this world, Indeed, who is so burdened by woe Since the earth was made, For I have lost all my sons. Better men were never born! For this my song is 'alas!' For I will never again be happy; I have lost all of my sons Through a hideous battle, Because of Saracens that were fierce.</p>
560	<p>For Godes love in Trinité That this world hath in won. For Jhesu is of so michel might He may make thine hert light And thou not never hou son." "Gode man," seyde the pilgrim, "Thou hast me frained bi God thin To telle thee of mi fare And alle the soth withouten les Ichil thee telle hou it wes</p>	<p>For Jesus is of such great might He may make your heart light At a time you do not expect it." "Young man," replied the pilgrim, "You have asked me by your God To tell you about my troubles And all the truth without lying. I will tell you how it happened, How I am barren of joys. So much grief has afflicted me That my heart will break from it With sorrow and tearful sighs. All of my happiness is lost! I will never have joy, truly. I wish I were in my grave! I was once a man of stately rank And respected as a lord of great authority And as earl of all Durrës.¹³ I had fifteen fair sons And all were knights, strong and keen. Men called me Earl Jonas. I am sure there is no man in this world, Indeed, who is so burdened by woe Since the earth was made, For I have lost all my sons. Better men were never born! For this my song is 'alas!' For I will never again be happy; I have lost all of my sons Through a hideous battle, Because of Saracens that were fierce.</p>
570	<p>Of blis hou icham bare. So michel sorwe is on me steke That min hert it wil tobreke With sorwe and sikeing sare. Forlorn ich have al mi blis Y no schal never have joie, ywis, In erthe Y wald Y ware. "A man Y was of state sum stounde And holden a lord of gret mounde And erl of al Durras.</p>	<p>How I am barren of joys. So much grief has afflicted me That my heart will break from it With sorrow and tearful sighs. All of my happiness is lost! I will never have joy, truly. I wish I were in my grave! I was once a man of stately rank And respected as a lord of great authority And as earl of all Durrës.¹³ I had fifteen fair sons And all were knights, strong and keen. Men called me Earl Jonas. I am sure there is no man in this world, Indeed, who is so burdened by woe Since the earth was made, For I have lost all my sons. Better men were never born! For this my song is 'alas!' For I will never again be happy; I have lost all of my sons Through a hideous battle, Because of Saracens that were fierce.</p>
580	<p>Fair sones ich hadde fiftene And alle were knightes stout and kene; Men cleped me th'erl Jonas. Y trowe in this world is man non, Ywis, that is so wo bigon Sethen the world made was, For alle min sones ich have forlorn - Better berns were non born - Therefore Y sing 'allas.' "FOR blithe worth Y never more: Alle mi sones ich have forlore Thurth a batayl unride, Thurth Sarrayins that fel wore</p>	<p>I had fifteen fair sons And all were knights, strong and keen. Men called me Earl Jonas. I am sure there is no man in this world, Indeed, who is so burdened by woe Since the earth was made, For I have lost all my sons. Better men were never born! For this my song is 'alas!' For I will never again be happy; I have lost all of my sons Through a hideous battle, Because of Saracens that were fierce.</p>
590	<p>Alle mi sones ich have forlore Thurth a batayl unride, Thurth Sarrayins that fel wore</p>	<p>I have lost all of my sons Through a hideous battle, Because of Saracens that were fierce.</p>

¹³ *Durras*: Probably modern Durrës in coastal Albania.

600	<p>To Jerusalem thai com ful yore To rob and reve with pride. And we toke our ost anon Ogaines hem we gun gon Bateyl of hem to abide; The acountre of hem was so strong That mani dyed ther among Or we wald rest that tide. “Thurth mi fiftene sone Were the geauntes overcome And driven doun to grounde. Fiftene amirals ther wer nome, The king gan fle with alle his trome For drede of ous that stounde. Ich and mi sones withouten lesing Out of that lond we driven the king And his men gaf dedli wounde.</p>	<p>They came eagerly to Jerusalem To rob and plunder with arrogance. And we took out our army at once, Going forth against them To face them in battle. Their attack was so strong That many among us died there Before we could rest that night. Through my fifteen sons The monsters were overcome And driven down to the ground! Fifteen emirs were taken there. Their king began to flee with his troops For dread of us at that moment. My sons and I, without a lie, We drove the king out of that land And gave his men deadly wounds.</p>
610	<p>The king him hight Triamour, A lord he was of gret honour And man of michel mounde. “Than dede we wel gret foly: We suwed him with maistrie Into his owen lond. Into Alisaundre thai fleye owy, The cuntré ros up with a cri To help her king an hond. In a brom feld ther wer hidde</p>	<p>Their king was called Triamour; He was a lord of great honor And a man of immense prowess. Then we committed a great folly. We pursued him in force Into his own lands. They flew away into Alexandria; The country rose up with a cry To give hands to their king in help. Three hundred Saracens, well-armed, Were in hiding in a field of bushes, All with helmets and lethal blades.</p>
620	<p>Thre hundred Sarrayins wele yschridde With helme and grimly brond, Out of that brom thai lepen anon And bilapped ous everichon And drof ous alle to schond. “Thai hewen at ous with michel hete And we layd on hem dintes grete And slouwen of her ferred, And ar that we were alle ynome Mani of hem were overcome</p>	<p>Out of the bushes they leaped at once And surrounded every one of us And drove us all to shameful defeat. They struck at us with blazing fury, And we landed great blows on them And killed many of their troops. And before we were all taken Many of them were overcome, Fatally wounded in their armor. But they were too many and we too few. All of our armor they cut to pieces And slaughtered our horses under us. Yet we fought on foot a long time until Our swords, which were so strong, broke And then we surrendered out of necessity.</p>
630	<p>Ded wounded under wede. Thai were to mani and we to fewe, Al our armour thai tohewe And stiked under ous our stede; Yete we foughten afot long Til swerdes brosten that were strong And than yeld we ous for nede. “To the king we yolden ous al and some That we might to raunsoun come To save our lives ichon,</p>	<p>They struck at us with blazing fury, And we landed great blows on them And killed many of their troops. And before we were all taken Many of them were overcome, Fatally wounded in their armor. But they were too many and we too few. All of our armor they cut to pieces And slaughtered our horses under us. Yet we fought on foot a long time until Our swords, which were so strong, broke And then we surrendered out of necessity. We yielded ourselves to the king, all and some, That we might be taken for ransom To save each of our lives.</p>
640	<p>Into Alisaunder he ladde ous tho And into his prisoun dede ous do, Was maked of lime and ston. Litel was our drink and lasse our mete, For hunger we wende our lives lete; Wel wo was ous bigon. So were we ther alle that yer</p>	<p>He led us then to Alexandria And put us into his prison, Which was made of solid limestone. Our drink was little and our food less. We thought we would lose our lives from hunger. We were overcome with grief. We were there all that year in this way,</p>

650	<p>With michel sorwe bothe yfere That socour com ous non. “So it bifel that riche Soudan Made a fest of mani a man Of thritti kinges bi tale. King Triamour com to court tho And Fabour his sone dede also With knightes mani and fale The thridde day of that fest That was so riche and so honest So derlich dight in sale.</p>	<p>All together in great suffering, For no help came to us. So it happened that a rich sultan Made a feast for many a man, For thirty kings in count. King Triamour came to the court And Fabor, his son, did as well With knights, many and plentiful, On the third day of that feast, Which was so rich and stately, And so lavishly prepared in the hall.</p>
660	<p>After that fest that riche was Ther bifel a wonder cas Wherthurth ros michel bale. “That riche Soudan hadde a sone That was yhold a douhti gome, Sadok was his name.</p>	<p>After that feast which was so grand, A wondrous event happened That would lead to great evil. That rich sultan had a son Who was held to be a rugged man; Sadok was his name.</p>
670	<p>The kinges sone Fabour he cleped him to, Into his chaumber thai gun go, Tho knightes bothe ysame. Sadok gan to Fabour sayn Yif he wald ate ches playn And held ogain him game, And he answerd in gode maner He wald play with him yfere Withouten ani blame.</p>	<p>The king’s son, Fabor, called to him. They went into his chamber, Both of the two knights together. Sadok asked Fabor If he would play chess¹⁴ And challenged him to a game, And he answered in good faith That he would play together with him Without any poor sportsmanship.</p>
680	<p>“Ate ches thai sett hem to playn, Tho hendy knightes bothe tuayn That egre were of sight. Er thai hadde don half a game With strong wretthe thai gan to grame, Tho gomes michel of might. Thurth a chek Fabour seyde for soth Sadok in hert wex wroth And missayd him anonright And clepd him <i>fiz a putayn</i> And smot him with might and main Wherthurth ros michel fight. “With a roke he brac his heved than That the blod biforn out span In that ich place. ‘Sadok,’ seyde than Fabour, ‘Thou dost me gret deshonor</p>	<p>They set themselves at the chessboard to play, Both of those noble knights, Who were so competitive in manner. Before they had finished half the game They began to seethe with strong rage, Those men of great might. It was with a check Fabor called, in truth, That Sadok became enraged in heart And at once became abusive with him, Calling him ‘son of a whore!’¹⁵ He struck him with force and fury, Through which a great fight arose. He smashed Sadok’s head with a rook So that the blood spurted out All over the place. Then Fabor shouted, ‘Sadok, You have done me great dishonor</p>

¹⁴ Chess was at the time thought to be helpful in teaching war strategies. As the game apparently began in India and spread through Muslim lands it would have still had an exotic connotation to an English audience. See also *Floris*, line 717, where the hero plays checkers.

¹⁵ *Fiz a putayn*: The phrase ‘pardon my French’ is centuries later, but here there is a similar attribution of vulgar language to French. Compare *Bevis of Hampton*, line 302, where Bevis swears in English. Romance characters invariably speak and understand English no matter their geography. Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* has a rare touch of realism when Custance washes up in Northumberland and the locals have difficulty comprehending her “Latyn corrupt” (*CT* II.519), presumably Italian.

690	<p>That thou me manace. Nar thou mi lordes sone were Thou schuldest dye right now here. Schustow never hennes passe.’ Sadok stirt up to Fabour And cleped him anon, ‘Vile traitour!’ And smot him in the face. “With his fest he smot him thore That Fabour was agreved sore And stirt up in that stounde.</p>	<p>To threaten me like this! If you were not my lord’s son, You would die here right now. You would never walk out of here!’ Sadok charged Fabor And swiftly called him, ‘Vile traitor!’ And struck him in the face. With his fist he punched him there So that Fabor was infuriated And leaped up from his place.</p>
700	<p>The cheker he hent up fot-hot And Sadok in the heved he smot That he fel ded to grounde. His fader sone he hath yteld That he hath the Soudan sone aqueld And goven him dethes wounde, On hors thai lopen than bilive Out of the lond thai gun drive For ferd thai were yfounde. “When it was the Soudan teld</p>	<p>He flung up the chessboard in a rush And smashed it on Sadok’s head So that he fell dead to the ground.¹⁶ He had soon told his father That he had killed the sultan’s son By giving him a deadly wound. Without delay they leaped on horses; They galloped away out of the land For fear that they would be found. When the sultan was told</p>
710	<p>That his sone was aqueld And brought of his liif dawe On al maner he him bithought Hou that he him wreke mought Thurth jugement of lawe. After the king he sent an heyghe To defende him of that felonie That he his sone hath yslawe And bot he wald com anon With strengthe he schuld on him gon,</p>	<p>That his son was dead And deprived of his life’s days, He considered every way That he might wreak vengeance Through the judgment of law. He had a messenger rush to the king To warn the man who had slain his son To defend himself against that felony; And unless he would come at once He would come to him in force And have him drawn with wild horses.</p>
720	<p>With wilde hors don him drawe. “King Triamour com to court tho And Fabour his sone dede also To the Soudans parlement. When thai biforn him comen beth Thai were adouted of her deth Her lives thai wende have spent For the Soudan cleped hem fot-hot And his sones deth hem atwot And seyde thai were alle schent;</p>	<p>King Triamour then came to court And Fabor, his son, did as well To the sultan’s assembly. When they were there before him, They were in fear of their lives; They believed their days to be finished. For the sultan called them in haste And charged them with his son’s death And said they were all condemned. Unless they had a strong defense He would place them in great peril And to their judgment.</p>
730	<p>Bot thai hem therof were might In strong perile he schuld hem dight And to her jugement. “Than dede he com forth a Sarrayine - Have he Cristes curs and mine With boke and eke with belle - Out of Egypt he was ycome, Michel and griselich was that gome</p>	<p>Then the sultan had a Saracen come forward. May he have Christ’s curse, and mine, With the book and bell as well!¹⁷ He had come out of Egypt. The man was huge and bloodthirsty</p>

¹⁶ Medieval chessboards were not balsa-wood affairs but could be carved from ivory or marble, and were certainly heavy enough to kill.

¹⁷ *With boke and eke with belle*: The ritual tools of Catholic excommunication. See also *Athelston*, 682.

740	<p>With ani god man to duelle. He is so michel and unrede Of his sight a man may drede With tong as Y thee telle; As blac he is as brodes brend, He semes as it were a fende That comen were out of helle. “For he is so michel of bodi ypight Ogains him tuelve men have no might Ben thai never so strong, For he is four fot sikerly</p>	<p>Against any good man in a duel. He is so gigantic and hideous That any man might dread his sight, As I tell you with my tongue. He is as black as burnt nails; He seems as if he were a fiend That had come out of hell. For he is so powerfully built in body that Twelve men against him have no chance, However strong they are. For he is so incredibly tall</p>
750	<p>More than ani man stont him bi, So wonderliche he is long. Yif King Triamour that ther was Might fenden him in playn place Of that michel wrong Than is that vile glotoun Made the Soudans champioun Batayl of him to fong. “King Triamour answerd than To that riche Soudan In that ich stounde</p>	<p>That he is four feet higher, certainly, Than any man standing by him. If King Triamour, who was there, Wished to defend himself on open ground Against that great crime, Then that foul monster Would be appointed the sultan’s champion To face him in battle. King Trimaour then gave his reply To that rich sultan In that same place</p>
760	<p>That he wald defende him wele ynough That he never his sone slough No gaf him dedli wounde. When he seye Amoraunt so grim - Ther durst no man fight with him So grille he was on grounde - Than asked he respite til a day To finde another yif he may Ogaines him durst founde.</p>	<p>That he would defend himself well enough, If the sultan would not slay his son Or inflict deadly wounds on him. No man would dare fight with him When he saw Amoraunt, so grim, So savagely did he stand on the ground. Then he asked for a reprieve for a time To find another man, if he might Dare to face against him.</p>
770	<p>“Than hadde he respite al that yere And fourti days so was the maner Thurth lawe was than in lond; Yif himselven durst nought fight Finde another yif he might Ogaines him durst stond. The king as swithe hom is went, Over alle his lond anon he sent After erl, baroun, and bond And asked yif ani wer so bold - Thriddendel his lond have he schold -</p>	<p>Then he had a reprieve all that year And forty days, as was the custom, According to the law in the land then. If he dared not fight himself, He might find another if he Would dare to stand against him. The king went home as swiftly; At once he sent word all over his land For earls, barons, and bonded men, And asked if any were so bold. He who dared to take the battle in hand Would have a third portion of his land. But his promises were for nothing. There was no one who dared accept the fight With the giant for his sake.</p>
780	<p>The batayl durst take an hond. “Ac for nought that he hot might Ther was non durst take the fight With the geaunt for his sake. Than was ich out of prisoun nome, Biforn him he dede me come Conseyl of me to take And asked me at worde fewe Yif Y wist other Y knewe A man so mighti of strake</p>	<p>Then I was taken out of prison. He made me appear before him To take counsel with me, And asked me in few words If I could think of or knew A man so mighty in combat Who would dare take the fight for him. If he were a burgess or knight,</p>
790	<p>That for him durst take the fight; Were he burjays other knight</p>	<p>Who would dare take the fight for him. If he were a burgess or knight,</p>

800	<p>Riche prince he wald him make. “And yif Y might ani fende He wald make me riche and al mi kende And gif me gret honour And wold sese into min hond To helden thriddendel his lond With cité, toun, and tour. Ac ichim answerd than In alle this warld was ther no man To fight with that traitour Bot yif it Gii of Warwike were Or Herhaud of Ardern his fere In warld thai bere the flour. “When the king herd tho That Y spac of tho knightes to Ful blithe he was of chere, He kist me so glad he was. ‘Merci,’ he seyde, ‘Erl Jonas; Thou art me leve and dere. Yif ich hadde here Sir Gii Or Herhaud that is so hardi Of the maistri siker Y were. And thou mightest bring me her on Thee and thine sones Y schal lete gon Fram prisoun quite and skere.’ “Bi mi lay he dede me swere That Y schuld trowelich bode bere To tho knightes so hende</p>	<p>The king would make him a rich prince. And if I might find someone He would make me and all my kin rich And give me great honor, And would place into my hand A third of his land to hold, With city, town, and tower. But I answered then That there was no man in all this world To fight with that villain Unless it were Guy of Warwick Or Herhaud of Arden, his companion. In the world they bear the prize. When the king heard What I said about those two knights, He was very pleased in his appearance. He kissed me, he was so glad. ‘Thank you, Earl Jonas,’ he said.¹⁸ ‘You are dear and precious to me. If I had here Sir Guy, Or Herhaud, who is so hardy, I would be certain of victory. If you can bring me one of them here, I will release you and your sons From prison, fully and blameless.’ On my faith he made me swear That I would faithfully carry word To those knights who were so valiant, And he said to me just as quickly that With great sorrow he would slay me Unless I could find them, And have all my sons torn apart. And I have been granted that interval To bring them out of bondage. Out of this land I went With great hardship and great woe. I did not know which way to go. I searched for them in the land of Konya, Into Calabria and into Saxony, And from there into Germany, In Tuscany and in Lombardy, In France and in Normandy, Into the land of Spain, In Brabant, Apulia, and Barcelona, And into the king’s land of Tarsia¹⁹ And through all Aquitaine, In Sicily, in Hungary, and in Ragusa, In Romania, Burgundy, and Gascony,</p>
810	<p>And seyde to me as swithe anon With michel sorwe he schuld me slon Bot ichem might fende And al mine sones do todrawe; And ichim graunt in that thrawe To bring hem out of bende. Out of this lond Y went tho With michel care and michel wo; Y nist wider to wende. “Y sought hem into the lond of Coyne, Into Calaber and into Sessoyne, And fro thennes into Almayne, In Tuskan and in Lombardye, In Fraunce and in Normondye, Into the lond of Speyne, In Braban, in Poil and in Bars, And into kinges lond of Tars And thurth al Aquitayne, In Cisil, in Hungri and in Ragoun, In Romaine, Borgoine, and Gastoine</p>	<p>And he said to me just as quickly that With great sorrow he would slay me Unless I could find them, And have all my sons torn apart. And I have been granted that interval To bring them out of bondage. Out of this land I went With great hardship and great woe. I did not know which way to go. I searched for them in the land of Konya, Into Calabria and into Saxony, And from there into Germany, In Tuscany and in Lombardy, In France and in Normandy, Into the land of Spain, In Brabant, Apulia, and Barcelona, And into the king’s land of Tarsia¹⁹ And through all Aquitaine, In Sicily, in Hungary, and in Ragusa, In Romania, Burgundy, and Gascony,</p>
820	<p>And seyde to me as swithe anon With michel sorwe he schuld me slon Bot ichem might fende And al mine sones do todrawe; And ichim graunt in that thrawe To bring hem out of bende. Out of this lond Y went tho With michel care and michel wo; Y nist wider to wende. “Y sought hem into the lond of Coyne, Into Calaber and into Sessoyne, And fro thennes into Almayne, In Tuskan and in Lombardye, In Fraunce and in Normondye, Into the lond of Speyne, In Braban, in Poil and in Bars, And into kinges lond of Tars And thurth al Aquitayne, In Cisil, in Hungri and in Ragoun, In Romaine, Borgoine, and Gastoine</p>	<p>And he said to me just as quickly that With great sorrow he would slay me Unless I could find them, And have all my sons torn apart. And I have been granted that interval To bring them out of bondage. Out of this land I went With great hardship and great woe. I did not know which way to go. I searched for them in the land of Konya, Into Calabria and into Saxony, And from there into Germany, In Tuscany and in Lombardy, In France and in Normandy, Into the land of Spain, In Brabant, Apulia, and Barcelona, And into the king’s land of Tarsia¹⁹ And through all Aquitaine, In Sicily, in Hungary, and in Ragusa, In Romania, Burgundy, and Gascony,</p>
830	<p>And seyde to me as swithe anon With michel sorwe he schuld me slon Bot ichem might fende And al mine sones do todrawe; And ichim graunt in that thrawe To bring hem out of bende. Out of this lond Y went tho With michel care and michel wo; Y nist wider to wende. “Y sought hem into the lond of Coyne, Into Calaber and into Sessoyne, And fro thennes into Almayne, In Tuskan and in Lombardye, In Fraunce and in Normondye, Into the lond of Speyne, In Braban, in Poil and in Bars, And into kinges lond of Tars And thurth al Aquitayne, In Cisil, in Hungri and in Ragoun, In Romaine, Borgoine, and Gastoine</p>	<p>And he said to me just as quickly that With great sorrow he would slay me Unless I could find them, And have all my sons torn apart. And I have been granted that interval To bring them out of bondage. Out of this land I went With great hardship and great woe. I did not know which way to go. I searched for them in the land of Konya, Into Calabria and into Saxony, And from there into Germany, In Tuscany and in Lombardy, In France and in Normandy, Into the land of Spain, In Brabant, Apulia, and Barcelona, And into the king’s land of Tarsia¹⁹ And through all Aquitaine, In Sicily, in Hungary, and in Ragusa, In Romania, Burgundy, and Gascony,</p>

¹⁸ *Merci*: This word was probably usually ‘mercy’ in the sense of asking for help or pardon, but here it makes contextual sense that Triamour is showing gratitude and using French *merci* as an interjection.

¹⁹ *Tars*: Perhaps Tarsia, Italy, or Tarsus, modern Turkey.

840	<p>And thurthout al Breteyne. “And into Ingland wenden Y gan And asked ther mani a man Bothe yong and old, And in Warwike that cité Ther he was lord of that cuntré For to haven in wold. Ac Y no fond non lite no miche That couthe telle me sikerliche Of tho to knightes bold,</p>	<p>And throughout all Brittany. And I made my way to England And asked many a man there, Both young and old, And in the city of Warwick, Where he was lord of that country And held it in rule. But I found nobody at all Who could tell me with certainty About those two bold knights, Where I could find Guy or Herhaud In any land, near or far. Therefore my heart is cold, For I have sworn the king my pledge That I will bring Guy right away If he is alive. And if I do not bring him at once, I know well that that he will kill me. Because of this I am in great anguish. He will have my sons hanged And drawn apart with great injustice, Those knights, gracious and noble. And if they die it is a great sadness. For them I have such sorrow, to be sure, My heart will be broken into three.” “Good man,” said Guy, “listen to me now. You have great sorrow for your sons, And it is no wonder, When you have looked for Guy and Herhaud And you cannot find them. Your grief is great, certainly. Through them your hope was to go free, With all your sons forth with you, Through God’s help and theirs. There was a time in the old days When they were counted as sturdy men And held in high esteem. Through God’s help, our Lord, Who is my support and gives me strength, And grants me success, And for Guy’s love and Herhaud also, Who were fearless in deeds, Who you have searched for with great trouble, I will take up the battle now for you Against the giant who is so strong, Who you say is so hideous. And even if he is the devil himself, I will take the fight for you And help you in your time of need.” When the earl heard him speak so, That he would undergo battle for him, He eyed him from foot to head. He was built powerfully in body; He seemed a man of great might,</p>
850	<p>Wher Y schold Gii no Herhaud fende In no lond fer no hende; Therefore min hert is cold. “For ich have the king mi trewthe yplight That Y schal bring Gii now right Yif he olives be. And yive Y bring him nought anon Wele ich wot he wil me slon - Therefore wel wo is me - And min sones he schal don hong</p>	
860	<p>And todrawe with michel wrong, Tho knightes hende and fre. And yif thai dye gret harm it is For hem ich have swiche sorwe, ywis, Mine hert wil breken on thre.” “God man,” seyde Gii, “listen me now, For thine sones gret sorwe hastow And no wonder it nis When thou Gii and Herhaud hath sought And thou no may hem finde nought;</p>	
870	<p>Thi care is michel, ywis. Thurth hem thine hope was to go fre And thi sones al forth with thee Thurth Godes help and his. Sum time bi dayes old For douhti men thai wer told And holden of gret priis. “Thurth Godes helpe our Dright - He be min help and give me might And leve me wele to spede -</p>	
880	<p>And for Gyes love and Herhaud also That thou hast sought with michel wo, That douhti were of dede, Batayl ichil now for thee fong Ogain the geaunt that is so strong, Thou seyst is so unrede. And thei he be the fende outright Y schal for thee take the fight And help thee at this nede.” When th’erl herd him speke so</p>	
890	<p>That he wald batayl fong for him tho He biheld fot and heved. Michel he was of bodi pight, A man he semed of michel might</p>	

900	<p>Ac pouerliche he was biweved. With a long berd his neb was growe, Miche wo him thought he hadde ydrowe. He wende his wit were reved For he seyde he wald as yern Fight with that geaunt stern Bot yif he hadde him preved. “God man,” than seyde he, “God almighty foryeld it thee That is so michel of might Thatow wost batayl for me fong Ogain the geaunt that is so strong; Thou knowest him nought, Y plight, For yif he loked on thee with wrake, Sternliche with his eyghen blake, So grim he is of sight</p>	<p>But he was poorly clothed. His face was overgrown with a long beard. He looked as if he had suffered many hardships. He assumed the man had lost his wits, For he said without hesitation that he would Fight with that forbidding giant, Unless it was denied to him. “Good man,” he said then, “God Almighty reward you For being so great in strength That you would undertake battle for me Against the giant, who is so strong. But I swear, you know nothing about him! For if he looked on you with rage, Sternly, with his black eyes, He is so terrifying to see.</p>
910	<p>Wastow never so bold in al thi teime Thatow durst batayl of him nim No hold ogaines him fight.” “Gode man,” seyde Gii, “lat be that thought For swiche wordes help ous nought Ogain that schrewe qued. Mani hath loked me opon With wicked wil, mani on That wald han had min hed, And thei no fled Y never yete</p>	<p>You were never so bold in all your days That you would dare face him in battle Or withstand the fight against him.” “My good man,” said Guy, “let that thought go. For such words give us no help Against that wicked devil! Many have looked upon me With malicious intent, many a man Has wanted to have my head, And I have never yet fled from them, Nor ever left a battle out of fear, For any man who ever ate bread! And even if he is the devil’s spawn, I will not back one foot away, In the name of Him who suffered death.”</p>
920	<p>No never for ferd batayl lete, For no man that brac bred. And thei he be the devels rote Y schal nought fle him afot, Bi Him that suffred ded.” “Leve sir,” than seyde he, “God of heven foryeld it te. Thine wordes er ful swete.” For joie he hadde in hert that stounde; On knes he fel adoun to grounde</p>	<p>“Dear sir,” he then said, “God in Heaven reward you for it! Your words are very sweet.” He had joy in his heart that moment. He fell to his knees to the ground And kissed Sir Guy’s feet. Guy took him up in his two arms And they went into Alexandria To meet with the king. And when they came into the tower Before the king, Sir Triamour, They greeted him courteously. And when the king saw Earl Jonas, He barely recognized his face, So much had his features changed.</p>
930	<p>And kist Sir Gyes fet. Gii tok him up in armes to, Into Alisaunder thai gun go With the king to mete. And when thai com into the tour Bifor the king Sir Triamour Wel fair thai gun him grete. And when he seye th’erl Jonas Unnethe he knewe him in the fas So chaunged was his ble.</p>	<p>“Earl Jonas,” said the king, “Tell me now without any lying, Guy and Herhaud—where are they?” The earl answered and sighed sadly, “I tell you the truth, You will see Guy or Herhaud no more. For them I have been in England And I could not see them anywhere;</p>
940	<p>“Erl Jonas,” seyde the king, “Telle me now withouten lesing Gii and Herhaud where ben he?” Th’erl answerd and siked sore, “Gii no Herhaud sestow no more For sothe Y telle thee. For hem ich have in Inglond ben And Y no might hem nowhar sen,</p>	<p>“I tell you the truth, You will see Guy or Herhaud no more. For them I have been in England And I could not see them anywhere;</p>

950	<p>Therefore wel wo is me. "Ac the lond folk teld me in speche That Gii was gon halwen to seche Wel fer in uncouth the lond And Herhaud after him is went For to seche him verrament. Noither of hem Y no fond. Ac this man ich have brought to thee That hath ben man of gret bounté That wele dar take on hond Ogain the gaunt that is so fel Al for to fende thee ful wel</p>	<p>Therefore woe is me. But the people Of that land told me in conversation That Guy had gone to seek out holy places, Far away in unfamiliar lands, And Herhaud had gone after him To seek him out, in truth. I found neither one of them. But I have brought this man to you Who is a warrior of great skill And will take in hand the challenge Against the giant who is so fierce, All to defend you in full.</p>
960	<p>For drede wil he nought wond." "Erl Jonas," seyde the king, "Loke with him be no feynting That Y deseived be. And yif ther be thou schalt anon Be honged and thi sones ichon." "Y graunt, sir," than seyde he. The king cleped Sir Gyoun And asked him at schort resoun, "What is thi name tel me?"</p>	<p>He will not quaver in fear." "Earl Jonas," said the king, "See that there is no cowardice in him So that I am not deceived. And if there is, you will at once Be hanged along with each of your sons." "I give my word, sir," he then replied. The king called Sir Guy to him And asked him curtly, "What is your name, tell me?"</p>
970	<p>Sir Gii answerd to the king, "Youn," he seyde, "withouten lesing Men clepeth me in mi cuntré." "What cuntré artow?" the king sede. "Of Ingland, so God me rede; Therin ich was yborn." "O we," seyde the king, "artow Inglis knight? Than schuld Y thurth skil and right Hate thee ever more.</p>	<p>Sir Guy answered the king, "Youn," he said, "Without lying, Is what men call me in my land." "From what country are you?" the king said. "From England, so God help me. I was born there." "Ah!" said the king, "You are an English knight? Then I should, by reason and right, Hate you forevermore.</p>
980	<p>Knewe thou nought the gode Gii Or Herhaud that was so hardi? Tel me the sothe bifore. Wele ought ich be Gyes fo man; He slough mi brother Helmadan, Thurth him icham forlore. "Min em he slough, the riche Soudan, Ate mete among ous everilkan. Seyghe Y never man so bigin. Y seyge hou he his heved of smot And bar it oway with him fot-hot</p>	<p>Did you not know this good Guy Or Herhaud, who was so manly? Tell me the truth to my face. I should very well be Guy's enemy. He killed my brother Helmadan. Because of him he is lost to me. He killed my uncle, the rich sultan, At his dinner, among every one of us! I never saw a man behave so! I saw how he struck his head off And carried it away with him in haste, Despite all who were there! We chased after him then. The devil helped him to get away; I believe he is of his kin.</p>
990	<p>Maugré that was therinne. After him we driven tho - The devel halp him thennes to go, Y trowe he is of his kinne. Mahoun gaf that thou wer he, Ful siker might Y than be The maistri forto winne." Sir Gii answerd to the king, "Wel wele Y knowe withouten lesing Herhaud so God me rede</p>	<p>Mohammad grant that you were him! I would then be fully certain To win the victory." Sir Guy answered the king, "So help me God, I know Herhaud Very well, without a lie. And if you had one of them here, You would be sure of triumph</p>
1000	<p>And yif thou haddest her on here Of the maistri siker thou were</p>	<p>And if you had one of them here, You would be sure of triumph</p>

1010	<p>The bateyl forto bede.” The king asked him anonright, “Whi artow thus ivel ydight And in thus pouer wede? A feble lord thou servest, so thenketh me, Or oway he hath driven thee For sum ivel dede.” “Nay, sir, for God,” quath Gii, “A wel gode Lord than serve Y. With Him was no blame. Wel michel honour He me dede And gret worthschipe in everi stede And sore ich have Him grame; And therefore icham thus ydight To cri Him merci day and night Til we ben friendes same. And mi Lord and Y frende be Ichil wende hom to mi cuntré</p>	<p>To command the battle.” The king rounded on him at once, “Then why are you so shabbily equipped And in these ragged clothes? You serve a feeble lord, it seems to me, Or he has driven you away For some evil deed.” “No, sir, by God,” replied Guy. “I serve the highest Lord of all. I have no grievance with Him. He gave me great honor And lavish blessings in every place, And I have troubled Him sorely. And therefore I am dressed To cry to Him for mercy day and night Until we are at peace together. And when my Lord and I are friends I will go home to my country And live with joy and pleasure.”²⁰</p>
1020	<p>And live with joie and game.” “Frende Youn,” seyde the king, “Wiltow fight for mi thing Other Y schal another purvay?” “Therfor com ich hider,” quath Gii, “Thurth Godes help and our Levedi As wele as Y may. Bot first th’erl Jonas and his sones Schal be deliverd out of prisones This ich selve day.”</p>	<p>“Youn, my friend,” said the king, “Will you fight for my cause Or should I hire another man?” “For this I have come,” said Guy. “Through God’s help and our Lady, I will do as well as I can. But first the earl and his sons Will be released out of prison This same day.”</p>
1030	<p>The king answerd, “Y graunt thee. Mahoun he mot thine help be That is mi lord verray.” “Nay,” seyde Gii, “bot Marie sone He mot to help come For Mahoun is worth nought.” “Frende Youn,” seyde the king, “Understond now mi teling, Al what ich have ythought Yif that thou may overcom the fight</p>	<p>The king answered, “I grant it. May Mohammad, who is My true lord, be your support.” “No,” said Guy, “only Mary’s son May be of any help, For Mohammad is worth nothing.” “My friend Youn,” said the king, “Understand now what I tell you And all that I have planned. If you can prevail in the fight And defend me with justice Against the wrong put on me, I will do so much for you That men will speak of it forevermore As far as this world is created. All the men who are in my prison Who are counted as Christians, From here to India, Will be released for love of you. They will go free by pardon,</p>
1040	<p>And defende me with right The wrong is on me sought, So michel Y schal for thee do That men schal speke therof evermo As wide as this warld is wrought. “Alle the men that in my prisoun be Thai schul be deliverd for love of thee That Cristen men be told. Fram henne to Ynde that cité Quite-claym thai schul go fre</p>	<p>That men will speak of it forevermore As far as this world is created. All the men who are in my prison Who are counted as Christians, From here to India, Will be released for love of you. They will go free by pardon,</p>

²⁰ Like Sir Amiloun’s trick of impersonating Amis, or Odysseus’ ruse of calling himself ‘Nobody’ to the Cyclops, Guy indulges in a clever speech with a double meaning. Yet here the secondary meaning of ‘Lord’ piously describes his heavenly reconciliation with God.

1050	<p>Bothe yong and old. And so gode pes Y schal festen anon That Cristen men schul comen and gon To her owhen wille in wold.” “Gramerci,” than seyde Sir Gii, “That is a fair gift sikerly, God leve thee it wele to hold.” The king dede make a bathe anonright For to bathe Gii and better dight; In silk he wald him schrede.</p>	<p>Both young and old. And I will establish such a firm peace That Christian men can come and go By their own will in the world.” “My gracious thanks,” said Sir Guy. “That is a fair gift, certainly. May God grant that you hold to it.” The king had a bath drawn at once For Guy to be bathed and better dressed. He wanted him robed in silk.</p>
1060	<p>“Nay, sir,” than seyde Sir Gii, “Swiche clothes non kepe Y Also God me rede To were clothes gold bigo For Y was never wont therto No non so worthliche wede. Mete and drink enough give me And riche clothes lat thou be, Y kepe non swiche prede.” And when the time com to th’ende</p>	<p>“No, sir,” Sir Guy said, “So help me God, I have no use For such clothes, To wear gold-embroidered finery. For it was never my desire To have such rich garments. Give me enough food and drink, And put aside fine clothes; I don’t care for such flamboyance.” And when the time came</p>
1070	<p>That thai schuld to court wende Ther sembled a fair ferred. King Triamour maked him yare tho And Fabour his sone dede also With knightes stithe on stede. To courtward than went he To Espire that riche cité With joie and michel prede. To the Soudan thai went on heye With wel gret chevalrie</p>	<p>That they should go to the court Where there was a grand assembly, King Triamour made himself ready, And his son Fabor did as well, With knights strong on their steeds. They set off for the court Of Speyer, that rich city,²¹ With joy and great ceremony. They went in haste to the sultan With a large group of knights To offer battle.</p>
1080	<p>Bateyle forto bede. Gii was ful wele in armes dight With helme and plate and brini bright The best that ever ware. The hauberk he hadde was Renis That was King Clarels, ywis, In Jerusalem when he was thare. A thef stale it in that stede And oway therwith him dede, To hethenese he it bare,</p>	<p>Guy was well-prepared in arms With helmet, armor, and shining mail, The best that ever was. The linked tunic he had was Rhenish; It was King Clarel’s, in fact, From Jerusalem when he was there. A thief stole into that place And took it away with him, Smuggling it into heathen lands.</p>
1090	<p>King Triamour’s elders it bought And in her hord-house thai thought To hold it ever mare. Sir Gii thai toke it in that plas. Thritti winter afrayd it nas; Ful clere it was of mayle As bright as ani silver it was, The halle schon therof as sonne of glas For sothe withouten fayle.</p>	<p>King Triamour’s forebears bought it And hoped to keep it forevermore In their treasure house. There they gave it to Sir Guy; It had been undisturbed for thirty years. The tunic was of gleaming mail; It was as bright as any silver. It shone in the hall like the sun on glass, To speak the truth, without doubt.</p>

²¹ *Espire*: This is likely Speyer in southern Germany, near Stuttgart, and not simply ‘spires’ generically. The city is still called *Espira* in Spanish. See also line 1702.

1100	<p>His helme was of so michel might Was never man overcomen in fight That hadde it on his ventayle. It was Alisaunders the gret lording When he faught with Poreus the king That hard him gan aseyle. A gode swerd he hadde withouten faile That was Ectors in Troye batayle, In gest as-so men fint. Ar he that swerd dede forgon Of Grece he slough ther mani on</p>	<p>His helmet was so powerfully built That no man was ever overcome in combat Who had it on his faceplate. It was Alexander the Great's When he fought with king Porus,²² Who had battled him hard. He had a good sword, beyond a doubt; It was Hector's from the Trojan battles, As men can find in legends. Before he gave up that sword, He slaughtered many a Greek</p>
1110	<p>That died thurth that dint. Hose and gambisoun so gode knight schold, A targe listed with gold About his swere he hint. Nas never wepen that ever was make That o schel might therof take Namore than of the flint. For King Triamours elders it laught, King Darri sum time it aught, That Gii was under pight.</p>	<p>Who died through its blows. He had leg-guards and jacket, As a good knight should, and around his neck He bore a shield edged with gold. There was never a weapon made That could cut through that shield Anymore than it might a piece of flint. What King Triamour's forefathers obtained, And King Darius owned for a time, Protected Sir Guy underneath.</p>
1120	<p>Ich man axe other bigan Whennes and who was that man That with the geaunt durst fight. King Triamour seyde with wordes fre "Sir Soudan, herken now to me Astow art hendy knight. To thi court icham now come To defende me of that ich gome That is so stern of sight. "This litel knight that stont me by</p>	<p>Every man began to ask the other Who that man was, and from where, Who dared to fight with the giant. King Triamour said with noble words, "Sir Sultan, hear me now, If you are a gracious knight. I have now come to your court To defend myself from that creature Who is so dreadful to see. This little knight who stands by me Will defend me from that felony And make me free and clear!"</p>
1130	<p>Schal fende me of that felonie And make me quite and skere." "Be stille," seyde the Soudan tho, "That batail schal wel sone be go Also brouke Y mi swere!" He dede clepe Amorant so grim And Gii stode and loked on him Hou foule he was of chere. "It is," seyde Gii, "no mannes sone, It is a devel fram helle is come,</p>	<p>"Be quiet," replied the sultan then. "The battle will start at once, As sure as I have head and neck!" He called for Amorant, so grim, And Guy stood and looked at him, Seeing how foul he was in appearance. "It is," Guy said, "no son of a man. It is a devil come from Hell. What wonders does he intend here? He is so strong in deeds, Who could endure his blows Without having to die hastily?"</p>
1140	<p>What wonder doth he here? "Who might his dintes dreye That he no schuld dye an heye So strong he is of dede?" Than speken thai alle of the batayle, Where it schuld be withouten fayle Thai token hem to rede. Than loked thai it schuld be</p>	<p>Then they all conferred on the battle, Where it should be beyond a doubt. They took themselves into counsel, And then decided that it should be</p>

²² Alexander battled the Indian leader Porus at the Hydaspes river, in modern Pakistan, in 326 B.C. Alexander prevailed but lost his beloved horse Bucephalus.

1150	<p>In a launde under the cité; Thider thai gun hem lede. With a river it ern al about, Therin schuld fight tho knightes stout; Thai might fle for no nede. Over the water thai went in a bot, On hors thai lopen fot-hot Tho knightes egre of mode. Thai priked the stedes that thai on sete And smiten togider with dentes grete And ferd as thai wer wode Til her schaftes in that tide</p>	<p>On a plain below the city. They began to lead themselves there. A river ran all around it. There the sturdy knights would fight; They could not flee for any need. Over the water they went in a boat. The knights, so keen in spirit, Galloped impatiently on horses. They spurred the steeds that they sat on And clashed together with great blows And warred as if they were berserk Until the moment that their lances Began to splinter on each side About them where they stood.</p>
1160	<p>Gun to schiver bi ich a side About hem ther thai stode. Than thai drough her swerdes grounde And hewe togider with grimli wounde Til thai spradde al ablode. Sir Amoraunt drough his gode brond That wele carf al that it fond When he hadde lorn his launce. That never armour might withstond That was made of smitthes hond</p>	<p>Then they drew their sharpened swords And hacked at each other with grisly wounds Until they were covered with blood. When he had lost his lance, Sir Amorant drew his best blade That easily carved all that it found. No armor that was ever made From a smith's hand might withstand it, In heathen lands or in France.</p>
1170	<p>In hethenesse no in Fraunce. It was Sir Ercules the strong That mani he slough therwith with wrong In batayle and in destauce. Ther was never man that it bere Overcomen in batayle no in were Bot it were thurth meschaunce. It was bathed in the flom of Helle, Agnes gaf it him to wille He schuld the better spede.</p>	<p>It was owned by Hercules the strong, Who killed many with it in wickedness In battle and in armed combat. There was never a man who bore it Who was overcome in battle or in war Unless it was through treachery. It was bathed in the streams of Hell Where a goddess gave it to him to wield²³ So that he would have better fortune. Whoever bore that sword of command Was never defeated in a fight by man Unless it was through deceitfulness.</p>
1180	<p>Who that bar that swerd of might Was never man overcomen in fight Bot it were thurth unlede. Ther worth Sir Gii to deth ybrought Bot yif God have of him thought, His best help at nede. Togider thai wer yern heweinde With her brondes wele kerveinde And maden her sides blede.</p>	<p>Sir Guy would have been brought to death there Had God not thought of him, His best help in time of need. They were briskly clashing together With their blades sharpened well, And they made their sides bleed.</p>
1190	<p>Sir Amoraunt was agreved in hert And smot to Gii a dint ful smert With alle the might he gan welde And hitt him on the helme so bright That alle the stones of michel might Fleyghe doun in the feld.</p>	<p>Sir Amorant was distressed at heart And struck a stinging blow on Guy With all the might he could muster, And hit him on the shining helmet So that all the stones of great value Fell down onto the field.</p>

²³ *Agnes gaf it him*: The identity of *Agnes* is unknown. TEAMS posits that the English scribe heard line 8467 of *Gui de Warewic*, “Une deuisse la li dona” (“a goddess gave it to him”), and misheard *une deuisse*, ‘a goddess,’ as ‘Agnes.’ Hercules was not unconditionally good and was also known for cheating and murder. The scribe might also have heard *ogress*.

1200	<p>Al of the helme the swerd out stint And forth right with that selve dint Other half fot of the scheld That never was atamed ar than For knight no for no nother man No were he never so beld. The sadelbowe he clef atuo, The stedes nek he dede also With his grimli brond; Withouten wem or ani wounde Wele half a fot into the grounde The scharp swerd it wond. Sir Gii to grounde fallen is, He stirt up anon, ywis, And loked and gan withstond.</p>	<p>The sword struck down all of the helmet, And that same blow sheared away A foot and a half of the shield, Which had never been conquered before By knight or by any other man, No matter how bold he was. He split the saddle pommel in two; He broke the steed's neck as well With his fearsome blade. Without any injury or damage, The sharp sword plunged down Well more than half a foot into the earth. Sir Guy was brought to the ground. He jumped up at once, in truth, And looked and stood firmly.</p>
1210	<p>Anon right in that ich stede To God almighten he bad his bede And held up bothe his hond. Sir Gii anon up stirt As man that was agremed in hert; Nought wel long he lay. “Lord,” seyde Gii, “God Almighty That made the therkenes to the night So help me today. Scheld me fro this geaunt strong</p>	<p>Immediately at that moment He made his prayer to God Almighty And held up both his hands. Sir Guy rose up at once Like a man enraged in heart. He did not lie down for long. “Lord,” said Guy, “God Almighty, Who made the darkness into night, So help me today! Shield me from this strong giant So that I do not suffer death from him, For you are truly the Lord.”</p>
1220	<p>That Y no deth of him afong Astow art lord verray. That dint,” he seyde, “was ivel sett Wele schal Y com out of thi dett, Yif that Y libbe may.” Gii hent his swerd that was ful kene And smot Amoraunt with hert tene A dint that sat ful sore That a quarter of his scheld He made to fleye in the feld</p>	<p>He then said to Amorant, “That blow Was foully struck. I will repay you well, If I may live to do it.” Guy raised his keen sword And with a furious heart he struck Amorant With a blow that fell sorely, So that he made a quarter of his shield Fly to the ground With his deadly blade.</p>
1230	<p>Al with his grimli gore. The stedes nek he smot atuo, Amoraunt to grounde is fallen tho, Wo was him therfore. Than were on fot tho knightes bold, Fight o fot yif thai wold - Her stedes thai han forlore. Amoraunt with hert ful grim Smot to Gii, and Gii to him With strokes stern and stive.</p>	<p>He struck the steed's neck in two, And Amorant was thrown to the ground. He was in distress over it. Then those bold knights were on foot, And would fight on their feet if they could, Now that they had lost their horses. Amorant, with a savage heart, Struck at Guy, and Guy at him, With strokes that were harsh and stiff.</p>
1240	<p>Hard thai hewe with swerdes clere That helme and swerd that strong were Thai gun hem al todrive. Hard foughten tho champiouns That bothe plates and hauberjouns Thai gun to ret and rive; And laiden on with dintes gret Aither of hem so other gan bete That wo was hem olive.</p>	<p>They hacked so fiercely with shining blades, Their helmets and swords which were so strong Were broken into pieces. The champions fought so hard That both their armor and mailcoats Began to split and crack. They fought on with merciless blows. Both of them beat on the other So that it was torment to remain alive.</p>

1250	<p>Sir Amoraunt was agreved strong That o man stode him tho so long, To Gii a strok he raught And hit him on the helme so bright That al the floures fel down right With a ful grimly draught. The cercl of gold he carf ato And forth with his dint also, Ther bileved it nought. On the scheld the swerd down fel And cleve it into halvendel;</p>	<p>Sir Amorant was strongly vexed That one man had withstood him so long. He reached a blow toward Guy And hit him on the shining helmet With a thundering stroke So that all the jeweled flowers fell right off. He carved in two the band of gold And yet continued forward with his stroke And did not hold back there. The sword came down on the shield And cleaved it into halves, Almost bringing him to the ground. But in drawing out the sword, And with his hotly disengaging it, There was a wondrous happening. Sir Guy fell on his knees to the ground And got up in the same moment And said, "Lord, full of grace, Never before has the blow of any knight Made me kneel down In any place where I was!"</p>
1260	<p>Almost to grounde him brought. What with the swerdes out draweing, And with his hetelich out braiding Ther fel a wonder cas. Sir Gii fel on knes to grounde And stirt up in that selve stounde And seyde, "Lord, ful of grace, Never dint of knight non No might me are knele don In no stede ther Y was."</p>	<p>Sir Guy flung up his sword in haste And struck Amorant on the hood So that he stumbled in his tracks. He hit him on the helmet in a rush And with that blow the sword passed on; Along the nose-guard it moved down And did the same at the face-guard, And carved them in two, beyond doubt, And cut a wound into his flesh. His shield with its golden rim Was cut into two through the help of Christ. He cleaved it in the same instant. So violently did he draw the blade out That Amorant at once Fell on his knees to the ground. There was such a furious fight between them That those who could observe it Said they had never seen one like it. There were never two knights Born of women as they were Who fought together with such rage On the day before the nativity Of Saint John the righteous martyr, To whom holy men appeal.²⁴ Both of the warriors fought together, Who were so wrathful in heart. There were no words of affection!</p>
1270	<p>Sir Gii hent up his swerd fot-hot, Amoraunt on the hod he smot That he stumbled in the place. He hit him on the helme an heyghe And with that dint the swerd it fleyghe, Bi the nasel it gan down founde And so it dede bi the ventayle And carf it ato saunfaile And into his flesche a wounde. His targe with gold list</p>	<p>Sir Guy flung up his sword in haste And struck Amorant on the hood So that he stumbled in his tracks. He hit him on the helmet in a rush And with that blow the sword passed on; Along the nose-guard it moved down And did the same at the face-guard, And carved them in two, beyond doubt, And cut a wound into his flesh. His shield with its golden rim Was cut into two through the help of Christ. He cleaved it in the same instant. So violently did he draw the blade out That Amorant at once Fell on his knees to the ground. There was such a furious fight between them That those who could observe it Said they had never seen one like it. There were never two knights Born of women as they were Who fought together with such rage On the day before the nativity Of Saint John the righteous martyr, To whom holy men appeal.²⁴ Both of the warriors fought together, Who were so wrathful in heart. There were no words of affection!</p>
1280	<p>He carf atuo thurth help of Crist He cleve that ich stounde. So heteliche the brond out he plight That Amorant anonright Fel on knes to grounde. So strong batayle was hem bituene, So seyde thai that might it sene, That seye thai never non swiche; That never was of wiman born Swiche to knightes as thai worn</p>	<p>Sir Guy flung up his sword in haste And struck Amorant on the hood So that he stumbled in his tracks. He hit him on the helmet in a rush And with that blow the sword passed on; Along the nose-guard it moved down And did the same at the face-guard, And carved them in two, beyond doubt, And cut a wound into his flesh. His shield with its golden rim Was cut into two through the help of Christ. He cleaved it in the same instant. So violently did he draw the blade out That Amorant at once Fell on his knees to the ground. There was such a furious fight between them That those who could observe it Said they had never seen one like it. There were never two knights Born of women as they were Who fought together with such rage On the day before the nativity Of Saint John the righteous martyr, To whom holy men appeal.²⁴ Both of the warriors fought together, Who were so wrathful in heart. There were no words of affection!</p>
1290	<p>That foughten togider with wreche On a day bifor the nativité Of Seyn Jon the martir fre That holy man is to seche. Togider fought tho barouns bothe That in hert wer so wrothe, Of love was ther no speche.</p>	<p>Sir Guy flung up his sword in haste And struck Amorant on the hood So that he stumbled in his tracks. He hit him on the helmet in a rush And with that blow the sword passed on; Along the nose-guard it moved down And did the same at the face-guard, And carved them in two, beyond doubt, And cut a wound into his flesh. His shield with its golden rim Was cut into two through the help of Christ. He cleaved it in the same instant. So violently did he draw the blade out That Amorant at once Fell on his knees to the ground. There was such a furious fight between them That those who could observe it Said they had never seen one like it. There were never two knights Born of women as they were Who fought together with such rage On the day before the nativity Of Saint John the righteous martyr, To whom holy men appeal.²⁴ Both of the warriors fought together, Who were so wrathful in heart. There were no words of affection!</p>

²⁴ *Seyn Jon the martir fre*: There is a John the Martyr (d. about 362), but TEAMS believes John the Baptist is more likely here, a highly popular saint who was, significantly, also martyred by beheading. His nativity is traditionally celebrated on June 24.

1300	<p>Sir Amoraunt withdrough him With loureand chere wroth and grim, For the blod of him was lete, That drink he most other his liif forgon So strong thrust yede him opon So michel was his hete. “Fourti batayls ichave overcome Ac fond Y never er moder sone That me so sore gan bete. Tel me,” he seyd, “what artow? Felt Y never man ar now That gaf dintes so grete.</p>	<p>Sir Amorant withdrew himself With a glowering face, angry and grim. For his blood was flowing; He had to drink or else lose his life. Thirst ravaged him strongly, For he was badly overheated. “I have prevailed in forty battles, But I never before met any mother’s son Who beat on me so sorely. Tell me,” he said, “who are you? I never felt any man before now Who gave such hard blows.</p>
1310	<p>“Tel me,” he seyd, “wennes thou be? For thou art strong, so mot Y the, And of michel might.” Sir Gii answerd withouten bost, “Cristen icham wele thou wost Of Ingland born, Y plight. King Triamour me hider brought For to defenden him yif Y mought Of that michel unright That ye beren on him with wough That Fabour never Sadony slough</p>	<p>Tell me,” he said, “where are you from? For you are strong, as I live and die, And of great might.” Sir Guy answered without boasting, “I am a Christian, you know well, Born in England, I assure you. King Triamour brought me here To defend him if I might From that great injustice That you charge on him wrongly, For Fabor never murdered Sadok, Neither by day or night.”²⁵</p>
1320	<p>Noither bi day no night.” “O artow Inglis?” seyd Amorant. “Now wald mi lord Ternagaunt That thou were Gii the strong. Mahoun gaf that thou wer he, Blithe wald Y than be Batail of him to fong; For he hath destrud al our lawe His heved wald ichave ful fawe Or heighe on galwes hong;</p>	<p>“Ah, are you English?” said Amorant. “Now if my lord Termagant would grant That you were Guy the strong! Mohammad grant that you were him! I would be happy then To face him in battle. For he has fought against our religion.²⁶ I would very gladly have his head Or see it hung high on the gallows.</p>
1330	<p>For kever schal we never er more That he hath don ous forlore With wel michel wrong. “With michel wrong and michel wough Fourti thousand of ous he slough In Costentin on a day. He and Herhaud his felawe Michel han destrud our lawe That ever more mon Y may. Yif he wer slain with brond of stiel</p>	<p>We will never again recover What he has caused us to lose With shameful wickedness! With injustice and with great woe He slaughtered forty thousand of us In Constantinople on one day. He and his comrade Herhaud Have done great damage to our faith, Which I could lament for ever more! If he were slain with a blade of steel, Then I would be fully avenged on him Who has injured our religion.”</p>
1340	<p>Than were Y wroken on him ful wel That han destrud our lay.” Sir Gii answerd, “Whi seistow so?</p>	<p>Sir Guy answered, “Why do you say so?</p>

²⁵ Fabor certainly does murder Sadok, though he is provoked. Either the poet errs or wants Sir Guy to be innocent of that fact to heighten his altruism. Otherwise Guy knowingly champions a guilty man, Triamour, even if for the purposes of aiding Jonas.

²⁶ Amorant is referring to an episode in the Couplet *Guy of Warwick*, 2869-4096, where Guy defends Constantinople from a Saracen invasion. The Muslims do ‘recover’ Constantinople in 1453.

1350	<p>Hath Gii ani thing thee misdo?" Amoraunt seyde, "Nay, "Ac it wer gret worthschip, ywis, To alle the folk of hethenisse That Y hadde so wroken mi kende. Cristen," he seyde, "listen to me, The weder is hot astow may se, Y pray thee, leve frende, Leve to drink thou lat me gon For the lordes love thou levest on, Astow art gode and hende. For thrist mi hert wil tospring And for hete withouten lesing Mi live wil fro me wende. "And yif Y schal be thus aqueld Thurth strong hete in the feld It were ogain thee skille.</p>	<p>Has Guy done <i>you</i> any wrong?" Amorant said, "No, But it would bring great honor, indeed, To all the people of the caliphate For me to avenge my brothers. Christian," he said, "listen to me. As you can see, the weather is hot. I ask of you, good friend, That you give me time to go drink, For the love of the gods you believe in, If you are good and noble. For my heart will burst from thirst, And because of heat, without a lie, My life will depart from me. And if I am killed in this way, Overcome by heat on the field, It would demean your battle skills.</p>
1360	<p>Unworthschipe it war to thee - It were thee gret vileté In wat lond thou com tille. Ac lete me drink a litel wight For thi lordes love ful of might That thou lovest with wille And Y thee hot bi mi lay Yif thou have ani threst today Thou shalt drink al thi fille."</p>	<p>It would not be praiseworthy to you. It would stain you with great villainy In whatever land you come to.²⁷ But let me drink a little bit For your lord's love, full of might, That you love with all your will; And I promise you by my faith, If you have any thirst today You will drink your fill."</p>
1370	<p>Sir Gii answerd, "Y graunt thee And yete today thou yeld it me Withouten ani fayle." And when he hadde leve of Sir Gii He was ful glad sikerli, No lenger nold he dayle. To the river ful swithe he ran, His helme of his heved he nam And unlaced his ventayle. When he hadde dronken alle his fille</p>	<p>Sir Guy answered, "I grant it to you If you yield it back to me today Without failure." And when he had consent from Sir Guy, He was very glad, for certain. He did not delay any longer. He ran quickly to the river. He took off his helmet from his head And unlaced his face-piece. When he had drunk all his fill, He started up with a savage heart And began to attack Sir Guy.</p>
1380	<p>And Sir Gii he gan to asayle. "Knight," he seyde, "yeld thee bilive For thou art giled, so mot Y thrive. Now ichave a drink Icham as fresche as ich was amorwe. Thou schalt dye with michel sorwe For sothe withouten lesing."</p>	<p>"Knight," he said, "surrender yourself fast, For as I live and die, you are tricked. Now that I have a drink I am as fresh as I was in the morning. You will die in great sorrow In truth, without a lie."</p>

²⁷ This battle sequence is the longest and most detailed of these romance texts. Armor was heavy and built for mounted charges, not day-long combat in a Mediterranean summer. The danger of becoming overheated would be a very real one, and is used here to increase Guy's nobility when his sense of fair play is deceived. The line between genteel chivalry and naivety could be a delicate one in literature. In *The Battle of Maldon*, Byrthnoth permits the invading Vikings time to regroup on shore when the tide comes in, and the English are defeated. The nuance of the poet's word-choice, *ofermode*—pride, recklessness, or sporting courtesy—is still debated.

1390	<p>Than thai drowen her swerdes long Tho knightes that wer stern and strong Withouten more dueling And aither gan other ther asayle And ther bigan a strong bataile With wel strong fighting. Amoraunt was ful egre of mode And smot to Gii as he wer wode - Ful egre he was to fight - That a quarter of his scheld He made it fleye into the feld And of his brini bright.</p>	<p>Then they drew their long swords, Those knights who were stern and strong, Without more delay, And each assaulted the other. And there was again a ferocious battle With furious fighting. Amorant was keen in spirit And struck at Guy as if he were mad. He was so eager to fight That he made a quarter of his shield Fly onto the field.</p>
1400	<p>Of his scholder the swerd glod doun That bothe plates and hauberjoun He carf atuo, Y plight. Al to the naked hide, ywis, And nought of flesche atamed is Thurth grace of God almighty. The scharp swerd doun gan glide Fast bi Sir Gyes side - His knew it com ful neye - That gambisoun and jambler Bothe it karf atuo yfere;</p>	<p>And on Guy's gleaming coat of mail The sword streaked down his shoulder So that he carved both armor and mail Into two, I swear, Almost to the naked skin. But no flesh was pierced Through the grace of God Almighty. The sharp sword glided down Close along Sir Guy's side, Coming very near his knee So that it split in two Both his jacket and leg-armor together.</p>
1410	<p>Into th'erthe the swerd it fleye Withouten wem or ani wounde Half a fot into the grounde, That mani man it seye. And when Gii seye that fair grace That nothing wounded he was Jhesu he thanked on heye. And when Gii feld him so smite He was wroth ye mow wite; To Amoraunt he gan reken</p>	<p>The sword was thrust into the earth Half a foot into the ground Without any damage or injury; That was seen by many men. And when Sir Guy saw that fair blessing So that he had no wounds, He thanked Jesus on high. And when Guy felt himself hit so, He was angered, you might be sure; He charged on Amorant.</p>
1420	<p>He hent his brond with wel gode wille And stroke to him with hert grille; His scheld he gan tobreken. So hetelich Gii him smot That into the scholder half a fot The gode swerd gan reken. And with that strok Gii withdrough Weri he was forfoughten ynough, To Amoraunt he gan speken. "Sir Amoraunt," than seyde Gii,</p>	<p>He grasped his blade with firm will And struck at him with raging heart, Shattering his shield. Guy hit him in such frenzy That the good sword ran Half a foot into the shoulder. With that stroke Guy withdrew. He was weary enough of fighting And began to address Amorant. "Sir Amorant," said Guy,</p>
1430	<p>"For Godes love now merci Yif that thi wille be. I have swiche thrist ther Y stonde Y may unnethe drawe min hond Therefore wel wo is me. Yeld me now that ich dede, Y gaf thee leve to drink at nede. Astow art hende and fre, Leve to drink thou lat me go As it was covenant bituen ous to</p>	<p>"For God's love, have mercy now If it be your will. I have such thirst where I stand I can hardly lift my hand; Therefore woe is me! Grant me now that same favor: I gave you leave to drink in your need. If you are courteous and noble, Give me space to go drink As it was agreed between us.</p>
1440	<p>For Godes love Y pray thee."</p>	<p>For God's love, I beseech you."</p>

	<p>“Hold thi pes,” seyde Amoraunt, “For bi mi lord Sir Ternagaunt Leve no hastow non. Ac now that Y the sothe se That thou ginnes to feynt thee Thine heved thou schalt forgon.” “Amoraunt,” seyde Gii, “do aright, Lete me drink a litel wight As Y dede thee anon 1450 And togider fight we; Who schal be maister we schal se Wiche of ous may other slon.” “Hold thi pays,” seyde Amoraunt, “Y nil nought held thee coveaunt For ful this toun of gold, For when ichave thee sleyn now right The Soudan troweli hath me hight His lond gif me he schold Ever more to have and hold fre 1460 And give me his douhter bright o ble, The miriest may on mold. When ichave thee sleyn this day He schal give me that fair may With alle his lond to hold. “Ac do now wele and unarme thee And trowelich yeld thou thee to me Olive Y lat thee gon. And yif thou wilt nought do bi mi red Thou schalt dye on ivel ded 1470 Right now Y schal thee slon.” “Nay,” seyde Gii, “that war no lawe. Ich hadde lever to ben todrawe Than swiche a dede to don. Ar ich wald creaunt yeld me Ich hadde lever anhangen be And brent bothe flesche and bon.” Than seyde Amoraunt at a word “Bi the treuthe thou owe thi lord That thou lovest so dere 1480 Tel me what thi name it be And leve to drink give Y thee Thi fille of this river. Thou seyde thi name is Sir Youn; It is nought so bi Seyn Mahoun, It is a lesing fere. Yif thi name were Youn right Thou nere nought of so miche might No thus unbiknowen here.” “Frende,” seyde Gii, “Y schal telle thee; 1490 Astow art hendi man and fre Thou wray me to no wight. Gii of Warwike mi name it is, In Inglond Y was born, ywis. Lete me now drink with right.”</p>	<p>“Shut your mouth,” said Amoraunt. “By my lord Sir Termagant, I will give you no relief. But now that I see the truth, That you are becoming faint, You will soon be without your head.” “Amoraunt,” said Guy, “act rightly. Let me drink a little bit As I did for you before And we will fight together. We will see who will be master, And which of us will slay the other.” “Hold your tongue,” said Amoraunt. “I won’t hold my agreement with you For a town full of gold. For after I have slain you soon, The sultan has faithfully promised me That he will give me his land Evermore to have and hold free, And give me his daughter with the fair face, The merriest maid on earth. When I have killed you this day, He will give me that beautiful girl With all his land to hold. But now it would be best to unarm yourself And yield yourself to me faithfully And I will let you go alive. And if you will not do as I advise, You will die a foul death. I will slay you right now.” “No,” said Guy, “That would not be right. I would rather be dismembered Than do such a deed. Before I would grant myself defeated, I would rather be hanged And have both flesh and bone burned.” Then Amoraunt said, in few words, “By the loyalty you owe your lord That you love so dear, Tell me what your name is And I will give you leave to drink Your fill of this river! You said your name is Sir Youn; It is not so, by Saint Mohammad! It is a lying trick. If your name was in fact Youn, You would not be of so much might And still be unknown here!” “Friend,” said Guy, “I will tell you. If you are a noble and free-born man, Betray me to no one. My name is Guy of Warwick. I was indeed born in England. Now let me rightly drink.”</p>
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1500	<p>When Amoraunt seye sikerly That it was the gode Gii That ogaines him was dight He loked on him with michel wrake, Sternliche with his eyghen blake With an unsemli sight. “Sir Gii,” he seyde, “welcom to me. Mahoun, mi lord, Y thank thee That ich have thee herinne. Michel schame thou hast me don, Thi liif thou schalt as tite forgon, Thi bodi schal atuinne And thine heved, bi Ternagant, Mi leman schal have to presaunt That comly is of kinne.</p>	<p>When Amorant saw clearly That it was the good Guy Who was set against him, He looked at him with great wrath, Coldly with his black eyes, With a hideous glare. “Sir Guy,” he said, “welcome! I thank Mohammad, my lord That I have you here! You have caused me great shame. You will in short time lose your life; Your body will be cut in two. And your head, by Termagant, Will be a present to my lover, Who is of a fine lineage.</p>
1510	<p>Hennes forward siker thou be Leve no tit thee non of me For al this ward to winne.” “Allas,” seyde Gii, “what schal Y don? Now Y no may have drink non Mine hert breketh ato.” Anon he bithought him thenne Right to the river he most renne; He turned him and gan to go. Amoraunt with swerd on hond</p>	<p>From here on you can be sure that I won’t permit you to do anything, Not for all this world.” “Alas!” said Guy, “what will I do Now that I cannot have a drink? My heart is breaking in two.” At once he resolved to himself That he must run straight to the river; He turned away and began to go. Amorant, with his sword in hand, Thought he had brought Guy to ruin And that he would slay him in pain. Guy ran straight into the water; Unless he called on God Almighty He would never come up again. Sir Guy was then in great fear. He stood in the water up to his waist, And it felt refreshing to him.</p>
1520	<p>He thought have driven Gii to schond With sorwe he wald him slo. Gii ran to the water right, Bot on him thenke God Almighty Up cometh he never mo. Tho was Sir Gii in gret drede. In the water he stode to his girdel stede And that thought him ful gode. In the water he dept his heved anon Over the schulders he dede it gon</p>	<p>That cooled his blood well. And when Sir Guy had drunk enough, He hurriedly pulled his head up Out of those waters. Amorant stood upon the land With a sword drawn in hand And struck Guy where he stood. He hit Guy fiercely; He fell down into the water From that ugly blow So that the water ran about him. Sir Guy started up in great fear, For he would delay for nothing, And he shook his head as a hardy knight. “I am very cold from this water In my stomach, back, and sides; And I had no permission from you. Therefore, may you have great shame And may evil fortune befall you.”</p>
1530	<p>That keled wele his blod. And when Gii hadde dronken anough Hetelich his heved up he drough Out of that ich flod And Amoraunt stode opon the lond With a drawn swerd in hond And smot Gii ther he stode. Hetelich he smot Gyoun, Into that water he fel adoun With that dint unride</p>	<p>At once he dipped his head in the water, Diving in past the shoulders. That cooled his blood well. And when Sir Guy had drunk enough, He hurriedly pulled his head up Out of those waters. Amorant stood upon the land With a sword drawn in hand And struck Guy where he stood. He hit Guy fiercely; He fell down into the water From that ugly blow So that the water ran about him. Sir Guy started up in great fear, For he would delay for nothing, And he shook his head as a hardy knight. “I am very cold from this water In my stomach, back, and sides; And I had no permission from you. Therefore, may you have great shame And may evil fortune befall you.”</p>
1540	<p>That the water arn him about. Sir Gii stirt up in gret dout, For nothing he nold abide, And schoke his heved as knight bold. “In this water icham ful cold Wombe, rigge, and side And no leve, sir, ich hadde of thee And therefore have thou miche maugré And ivel thee mot bitide.”</p>	<p>Therefore, may you have great shame And may evil fortune befall you.”</p>

1550	<p>Sir Gii stirt up withouten fayl And Amoraunt he gan to asayl; To fight he was ful boun. Hard togider thai gan to fight; Of love was ther no speche, Y plight, Bot heweing with swerdes broun. “Amoraunt,” than seyde Gii, “Thou art ful fals sikerly And fulfilt of tresoun. No more wil Y trust to thee For no bihest thou hotest me.</p>	<p>Sir Guy jumped up, without fail, And began to attack Amoraunt. He was very keen to fight. They again fought fiercely together. There were no words of affection, I guarantee, But hacking with shining swords. “Amoraunt,” Guy said then, “You are completely false, for sure, And filled full of treason. I will not trust you anymore With any promise you make me. You are a two-faced beast.”²⁸</p>
1560	<p>Thou art a fals glotoun.” Hard togider thai gun fight Fro the morwe to the night That long somers day. So long thai foughten bothe tho Wiche was the better of hem to No man chese no may. Bot at a strok as Amoraunt cast Sir Gii mett with him in hast And taught him a sori play.</p>	<p>They battled together ferociously From the morning to the night All that long summer’s day. Both of them fought so long That no one could choose Which was the better of them. But as Amoraunt thrust one stroke Sir Guy met with him in haste And taught him a painful lesson.</p>
1570	<p>The right arme with the swerd fot-hot Bi the scholder of he it smot, To grounde it fleye oway. When Amoraunt feld him so smite In his left hond with michel hete The swerd he hent fot-hot. As a lyoun than ferd he, Thritti sautes he made and thre With his swerd that wel bot. Bot for the blod that of him ran</p>	<p>He slashed off his right arm with his sword, At the shoulder in a sudden stroke. It flew away to the ground. When Amoraunt felt himself struck so, With great ferocity he hastily Grabbed the sword in his left hand. He then fought like a lion. He made thirty charges and three more With a sword that could bite well. But because of the blood that ran from him, Amoraunt’s strength began to fade.</p>
1580	<p>Amoraunt strengthe slake bigan. When Gii that soth wot That Amoraunt was faynting Sir Gii him folwed withouten dueling; That other hond of he smot. When Amoraunt had bothe hondes forlore A wreche he held himself therfore; His wit was al todreved. On Sir Gii he lepe with alle his might That almost he had feld him doun right,</p>	<p>When Guy realized the fact, That Amoraunt was faltering, Sir Guy followed him without delay And struck off his other hand. When Amoraunt had lost both hands He considered himself finished; His wits were all lost. He leaped with all his might on Sir Guy So that he almost brought him down.</p>
1590	<p>And Sir Gii was agreved And stirt bisiden fot-hot, And Amoraunt in the nek he smot. His might he hath him bireved; He fel to grounde withouten faile And Sir Gii unlaced his ventayle And he strok of his heved.</p>	<p>But Sir Guy was alert And jumped aside quickly, And he slashed Amoraunt in the neck. He had deprived him of his force; He fell to the ground without question. Sir Guy unlaced his face-shield And he struck off his head.</p>

²⁸ *Gloutoun*: Cohen explains that giants are often called *gluttons* in medieval romance to emphasize their “gross, ingestive corporeality” in contrast to the hero’s “Christian self-control.” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University Press, 1997), 105.

	<p>Over the water he went in a bot And present therwith fot-hot The king Sir Triamour.</p>	<p>He went over the water in a boat And quickly presented the head To the king, Sir Triamour.</p>
1600	<p>The king Sir Triamour than Went to that riche Soudan And also his sone Fabour. Than was the Soudan swithe wo, Quite-claim he lete hem go With wel michel honour. Into Alisaunder thai went that cité And ladde with hem Sir Gii the fre That hadde ben her socour.</p>	<p>King Triamour then went To that rich sultan And also his son Fabor. Then the sultan was in great sorrow; He pardoned him and let them go With great and stately honor. They went into the city of Alexandria And brought with them Sir Guy the brave Who had been their champion.</p>
1610	<p>The king tok th' erl Jonas tho And clept him in his armes to And kist him swete, ich wene, An hundred times and yete mo And quite-claim he lete him go And his sones fiftene. “Erl Jonas,” seyde the king, “Herken now to my teling And what ichil mene: For mi liif thou savedest me Half mi lond ich graunt thee</p>	<p>The king then took Earl Jonas And embraced him in his two arms And kissed him warmly, I believe, A hundred times and more, And he pardoned and released him With his fifteen sons. “Earl Jonas,” said the king, “Listen now to my speech And to what I intend. Because you have saved my life, I will grant you half my land With this knight, strong and keen.</p>
1620	<p>With this knight strong and kene. “Understond to me, sir knight, Mahoun gave ful of might Thou wost duelle with me; Thridde part mi lond Y give thee to, Michel honour ichil thee do, A riche prince make thee. Y nil nought thou forsake God thine; Thou art bileveand wele afine, Better may no be.”</p>	<p>Agree to me, sir knight, Who Mohammad filled with might, That you will stay with me. I will give you a third part of my land; I will do you great honor And make you a rich prince. I will not make you forsake your God! You are a devout and true believer; There can be no one better.”</p>
1630	<p>Sir Gii answerd him ful stille: “Sir, of thi lond nought Y nille For sothe Y telle thee.” That erl to Jerusalem went anon, Gii of Warwike with him gan gon And alle his sones on rawe. Th' erl wold yif he might Wite the name of that knight Yif he him evermore sawe.</p>	<p>Sir Guy answered him gently: “Sir, I tell you the truth, I want none of your land.” The earl at once set off for Jerusalem, And Guy of Warwick went with him, And all his sons together. The earl wanted to, if he could, Learn the name of that knight For if he ever saw him again.</p>
1640	<p>“In conseyll, sir knight,” than seyde he, “Thou Youn dost clep thee, Thou no hatest nought so Y trowe. For Jhesu love Y pray thee That died on the Rode tre Thi right name be aknawe.” Sir Gii seyde, “Thou schalt now here Sethen thou frainest me in this maner; Mi name ichil thee sayn: Gii of Warwike mi name is right, Astow art hende and gentil knight</p>	<p>“In confidence, sir knight,” he said, “Though you call yourself Youn, I do not believe that is your name. For the love of Jesus, Who died On the wooden Cross, I ask you To reveal your real name.” Sir Guy said, “You will now hear it, Since you have asked me in this manner. I will tell you my name. My real name is Sir Guy of Warwick. If you are a gracious and noble knight, You will not betray me to anyone.</p>
1650	<p>To non thou schalt me wrayn.</p>	

1660	<p>Batayl for thi love Y nam And the geaunt overcam; Therof ich am ful fain.” When th’erl seye it was Sir Gii He fel down on knes him bi And wepe with both his ayn. “For Godes love,” he seyde, “merci. Whi artow so pouer Sir Gii And art of so gret valour? Here ich give thee in this place Al th’erldam of Durras Cité and castel tour. Thi man ichil bicomem and be And alle mi sones forth with me Schal com to thi socour; For the priis of hethen lond Thou hast thurth douhtines of hond Wonne with gret vigour.” “Erl Jonas,” than seyde Sir Gii, “Mi leve frende, gramerci. For thi gode wille Than schustow hire me al to dere To give me thi lond in swiche maner; Therof nought Y nille. To your owen cuntré wendeth hom, God biteche Y you everichon; Mi way ichil fulfille.” Thai went and kist him everi man, Th’erl so sore wepe bigan That might him no man stille. Th’erl to Durras went anon And his sones everichon Were scaped out of care. Gii than in his way is nome. For that the geaunt was overcome Ful blithe than was he thare. Into Grece than went he And sought halwen of that cuntré The best that ther ware.</p>	<p>For your love I faced battle And overcame the giant; For that I am very glad.” When the earl saw he was Sir Guy, He fell down by him on his knees And wept with both eyes. “For God’s love,” he said, “thank you. Why are you so penniless, Sir Guy, When you are of such great valor? I will give you here in this place All the earldom of Durrës, The city and the castle tower. I will become your man and serve you, And all my sons along with me Will come to your support. For you have won victory in heathen lands Through your bravery in arms And great vigor.” “Earl Jonas,” Sir Guy then answered, “My dear friend, kind thanks For your good will. You would repay me far too dearly To give me your lands in such a way. I will have none of them. Make your way home to your country; May God be with each one of you. I will fulfill my pilgrimage.” Every man went up and kissed him. The earl began to weep so bitterly That no man was able to calm him. The earl went at once to Durrës With each one of his sons, Who had escaped out of danger. Guy then took his way. He was full of joy there, For the giant had been overcome. He went into Greece And looked for the holy places of that land, The best that there were.</p>
1670	<p>1680</p>	<p>1690</p>
1680	<p>1690</p>	<p>1700</p>
1690	<p>1710</p>	<p>1720</p>
1700	<p>1730</p>	<p>1740</p>

²⁹ *Costentine*: The poet could mean Cotentin, now the Cherbourg peninsula in Normandy. *King Richard in Auchinleck* has the king traveling “Bi Brandis & bi Costentine” (78), modern Brandis, near Leipzig, on the way to Marseilles. TEAMS feels that Constantinople is meant, which makes the most sense and explains why Guy travels there from Greece (1687-92) and calls it “biyond the Grekis Se” (2049).

	<p>His sinnes forto bete. In Almaine than went he, ywis, 1700 Ther he was sumtime holden of gret pris. He com to a four way lete Biyonde Espire, that riche cité, Under a croice was maked of tre, A pilgrim he gan mete, That wrong his honden and wepe sore And cursed the time that he was bore, “Allas!” it was his song. “Wayleway,” he seyde, “that stounde! 1710 Wickedliche icham brought to grounde With wel michel wrong.” Sir Gii went to him tho, “Man,” he seys, “whi farstow so? So God geve thee joie to fong, Tel me what thi name it be And whi thou makest thus gret pité, Me thenke thi paynes strong.” “Gode man,” seyde the pilgrim tho, “What hastow to frein me so? Swiche sorwe icham in sought 1720 That thei Y told thee alle mi care, For thee might Y never the better fare; To grounde ich am so brought.” “Yis,” seyde Gii, “bi the gode Rode, Conseyl Y can give thee gode And tow telle me thi thought, For oft it falleth uncouth the man That gode conseyle give can, Therefore hele it nought.” “For God,” he seyde, “thou seyst ful wel. 1730 Sumtime ich was, bi Seyn Mighel, An erl of gret pousté. Thurth al Cristendom, ywis, Ich was teld a man of gret pris And of gret bounté; And now icham a wroche beggare. No wonder thei icham ful of care Allas, wel wo is me.” For sorwe he might speke namore; He gan to wepe swithe sare 1740 That Gii hadde of him pité. Than seyde the pilgrim, “Thou hast gret wrong To frain me of mi sorwe strong And might nought bete mi nede. To begge mi brede Y mot gon, Sethen yistay at none ete Y non Also God me rede.” “Yis, felawe,” quath Gii, “hele it naught. Telle me whi thou art in sorwe braught, The better thou schalt spede 1750 And sethen we schul go seche our mete. Ichave a pani of old biyete,</p>	<p>To atone for his sins. Then he went to Germany, in fact, Where he was once held in great esteem. He came to a four-way crossroads Outside of Speyer, that rich city. Under a cross made from a tree, He came across a pilgrim Who wrung his hands and wept bitterly And cursed the time that he was born. “Alas!” was his refrain. “Woe is me,” he cried, “for that time! I am wickedly brought to the earth With great and evil injustice!” Sir Guy then went to him. “Fellow,” he said, “why do you act like this? So God give you the hope of joy, Tell me what your name is And why you mourn so pitifully. It seems your suffering is strong.” “Good man,” said the pilgrim, “What is your business in asking me so? I am afflicted with such sorrows That even if I told you all my troubles, I would fare no better for it. And so I am brought to the earth!” “Indeed,” said Guy, “by the holy Cross, I can give you wise advice If you tell me your thoughts. For often it happens that a stranger Can give the best counsel. Therefore do not hide your heart.” “By God,” he said, “you are well-spoken. At one time I was, by Saint Michael, An earl of considerable power. Throughout all Christendom, in fact, I was spoken of as a man Of great refinement and vast wealth. And now I am a wretched beggar! No wonder I am full of worries. Alas, woe is me.” He could not speak any more for sorrow. He began to weep very bitterly So that Guy had pity on him. Then the pilgrim said, “You do me wrong To ask me about my great sorrow And not help me in my need. I must go to beg my bread, For if I stay at home I do not eat, So help me God.” “Yes, brother,” said Guy, “do not hide it. Tell me why you were reduced to misery, And you will fare better, And then we will go find our dinner. I have a penny I got long ago,</p>
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	<p>Thou schalt have half to mede.” “Gramerci, sir,” than seyde he, “And alle the soth Y schal telle thee. Erl Tirri is mi name, Of Gormoys th’erls sone Aubri. Ich hadde a felawe that hight Gii, A baroun of gode fame. For the douk of Pavi Sir Otoun 1760 Hadde don him oft gret tresoun He slough him with gret grame. Now is his neve th’emperour steward, His soster sone that hat Berard; He has me don alle this schame. “Th’emperour he hath served long For he is wonderliche strong And of michel might. He no cometh in non batayle That he no hath the maistri saunfayl, 1770 So egre he is to fight. In this world is man non That ogaines him durst gon, Herl, baroun, no knight, And he loked on him with wrake That his hert no might quake So stern he is of sight. “And for his scherewdhed Sir Berard Th’emperour hath made him his steward To wardi his lond about. 1780 Ther nis no douk in al this lond That his hest dar withstonde So michel he is dout. Yif a man be loved with him Be he never so pouer of kin And he wil to him lout He maketh hem riche anonright, Douk, erl, baroun, or knight, To held with him gret rout. “And yif a man with him hated be 1790 Be he never so riche of fe He flemeth him out of lond. Anon he schal ben todrawe Als tite he schal ben yslawe And driven him al to schond. So it bifel our emperour Held a parlement of gret honour,</p>	<p>And you will have half as your reward.”³⁰ “Kind thanks, sir,” he said then, “And I will tell you all the truth. Earl Thierry is my name, The son of Earl Aubrey of Worms. I had a friend named Guy, A baron of wide renown. When the duke of Pavia, Sir Otoun, Committed a great treason against him, He killed the duke in hot anger. Now his nephew is the emperor’s steward— His sister’s son, who is called Berard—³¹ And he has done me all this shame. He has served the emperor for long, As he is fearfully strong And of great might. He is so eager to fight That there’s no battle he enters Where he doesn’t have victory, without fail. In this world there is no man Who dares face against him, Earl, baron, or knight; He is so forbidding in appearance That if he looked on anyone with wrath His heart would quake. And for Sir Berard’s craftiness The emperor has made him his steward To keep order about his land. There is no duke in all this country Who might withstand his orders, So greatly is he feared. If a man is loved by him, No matter how poor a family he is from, If he grovels to the steward He will soon makes him rich— Duke, earl, baron, or knight— With a great retinue to stand with him! And if a man is hated by him, No matter how wealthy in holdings he is, He banishes him out of the land. He risks being dismembered As quickly as he might be slain, Or driven entirely to ruin. So it happened that our emperor Held an assembly of stately honor,</p>
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³⁰ *Pani*: A medieval penny was not a trivial coin but enough for a peasant’s dinner. It could be divided into halfpence (½d) and farthings (¼d). See also the note for *Amis and Amiloun*, 1821.

³¹ As with Sir Bevis and Saber (see note to line 323), there is often a special closeness between nephews and maternal uncles in medieval literature. Some academics have posited that primitive Germanic culture was more matrilineal. See also Stephen O. Glosecki, “*Beowulf* and the Wills: Traces of Totemism?”, *Philological Quarterly* 78:1/2 (1999): 15-47.

1800	<p>For his erls he sent his sond. Y come thider with michel prede With an hundred knightes bi mi side At nede with me to stonde. “And when Y come unto the court The steward with wicked pourt To me he gan to reke. He bicleped me of his emes ded And seyde he was sleyn thurth mi red; On me he wald be wreke. And when ich herd that chesoun Of the doukes deth Otoun Mine hert wald tobreke.</p>	<p>And sent his summons to his earls. I came forth with proud dignity With a hundred knights by my side To stand with me in time of need. And when I came into the court, The steward, with wicked insolence, Hurried up to me. He accused me of his uncle’s death And said he was killed through my urging, And that he would be avenged on me.³² And when I heard that charge Of Duke Otoun’s death, My heart felt like it would break!</p>
1810	<p>To th’emperour Y layd mi wedde an heighe To defende me of that felonie That he to me gan speke. “No wonder thei Y war fordredde; Th’emperour tok bothe our wedde As Y thee telle may For in alle the court was ther no wight, Douk, erl, baroun, no knight, That durst me borwe that day. Th’emperour comand anon</p>	<p>I hastened to give my word to the emperor To defend myself against the felony Of which he had accused me. It is no wonder that I was terrified. Though the emperor took both our pledges, As I can tell you, In all the court there was no one, Duke, earl, baron, or knight, Who dared act as guarantor for me that day. The emperor commanded at once That I should be put into his prison Without any more delay.</p>
1820	<p>Into his prisoun Y schuld be don Withouten more delay. Berard went and sesed mi lond, Mine wiif he wald have driven to schond, With sorwe sche fled oway. “Than was ich with sorwe and care Among min fomen nomen thare And don in strong prisoun. Min frendes token hem to rede, To th’emperour thai bisought and bede</p>	<p>The emperor commanded at once That I should be put into his prison Without any more delay. Berard went and seized my lands, And would have brought my wife to shame Had she not fled away in tears. There I was in misery and anguish, Standing among my enemies, And then put in the strong prison. My friends took counsel together. They sought out and pleaded With the emperor to pay ransom for me.</p>
1830	<p>To pay for me ransoun. Th’emperour and Sir Berard Deliverd me bi a forward And bi this enchesoun: Y schuld seche mi felawe Gii To defende ous of that felonie Of the doukes deth Otoun. “Out of this lond went Y me And passed over the salt se, In Inglond Y gan rive;</p>	<p>They sought out and pleaded With the emperor to pay ransom for me. The emperor and Sir Berard Released me on agreement And by this condition: I should look for my brother Guy To defend us from the felony Of Duke Otoun’s death. I went out of these lands And passed over the salty sea, And disembarked in England.</p>
1840	<p>At Warwike ichim sought, When Y com thider Y fond him nought Wo was me olive. No Sir Herhaud fond Y nought tare;</p>	<p>I looked for him at Warwick. When I arrived there I did not find him. It was woe to be alive! Nor did I find Sir Herhaud there.</p>

³² While Berard acts wrongly and maliciously in blaming Sir Thierry, the right for close kin to avenge a death (the original sense of the word *vendetta*) was acceptable and only gradually superseded by modern practices of state monopoly on force. The Holy Roman Empire’s reichstag at Worms still found it necessary to abolish blood feuds by edict (*Ewiger Landfriede*) in 1495.

	<p>To seche Gyes sone he is fare That was stollen with strive. Therefore Y wot that Gii is ded, For sorwe can Y me no red - Mine hert wil breke o five.” Sir Gii biheld Tirri ful right</p>	<p>He is gone to seek Guy’s son, Who was stolen by force.³³ Thus I believe that Guy is dead. I do not know where to turn for sorrow. My heart will break into five!” Sir Guy beheld Sir Thierry closely Who had once been so noble a knight And a lord of great power. His body, which was formerly finely attired, Looked as though it was almost naked, Overcome with sorrow and hardship. His legs, that were once sumptuously hosed, Could be seen weathered all over. “Alas,” Guy cried, “that moment!” For the grief he had then He could speak no more words But fell faint to the ground. Sir Thierry came to him at once And took him up in his arms And called to him there. “Friend,” he said, “what troubles you? It seems to me you are ill at ease; You have fared poorly.” Sir Guy answered after a long while, “These evils grieve me so strongly That I wish I were in the ground! For since I was first a man, I have never felt such sorrow That pained me so sorely!” “Friend, it is so,” said Thierry. “Today a year has gone by Since I went out of this land To search for Guy, my good friend. I have found nothing near or far, And so I am ruined. For now I am told that our emperor Has called a parliament over this matter, For my benefit, truly;³⁴ There is no duke or earl in his land Who will not be at that assembly To hear my judgment. And now I may not delay any longer For I am obliged to return home this day Or else lose my head. I have sworn my oath to the emperor That I will bring Sir Guy by tonight To fight against that fiend To defend us from that charge</p>
1850	<p>That whilom was so noble a knight And lord of michel mounde. His bodi was sumtim wele yschredde, Almost naked it was bihedde With sorwe and care ful bounde. His legges that wer sumtime hosed wel Tobrosten he seighe hem everidel. “Allas,” seyde Gii, “that stonde!” For sorwe that he hadde tho Word might he speke no mo</p>	
1860	<p>Bot fel aswon to grounde. Sir Tirri anon com to him than And in his armes up him nam And cleped opon him thare. “Man,” he said, “what aileth thee? Thou art ivel at aise so thenketh me, Hard it is thi fare.” Sir Gii answerd thereafter long, “This ivel greveth me so strong In erthe Y wold Y ware,</p>	
1870	<p>For sethen that Y was first man Nas never sorwe on me cam That greved me so sare.” “Than,” seyde Tirri, “felawe, ywis, Today a yer gon it is Out of this lond Y went To seche Gii mi gode frende. Y no finde nought fer no hende, Therefore icham al schent. For now it is told me our emperer Hath taken a parlement of this maner For mi love verrament That douk no erl in his lond be That he no schal be at that semblé For to here mi jugement. “And now no lenge abide Y no may That ne me bihoveth hom this day Other forto lese min heved. Th’emperour ichave mi treuthe yplight Y schal bring Sir Gii tonight</p>	
1880	<p>To fight ogain that qued To fende ous of that felonie</p>	
1890		

³³ Guy’s son Reinbroun is kidnapped by merchants and found by Herhaud in other versions of the story.

³⁴ *For mi love verrament*: A curious line which is perhaps sarcasm, unless something more like ‘concern’ or ‘attention’ is intended by *love*.

	<p>Ogain the douke Berard of Pavi Al of his emes ded. Y wot wele yif Y thider fare Thai schal me sle with sorwe and care, Certes Y can no red.” Gii biheld Tirri with wepeand eighe And seighe him al that sorwe dreighe That was him lef and dere.</p>	<p>Against the duke, Berard of Pavia, Because of his uncle’s death. I know very well that if I go there They will slay me with sorrow and pain; For sure, I know no solution.”</p>
1900	<p>“Allas,” thought Gii, “that ich stounde That Tirri is thus brought to grounde; So gode felawes we were.” He thought, “Might Y mete that douke His heved Y schuld smite fro the bouke Or hong him bi the swere. Y no lete for al this warldes won That Y no schuld the traitour slon To wreke Tirri mi fere.” “Tirri,” seyde Gii, “lat be thi thought.</p>	<p>Guy looked with weeping eyes upon Thierry, Who was beloved and dear to him, And saw him suffering all that anguish. “Alas,” thought Guy, “for the very moment That Thierry was brought to the ground. We were such loyal brothers.” He thought, “If I were to meet that duke, I would strike his head off his shoulders Or hang him by the neck. I won’t hesitate, for all this world’s wealth, To slay the traitor, To avenge Thierry my friend.”</p>
1910	<p>Ywis, it helpeth thee right nought, For sorwe it wil thee schende. To court go we bothe yfere, Gode tidinges we schul ther here Swiche grace God may sende. Have gode hert, dred thee no del For God schal help thee ful wel So curteys He is and hende.” Up risen tho knightes tuo With michel care and ful of wo</p>	<p>“Thierry,” said Guy, “let your thoughts go. In truth, they do not help you at all. They will ruin you for sorrow. We will go together to the court And we will hear good news there; God may send such grace to us. Take heart, and have no fear at all, For God is so caring and gracious That he will help you in full. Then the two knights rose up. With great worries and heavy spirits, They made their way to the court. And as those noble knights Went to the court in their journey, They were brave and devoted. “Alas,” said Sir Thierry, “I must rest before I continue on, Or my life’s breath will leap away from me.” “By God, brother,” said Sir Guy, “Lie down and I will sit by you And support your fair head.” And after he said this, Thierry laid his head on Guy’s lap And he soon fell asleep. And when Sir Thierry had fallen asleep, Sir Guy beheld him and began to weep And made great mourning. Then he saw an ermine appear from his mouth, As swift as the wind that blows on clouds, As white as a lily on the lake.³⁵</p>
1920	<p>To courtward thai gan wende And as thai went tho knightes fre To courtward in her jurné Ful bold thai were and yepe. “Allas,” Sir Tirri seyde tho, “Ich mot rest er ich hennes go Or mi liif wil fro me lepe.” “For God, felawe,” than seyde Gii, “Ly down and Y schal sitt thee bi And feir thine heved up kepe.”</p>	
1930	<p>And when he hadde thus yseyd On Gyes barm his heved he leyde, Anon Tirri gan slepe. And when Sir Tirri was fallen on slepe Sir Gii biheld him and gan to wepe And gret morning gan make. Than seighe he an ermine com of his mouthe, Als swift as winde that bloweth on clouthe As white as lilii on lake,</p>	

³⁵ *An ermine com of his mouthe*: This bizarre scene would have been highly meaningful and symbolic. TEAMS notes that this is the only romance where an ermine emerges out of someone’s mouth. The ermine was seen as embodying chastity and purity, and Queen Elizabeth I, the virgin queen, was painted holding an ermine by William Segar in 1585. Although Thierry is married, he is innocent of the murder.

1940	To an hille he ran withouten obade, At the hole of the roche in he glade; Gii wonderd for that sake. And when he out of that roche cam Into Tirri's mouthe he nam, Anon Tirri gan wake. Sir Gii was wonderd of that sight And Tirri sat up anonright And biheld Gii opon. Than seyde Tirri, "Fader of Heven, Sir pilgrim, swiche a wonder sweven	It ran without pausing to a hill And slipped into a cleft in the rock. Guy was mystified on account of it. And when it came out of that rock And disappeared back into Thierry's mouth, Thierry at once began to awaken. Sir Guy was amazed by the sight, And Thierry immediately sat up And looked upon Guy. Then Thierry said, "Father of Heaven! Sir pilgrim, I dreamed just now
1950	Me met now anon, That to yon hille that stont on heighe That thou may se with thin eigh Me thought that Y was gon And at an hole in Y wond And so riche tresour as Y fond Y trow in this world is non. "Beside that tresour lay a dragoun And theron lay a swerd broun, The sckauberck comly corn.	Such a wondrous dream, That on that hill which rises above, Which you can see with your eye, I dreamed that I was moving And I went into a hole, And I found treasure richer than Any in the world, I believe. Beside that treasure lay a dragon, And on it was a burnished sword With the scabbard ornately carved.
1960	In the hilt was mani precious ston, As bright as ani sonne it schon Withouten oth ysworn. And me thought Gii sat at min heved And in his lappe me biweved Astow dest me biforn. Lord merci, and it wer so Wele were me than bigo That ever yete was Y born." "Now felawe," seyde Gii, "bi mi leuté	In the hilt were many precious stones, Shining as bright as any sun; No need to swear on it! And I dreamed Guy sat by my head And he wrapped his coat over me ³⁶ As you did for me earlier. May the Lord be merciful! If it were so, I would have more riches Than ever yet since I was born." "Now, brother," said Guy, "By my honor,
1970	That sweven wil turn gret joie to thee And wele Y schal it rede. Thurth Gii thou schalt thi lond kever. Trust wele to God thei thou be pouer The better thou schalt spede. To the hulle nim we the way Ther thee thought the tresour lay And in thou schalt me lede. Now God that schope al mankinde Wald we might that tresour finde	That dream will bring great joy to you And I will interpret it fully. Through God you will recover your lands. Trust well in God, though you are poor, And you will fare all the better. Now we will make our way to the hill Where you dreamed the treasure lay, And you will lead me inside. Now may God, who shaped all mankind, Permit that we might find that fortune.
1980	It wald help ous at nede." Up risen tho knightes tuay And to the hille thai nom the way And in thai went ful even And founde the tresour and the dragoun And the swerd of stiel broun As Tirri mett in his sweven. Sir Gii drough out that swerd anon	It would help us in our need." The two knights rose up And made their way to the hill, And they went straight in And found the cache and the dragon And the sword of gleaming steel, Just as Thierry saw in his dream. Sir Guy drew out the sword at once,

³⁶ *Lappe*: Here Sir Guy's upper legs are not meant, but the older sense of the folds of his coat or skirt, which he wraps around Thierry as he sleeps.

1990	<p>And alle the pleynes therof it schon As it were light of leven. “Lord,” seyð Gii, “Y thanke Thi sond Y seighe never are swiche a brond; Y wot it com fram Heven.” Sir Gii gan the hilt bihold That richeliche was graven with gold, Of charbukel the pomel. Into the sckaweberk ogain he it dede And seyð to Tirri in that stede, “Bi God and Seyn Mighel, Of alle this riche tresore Y no kepe therof no more Bot this brond of stiel.”</p>	<p>And all of its surfaces shone As if it were sparks of lightning. “Lord,” said Guy, “I thank You for Your gift. I never before saw such a blade. I know it comes from Heaven.” Sir Guy inspected the hilt Which was richly engraved with gold, With a pommel of carbuncle-stone. He put it back into the scabbard And said to Thierry in that moment, “By God and Saint Michael, Of all this rich treasure, I will keep no more of it Than this sword of steel.”³⁷</p>
2000		
2005	<p>To courtward tho knightes went To aspie after the parlement; For drede wald thai nought lete. Ac Tirri was aferd ful sare Of his fomen be knowen thare</p>	<p>The two knights continued toward the court To seek out the parliament. They would not turn away out of dread. But Thierry was sorely afraid Of being recognized by his foes If he set foot in the city. Therefore they took their lodgings In an inn on the edge of the town Along a secluded street. All night long Guy did not sleep, So much was his heart always in thought On meeting Duke Berard. Guy rose early in the morning, And prayed to God and our Lady That they would shield him from sin, And said to Sir Thierry the gracious, “Keep this sword well for me, dear friend, Until I send for it by name, And I will go to court today. And if I might encounter the duke, I will greet him with hostility. And if he says anything lacking respect, By He who shed His blood for us, He will be shamed in public for it.” Guy went to town with great haste. He met the emperor returning from church And greeted him with honor. “Lord,” said Guy, “Who with His hand Made the woods, water, and land, Save you, Sir Emperor. I am a man from distant lands. And from your bounty, for charity’s sake, I ask for your assistance.” The emperor said, “Come to the court,</p>
2010	<p>In the cité yif he sete. Therefore thai toke her ostel gode At an hous withouten the toun stode Al bi a dern strete. Of al night Gii slepe nought, So michel his hert was ever in thought With Douk Berard to mete. Erlich amorwe than ros Gii And bisought God and our Levedi He schuld scheld him fro blame</p>	
2020	<p>And seyð to Sir Tirri the hende, “Kepe me wele this swerd, leve frende, Til Y sende therefore bi name, And Y schal go to court this day And yif Y the douke mete may Y schal gret him with grame; And yif he say ought bot gode, Bi Him that schadde for ous His blod Him tit a world schame.” Gii goth to toun with michel hete,</p>	
2030	<p>Th’emperour fram chirche he gan mete And gret him with anour. “Lord,” seyð Gii, “that with hond Made wode, water, and lond, Save thee, sir emperour. Icham a man of fer cuntré And of thi gode, <i>par charité</i>, Ich axse to mi socour.” Th’emperour seyð, “To court come</p>	

³⁷ The rhyme scheme (aabccbdbbeeb) is broken here, suggesting three missing lines, although there is no break or visual damage in Auchinleck at this point.

2040	<p>And of mi gode thou schalt have some For love of Seyn Saviour." To court thai went al and some, Th'emperour dede Gii biforn him come, "Pilgrim," than seyde he, "Thou art wel weri me thenketh now. Fram wiche londes comestow? For thi fader soule telle me." "Sir," seyde Gii, "ich understond I have ben in mani lond Biyond the Grekis Se:</p>	<p>And you will have some of my help For love of our Holy Savior." To court they went, all and some. The emperor had Guy come before him. "Pilgrim," he said then, "You seem very weary to me. From what lands have you come? For your father's soul, tell me." "Sir," said Guy, "I know That I have been in many lands Beyond the Greek Sea:</p>
2050	<p>In Jerusalem and in Surry, In Costentin and in Perci A gode while have ich be." "Sir pilgrim," seyde th'emperour fre, "Wha speketh man in that lond of me When thou com thennesward?" Sir Gii answerd, "Bi the gode Rode Men speketh thee ther ful litel gode Bot tidinges schrewed and hard; For thou hast schent so th'erl Tirri</p>	<p>In Jerusalem and in Syria, In Constantinople and in Persia I have journeyed a good while." "Sir pilgrim," said the noble emperor, "Wha do men in those lands say about me When you go there?" Sir Guy answered, "By the Holy Cross, Men say very little good about you, Only reports that are cruel and hard; For you have ruined the earl Thierry And other barons who were faithful For the love of your steward.</p>
2060	<p>And other barouns that ben hendy For love of thi steward. Gret sinne it is to thee To stroye so thi barouns fre Al for a fals schreward." When the douk herd him speke so As a wilde bore he lepe him to His costes for to schawe, With his fest he wald have smiten Gii Bot barouns held him owy,</p>	<p>It is a great sin on you To destroy your noble barons so, All for a false rogue." When the duke heard him say such things, He leaped at him like a wild boar Who would slice at his ribs. He would have struck Guy with his fist Had not barons held him away, A good twenty in a row.</p>
2070	<p>Wele tuenti on a rawe. He seyde to Gii, "Vile traitour, Ner thou bifor th'emperour Thei Y wende to ben tohewe Bi thi berd Y schuld thee schokke That al thi teth it schuld rokke, For thou art a kinde schrewe. "Bi thi semblaunt se men may Thou hast ben traitour mani a day - God gif thee schame and schond.</p>	<p>He shouted at Guy, "Vile traitor! If you weren't before the emperor, Even if I would be beheaded for it, I would shake you by your beard So that all your teeth would be rocked, For you are an utter criminal! By your looks men can see That you have been a traitor for many a day. God give you shame and disgrace! If I can get a hold of you, You will be put to a miserable death, As a traitor to lie in shackles. You will be in such a place That for seven years you will not see Either your feet or hands! This is how men should punish foul wretches For slandering good barons Who are lordings in their land."</p>
2080	<p>Yif that Y thee mai overgon To wicked dede thou schalt be don As a traitour to ly in bond, In swiche a stede thou schalt be This seven winter no schaltow se Noither fet no hond. So schal men chasti foule glotuns That wil missay gode barouns That lordinges ben in lond." "Ow sir," seyde Gii, "ertow thas?"</p>	<p>By the good Cross. And now that I know that you are one,</p>
2090	<p>Y nist no nar hou it was Bi the gode Rode. And now Y wot that thou art he,</p>	<p>I didn't know who I was speaking to, By the good Cross. And now that I know that you are one,</p>

2100	<p>Thou art uncurteys so thenketh me. Thou farst astow wer wode, And art a man of fair parage Ycom thou art of heighe linage And of gentil blod. It is thee litel curteysie To do me swiche vilanie Bifor th'emperour ther Y stode. "And for thee wil Y wond no thing, Y schal telle thee the sothe withouten lesing Bifor his barouns ichon, That with gret wrong and sinne, ywis, Th'erl Tirri deshirrite is And other gode mani on. A thousand men ichave herd teld Bothe in toun and in feld As wide as ichave gon</p>	<p>It seems to me you lack all manners. You carry on as if you were mad, Though you are a man of good parentage And come from high lineage And of noble blood. You show little grace To do me such villainy Before the emperor where I stand. And for you I will hold nothing back. I will tell you the truth without lying Before each of these barons, That Earl Thierry has been dispossessed With great injustice and sin indeed, Along with many other good men. I have heard a thousand men say, Both in town and in the fields, As far and wide as I have gone, That he is guiltless of that deed Which you lay on him with deceit, That he had killed your uncle."</p>
2110	<p>That he is giltles of that dede Thou berst on him with falskede, Thin eme he schuld slon." The douk Berrard was wroth, Bi Jhesu Crist he swore his oth. "Y wald that thou were Gii Or that thou so douhti were Thou durst fight for him here God gaf it and our Levedi." Sir Gii answerd, "Bi Seyn Savour,</p>	<p>Duke Berard was enraged; He swore his oath by Jesus Christ: "I wish that you were Guy Or that you were so fearless To dare to fight for him here! May God and our Lady grant it!" Sir Guy retorted, "By our Holy Savior, Have no doubt, foul traitor, I am ready to do it.</p>
2120	<p>Drede thee nothing, vile traitour, Therto icham redy. Bi thou wroth, be thou gladde, To th'emperour Y gif mi wedde To fight for th'erl Tirri." The douk Berard ther he stode Stared on Gii as he wer wode And egrelich seyde his thought. "Pilgrim," he seyde, "Thou art ful stout, Ywis, thi wordes that er so prout</p>	<p>Whether you like it or not, I pledge my oath to the emperor To fight for Earl Thierry." Duke Berard, where he stood, Glared at Guy as if he were a madman And gushed his thoughts impatiently: "Pilgrim," he said, "you are very brazen. Indeed, your words that are so proud Will be paid for dearly.</p>
2130	<p>Schal be ful dere abought. Y warn thee wele," he seyde tho, "That thine heved thou schalt forgo Whereso thou may be sought." Sir Gii seyde, "Than thou it hast Than make therof thi bast; For yete no getes thou it nought." Bifor th'emperour than come Gii And seyde, "Sir Berard of Pavi Is a man of mighti dede,</p>	<p>I warn you well," he continued, "You will lose your head Wherever you might be found."³⁸ Sir Guy snipped, "When you have done it, Then you can boast about it. As of yet you have got nothing." Guy then came before the emperor And said, "Sir Berard of Pavia Is a man of mighty deeds,</p>

³⁸ Berard likely has the customary right to set the terms of the vendetta and to demand Thierry face him, and thus Guy's gambit of goading him into accepting Guy as a substitute. This *flyting* scene seemingly does not square with Guy's purported goals of penitence and humility, but the fun of his needling Berard was perhaps too much temptation for the poet to pass up.

2140	<p>And fram fer cuntres comen icham And am a sely pouer man; Y no have here no sibbered No Y no have wepen no armour bright; For the love of God Almighty Finde me armour and stede.” Th’emperour answerd, “Bi Jhesu, Pilgrim, thou schalt have anow Of al that thee is nede.” The douk Berrard thennes he went;</p>	<p>And I have come from faraway lands And am a poor, simple man. I have no family here, Nor do I have weapons or shining armor. For the love of God Almighty Grant me armor and a steed.” The emperor answered, “By Jesus, Pilgrim, you will have enough Of everything necessary for you.” Duke Berard went away.</p>
2150	<p>His hert was in strong turment He no wist what he do might. Th’emperour cleped his douhter a mayde, “Leve douhter,” to hir he seyde, “Kepe this pilgrim tonight.” Sche him underfenge ful mildeliche And dede bathe him ful softliche, In silke sche wald him dight. Ac therof was nothing his thought; Bot of gode armour he hir bisought</p>	<p>His heart was in great torment; He did not know what he might do. The emperor called the maid, his daughter: “Dear daughter,” he said to her, “Attend to this pilgrim tonight.” She took charge of him with kindness And bathed him very gently, And wished to dress him in silk. But his intentions were not that, Only to ask her for firm armor To fight with Duke Berard.</p>
2160	<p>With the douke Berard to fight. Amorwe aros that emperour Erls, barouns of gret honour, To chirche with him thai yede. And when the barouns asembled was Than might men sen in that plas Togider a fair ferred. Thider com the douk Berard, Prout and stern as a lipard, Wele yarmed on stede</p>	<p>In the morning the emperor rose With earls and barons of great honor. They went with him to church. And when the barons were gathered, Men could then see in that place A fine assembly together. Duke Berard came forward, As proud and stern as a leopard. He was well-armed on horseback And spurred on like he was berserk Among the barons who stood there, In order to invite battle.</p>
2170	<p>And priked right as he wer wode Among the barouns ther thai stode Batayle forto bede. The maiden forgat never a del The pilgrim was armed ful wel With a gode glaive in honde And a swift-ernand stede; Al wrin sche dede him lede The best of that lond. Than Sir Gii him bithought</p>	<p>The maiden did not forget any detail. The pilgrim was armed in full With a firm spear in hand And a swift-galloping steed. She led him out fully equipped With the best of the land. Sir Guy had remembered And did not forget the good sword That he found in the treasure. He sent for it privately; No man knew anything of it, And Thierry sent him the sword. After that maiden had prepared Guy He was equipped richly and finely; Men began to behold him.</p>
2180	<p>The gode swerd forgat he nought That he in tresour fond. He sent thereafter priveleche - No man wist litel no miche - And Tirri sent him the brond. When that mayden hadde graithed Gii Wele ydight and ful richely Men gan on him biheld. Sche ledde him forth swithe stille, To th’emperour with gode wille</p>	<p>She led him forth very demurely; With good faith, she delivered him To the emperor for the battle. Then the emperor, noble and free, spoke: “Lordings, listen to me now, Both young and old.</p>
2190	<p>Sche taught him forto weld. Than seyde th’emperour hende and fre, “Lordinges, listen now to me Bothe yong and eld:</p>	<p>Then the emperor, noble and free, spoke: “Lordings, listen to me now, Both young and old.</p>

2200	<p>This knight that ye se now here Hath taken batail in strong maner Al forto fight in feld. “This knight,” he seyde, “that stount me bi Wil fight for th’erl Sir Tirri - For nothing wil he wond - And defende him of that felonie Ogain the douk Berard of Pavi That he berth him an hond; For Tirri is out of lond went To seche Gii verrament That for him might stond. This day is sett bituen hem tuo Or be deshirrite forevermo And flemed out of lond. “Bot now is comen here this knight, Ogain Berard hath taken the fight For nothing wil he flen. Ac, lordinges,” he seyde, “everichon Where the batayl schal be don Loke where it may best ben.” Than loked thai it schuld be In a launde under the cité. Thider in thai went biden. Mani man bad God that day Help the pilgrim as He wele may</p>	<p>This knight that you see here Has accepted battle with valor In order to fight in the field. This knight,” he said, “who stands by me Will fight for Earl Thierry. He will not fall back for anything, And he will defend him from that crime Against Berard, the duke of Pavia, Who accuses him with his own hand. For Thierry has gone out of the land To seek Guy, in truth, So that he might stand for him. This day is set between the two of them, Or else he will be disinherited forevermore And exiled out of the land. But now this knight has come here And has taken the fight against Berard. He will not flee for anything. But, lordings,” he said, “all of you, Confer on where the battle will be done, Where it may best take place.” They decided then that it should be On a plain below the city. They went toward there to wait. Many men prayed to God that day To help the pilgrim as He might In order to slay Duke Berard. The ready knights leaped on their horses And charged together until shafts That were sturdy and firm split apart, And saddle straps that were strong burst; And the knights were at the same moment Thrown out of their saddles. After that they drew their good swords, Which were fine and new, And laid on as if they were mad. And as one sees the sparks from flint, They hacked at each other so feverishly That the steam rose from their helmets. The stout knights were well armed, But that false Berard Had more iron around him. He was wrapped in two mail-coats And on his head he had two helmets Which were forged in Saracen lands. On his shoulder hung a double shield— No better one could be carried on the field— Matched with a rugged sword of fine steel. Many men had lost their life by it; Before then it was once owned By the kings of Constantinople. The valiant knights fought hard combat So that any who ever looked upon them Said amongst themselves</p>
2210	<p>2220 The douk Berard to slen. On hors lopen tho knightes prest And lopen togider til schaftes brest That strong weren and trewe; And her gerthes brusten that strong were And tho knightes bothe yfere Out of her sadels threwe. After thai drough her swerdes gode And leyde on as thai were wode That were gode and newe.</p>	<p>2220 They decided then that it should be On a plain below the city. They went toward there to wait. Many men prayed to God that day To help the pilgrim as He might In order to slay Duke Berard. The ready knights leaped on their horses And charged together until shafts That were sturdy and firm split apart, And saddle straps that were strong burst; And the knights were at the same moment Thrown out of their saddles. After that they drew their good swords, Which were fine and new, And laid on as if they were mad. And as one sees the sparks from flint, They hacked at each other so feverishly That the steam rose from their helmets. The stout knights were well armed, But that false Berard Had more iron around him. He was wrapped in two mail-coats And on his head he had two helmets Which were forged in Saracen lands. On his shoulder hung a double shield— No better one could be carried on the field— Matched with a rugged sword of fine steel. Many men had lost their life by it; Before then it was once owned By the kings of Constantinople. The valiant knights fought hard combat So that any who ever looked upon them Said amongst themselves</p>
2230	<p>2240 Opon his schulder henge a duple scheld Beter might non be born in feld, A gode swerd of stiel fine. Mani man therwith his liif had lorn; It was sumtim therbiforn The kinges Costentine. Strong batayl held tho knightes bold That alle that ever gan hem bihold Thai seyden hem among</p>	<p>2230 After that they drew their good swords, Which were fine and new, And laid on as if they were mad. And as one sees the sparks from flint, They hacked at each other so feverishly That the steam rose from their helmets. The stout knights were well armed, But that false Berard Had more iron around him. He was wrapped in two mail-coats And on his head he had two helmets Which were forged in Saracen lands. On his shoulder hung a double shield— No better one could be carried on the field— Matched with a rugged sword of fine steel. Many men had lost their life by it; Before then it was once owned By the kings of Constantinople. The valiant knights fought hard combat So that any who ever looked upon them Said amongst themselves</p>

2250	<p>The pilgrim was non erthely man; It was an angel from Heven cam For Tirri batayle to fong. For mani gode erl and mani baroun Berard hath ybrought adoun With wel michel wrong. Therefore hath God sent, ywis, An angel out of heven-blis To sle that traitour strong. Al the folk in that cité was, Litel and michel, more and las, To se the batayl thai yede.</p>	<p>That the pilgrim was no earthly man; It was an angel come from Heaven To stand for Thierry in battle! For Berard had brought down Many a good earl and many a baron With great injustice. Therefore God had sent, surely, An angel out of Heaven's bliss To slay that wicked traitor. All of the people in that city, Small and great, high and low, Had come there to see the battle.</p>
2260	<p>Bot Tirri in a chirche liis And ever he bisought God, ywis, He schuld him help and spede. When he herd telle that the pilgrim Fought ogain the douke Berardin To help him at his nede. Wel fain he wald thider gon Bot for knoweing of his fon Wel sore he gan him drede.</p>	<p>But Thierry hid in a church And continually beseeched God, in truth, That He would help and support him. When he heard the news that the pilgrim Was fighting against Duke Berard To help him in his need, He earnestly wished to go there; But the thought of recognition By his enemies filled him with terror.</p>
2270	<p>Ac natheles he ros up tho With michel care and michel wo And thider he went wel swithe. When he com to the plas Ther the bataile loked was Amonges hem he gan lithe And when he seyge the douk so strong And his armes tohewe among, In his hert he was ful blithe. And tho he seyge his blod spille, God he thonked with gode wille </p>	<p>But nonetheless he rose up then, And with great anxiousness and distress He went there very quickly. When he came to the place Where the battle was decreed He began to walk among the spectators. And when he saw the duke so strong And his weapons repeatedly smashed, In his heart he was full of joy. And when he saw his blood spill out He thanked God with firm will: ³⁹</p>
2281	<p>“Lord, merci,” Tirri gan say, “This is nought the pilgrim Y met yisterday That is so richeliche dight. He was a feble pouer body Sely, messays, and hungri, And he is of michel might. Y trow non ertelich man it be, On Gii Y thenke when ichim se So douhti he was in fight.</p>	<p>“Lord, have mercy!” Thierry exclaimed, “‘This is not the pilgrim I met yesterday Who is so valiantly dressed. He was a feeble, poor fellow, Simple, downtrodden, and hungry, And this man is of great strength. I know it is no mortal man! I am reminded of Guy when I see him, He was so formidable in combat.</p>
2290	<p>Yif Gii mi felawe now ded nere Ich wald sigge that he it were So liche thai ben of sight.” Into chirche ogain he yede And fel on knes in that stede And Jhesus Crist he bisought He schuld help the pilgrim That faught ogain Douk Berardin</p>	<p>If my friend Guy were not dead now, I would swear that it was him, They are so alike in appearance.” He went back into the church And fell on his knees in that place, And he called on Jesus Christ, That He would help the pilgrim Who was fighting against Duke Berard,</p>

³⁹ Again there is no lacuna in the manuscript, but a line is missing from the rhyme scheme.

2300	<p>That miche wo hath him wrought. Hard togider gun thai fight Fro the morwe to the night That thai rest hem nought. And when hem failed light of day Thai couthe no rede what thai do may. To th'emperour thai hem brought. “Sir emperour,” thai seydon anon, “What schul we with this knightes don? At thi wille schal it be.”</p>	<p>Who had brought him so much misery. They fought together fiercely From the morning to the night And they gave themselves no rest. And when the light of day failed the crowd, They could not decide what to do. They brought the warriors to the emperour. “Sir Emperor,” they said at once, “What should we do with these knights? It will be as you will.”</p>
2310	<p>Th'emperour clept to him tho Four barouns that his trust was to. “Lordinges,” than seyde he, “Kepe me wele the Douk Berard, And bring him tomorwe bi a forward, Open al your fe; And Y schal kepe the pilgrim tonight; Til tomorwe that it is day light He schal bileve with me.”</p>	<p>The emperour then summoned Four barons that he had trust in. “Lordings,” he said, “Keep Duke Berard well for me, And bring him tomorrow by your agreement, Upon forfeit of all your goods, And I will keep the pilgrim tonight. Until tomorrow when it is daylight, He will stay with me.”</p>
2320	<p>Than departed this batayle, Tho four barouns withouten fayl Understode Berard to kepe And th'emperour toke the pilgrim In a chaumber to loken him With serjaunce wise and yepe. The douke Berard forgat him nought; Of a foule tresoun he him bithought: Four knightes he gan clepe. “For mi love,” he seyde, “goth tonight Ther the pilgrim lith ful right And sleth him in his slepe.”</p>	<p>They departed from the battleground. The four barons, without fail, Agreed to keep Berard, And the emperour took the pilgrim To lock him in a chamber, With sergeants who were wise and alert. Duke Berard did not forget him; He devised a foul act of treachery. He called four knights to himself. “For my love,” he said, “go tonight, Straight to where the pilgrim lies, And kill him in his sleep.”</p>
2330	<p>Thai armed hem swithe wel Bothe in iren and in stiel And went hem forth in hast, Into the chaumber thai went anon. The pilgrims kepers everichon Lay and slepe ful fast. To the pilgrim thai went ful right And left up the bedde with her might Tho four traitours unwrast. To the se thai beren him And bothe bed and the pilgrim</p>	<p>They armed themselves well, Both in iron and in steel, And went forth in haste. They immediately went into the chamber, Where each of the pilgrim's keepers Lay sleeping soundly. They went straight to the pilgrim And lifted the bed with all their might, Those four evil wretches. They carried him to the sea, And both bed and pilgrim</p>
2340	<p>Into the see thai cast. To Sir Berard thai went anon And told him hou thai hadden don, Therof he was ful fawe. “Sir,” thai seyde, “be nought adred. Bothe the pilgrim and the bed Into the se we han ythrawe.” The pilgrim waked and loked an heyghe,</p>	<p>Were cast into the ocean. They soon returned to Sir Berard And told him how they had made out; He was very pleased to hear it. “Sir,” they said, “have no fear. We have thrown both the pilgrim And the bed into the sea.” The pilgrim woke up and gazed on high;</p>

2350	<p>The sterres on the heven he seighe, The water about him drawe. Thei he was ferd no wonder it nis; Non other thing he no seyge, ywis, Bot winde and wateres wawe. “Lord,” seyde Gii, “God Almighty That winde and water and al thing dight On me have now pité. Whi is me fallen thus strong cumbring? And Y no fight forto win nothing - Noither gold no fe, For no cité no no castel -</p>	<p>He saw the stars in the heavens As the water washed about him.⁴⁰ If he was afraid, it is no wonder! He saw no other thing, truly, But wind and water. “Lord,” said Guy, “God Almighty, Who made wind and waves and all things, Have pity on me now. Why have I fallen into this dreadful trial? I do not fight to win anything, Neither gold nor possessions, For any city or any castle; But only for my friend I loved so well Who was of great kindness. For he was once so valiant And now he is so poor in body. Truly it fills me with remorse.”</p>
2360	<p>Bot for mi felawe Y loved so wel That was of gret bounté, For he was sumtyim so douhti And now he is so pouer a bodi. Certes it reweth me.” Now herkeneth a litel striif Hou He saved the pilgrims liif, Jhesu that sitt in trone, With a fischer that was comand In the se fische takeand</p>	<p>Now listen to a short tale About how Christ, who sits on His throne, Saved the pilgrim’s life With a fisherman who was approaching, Catching fish in the sea By himself alone.</p>
2370	<p>Bi himself alon. He seth that bed floter him by “On Godes half!” he gan to cri, “What artow? Say me son.” The pilgrim his heved upplight And crid to him anonright And made wel reweli mon. “Gode man,” than seyde he, “Y leve on God in Trinité The sothe thou schalt now sen.</p>	<p>He saw that bed floating by him And began to call, “For the love of God! Who are you? Tell me right away.” The pilgrim lifted up his head And called to him immediately And made a pitiful cry. “Good man,” he then said, “As I trust in God in Trinity, You will now hear the truth.</p>
2380	<p>Understode thou ought of the batayl hard Bituen the pilgrim and Sir Berard Hou thai foughten bituen?” The fischer seyde, “Y seighe the fight Fro the morwe to the night, For nothing wald thai flen. Th’emperour comand tho Thai schuld be kept bothe tuo Tomorwe bring hem oghen.” “Icham,” he seyde, “the pilgrim</p>	<p>Do you know anything about the hard contest Between the pilgrim and Sir Berard, How they fought between themselves?” The fisherman said, “I saw the battle From the morning to the night, For they would not retreat for anything. Then the emperor commanded That both of them should be guarded And brought back again tomorrow.”</p>
2390	<p>That faught with the douke Berardin For Tirri the hendi knight. Yistreven we wer deled ato, In a chaumber Y was do With serjaunce wise and wight. Hou Ich com her no wot Y nought;</p>	<p>“I am,” he said, “the pilgrim Who fought with Duke Berard For Thierry, the noble knight. Last night we were separated. I was put away in a chamber With sergeants who were wise and keen. How I came here I do not know.</p>

⁴⁰ As TEAMS notes, this scene forms “the structural mid-point of the narrative,” as Guy contemplates the stars just as he does at the beginning of the story. The thematic difference is that Guy now lies in God’s hands as opposed to acting entirely by his own volition.

2400	<p>For His love that this world hath wrought Save me yif thou might.” The fischer tok him into his bot anon And to his hous he ladde him hom And saved his liif that night.</p>	<p>For His love, who shaped this world, Save me if you are able.” The fisherman quickly took him into his boat And brought him home to his house And saved his life that night.</p>
2410	<p>Th’emperour ros amorwe, ywis, And at the chirche he herd his messe In the first tide of the day And into his halle he gan gon And after the steward he axed anon And the pilgrim withouten delay. The four barouns forgat hem nought, The douke Berard thai han forth brought Redy armed to play.</p>	<p>The emperor rose in the morning, in fact, And heard his mass at the church In the first hours of the day. And he went into his hall And straightaway asked for the steward And the pilgrim, without delay. The four barons did not forget their duty; They brought Duke Berard forth, Ready and armed for the play of battle.</p>
2420	<p>And the pilgrims kepers com everichon And seyde to th’emperour, bi Seyn Jon, The pilgrim was oway. Th’emperour was wel wroth, Bi his fader soule he swore his oth Thai schuld ben hang and drawe. “For Godes love,” he seyde, “Merci, This douke Berard of Pavi Hath him brought o dawe.” Th’emperour seyde, “Bi Seyn Martin, Hastow don this, fals Berardin, To don the pilgrim slawe? Yeld him dethes or lives to me Or in mi court dempt thou schalt be Thurth judgement of lawe.” The douke Berard wex wroth and wo, Th’emperour he answerd tho With wel michel hete, “I have served thee long, Sir Emperour, And kept thi londes with michel anour And now thou ginnest me threte. Therof give Y nought a chirston. Hom to Lombardy ichil gon With alle the ost Y may gete. Y schal com into Almayn for al thi tene Of al thi lond siker mot thou ben O fot Y no schal thee lete.” When th’emperour herd that And of his threthene undergat He bad with wordes bold</p>	<p>And the pilgrim’s keepers came, every one, And said to the emperor, by Saint John, The pilgrim was gone. The emperor was very angry. He swore his oath, that by his father’s soul, They should be hanged and quartered. “For God’s love,” they pleaded, “have mercy. This Duke Berard of Pavia Has put him to death.” The emperor said, “By Saint Martin,⁴¹ Have you done this, cheating Berard, To have the pilgrim killed? Present him to me, dead or alive, Or you will stand condemned in my court Through the judgment of law.” Duke Berard grew furious and upset; He answered the emperor then With burning rage, “I have long served you, Sir Emperor, And kept your lands with great honor, And now you devise threats. I don’t give a cherry-stone for it! I will go home to Lombardy With all the army I can raise. I will return to Germany to hurt you. For all your land, you can be sure That I will not leave you with one foot!” When the emperor heard that And took in his threats, He ordered with bold words That he should get out of his court. And Berard answered right away That he would certainly not. The fisherman discreetly came in And gently nudged the emperor;</p>
2430	<p>Out of his court he schuld gon And he answerd sone anon That sikerliche he nold. Ther com the fischer priveliche And puked th’emperour softliche,</p>	<p>And gently nudged the emperor;</p>
2440		

⁴¹ *Seyn Martin*: Saint Martin of Tours (316-397), who is perhaps a symbolic choice as he ended his life as a voluntary beggar himself when he retired from the bishopric to monastic life.

<p>2450</p>	<p>His tale to him he told. "Sir emperour," he seyde, "listen to me. Of the pilgrim ichil telle thee Yif thou me herken wold." "Fischer," seyde th'emperour fre, "Of the pilgrim telle thou me Yif thou the sothe can sayn." "For sothe," he seyde, "Y can ful wel Y schal thee leyghen never a del; Therof icham ful fain. Yistreven withouten lesing Y went to the se of fischeing Mine nettes forto layn. A bedde Y fond ther floterand And theron a knight liggeand,</p>	<p>He told his tale to him. "Sir Emperor," he said, "listen to me. I will tell you about the pilgrim If you will give ear to me." "Fisherman," said the noble emperor, "Tell me about the pilgrim, If you can speak the truth." "For sure," he answered, "I can full well. I will not lie to you about any detail; About that I am very eager. Last night, without a lie, I went to the sea for fishing And to put out my nets. I found a bed floating there And a knight lying there on it, A man of great might. And I asked him who he was; He told me the truth there With words that were noble and dignified. 'I am,' he said, 'The pilgrim That fought with Duke Berard Yesterday to the ninth hour.' I took him into my boat at once And brought him home to my house And kept him as I would a friend. If you do not believe he is there, Have some officer sent forth And there you will find him." The emperor sent for him then. The fisherman and others with him Went and brought him back, without fail. The two knights were immediately set together. They began to assault each other, Charging with hard strokes. They fought together ferociously With blades that were bright, Hacking at coats of mail. In this way they battled together With fierce combat Until it was high noon. Duke Berard was in furious spirits; He struck at Guy as if he were berserk, Hoping to take his life. He hit him on the helmet in a rush So that all the flowers, fair and bright, Were made to scatter apart. He carved the nose-guard in two And cut the face-guard as well Right down to his bare chin.</p>
<p>2460</p>	<p>A man of michel mayn. "And ich him axed what he were. He told me the sothe there With wordes fre and hende. 'Icham,' he seyde, 'the pilgrim That faught with the douke Berardin Yisterday to the nende.' Y tok him into mi bot anon And to min hous Y lad him hom And kept him as mi frende.</p>	<p>And I asked him who he was; He told me the truth there With words that were noble and dignified. 'I am,' he said, 'The pilgrim That fought with Duke Berard Yesterday to the ninth hour.' I took him into my boat at once And brought him home to my house And kept him as I would a friend. If you do not believe he is there, Have some officer sent forth And there you will find him." The emperor sent for him then. The fisherman and others with him Went and brought him back, without fail. The two knights were immediately set together. They began to assault each other, Charging with hard strokes. They fought together ferociously With blades that were bright, Hacking at coats of mail. In this way they battled together With fierce combat Until it was high noon. Duke Berard was in furious spirits; He struck at Guy as if he were berserk, Hoping to take his life. He hit him on the helmet in a rush So that all the flowers, fair and bright, Were made to scatter apart. He carved the nose-guard in two And cut the face-guard as well Right down to his bare chin.</p>
<p>2470</p>	<p>Yif thou levest nought he is thare Do sum serjaunt thider fare And ther ye may him fende." Th'emperour sent after him tho With the fischer and other mo And brought him saunfayle. Thai were don togider blive With hard strokes forto drive Thai gun hem to asayle.</p>	<p>The emperor sent for him then. The fisherman and others with him Went and brought him back, without fail. The two knights were immediately set together. They began to assault each other, Charging with hard strokes. They fought together ferociously With blades that were bright, Hacking at coats of mail. In this way they battled together With fierce combat Until it was high noon. Duke Berard was in furious spirits; He struck at Guy as if he were berserk, Hoping to take his life. He hit him on the helmet in a rush So that all the flowers, fair and bright, Were made to scatter apart. He carved the nose-guard in two And cut the face-guard as well Right down to his bare chin.</p>
<p>2480</p>	<p>Wel hard togider gun thai fight, With her brondes that wer bright Thai hewe hauberk of mayle. Thus togider gun thai play Til it was the heyghe midday With wel strong batayle. The douk Berard was egre of mode, He smot to Gii as he wer wode His liif he wende to winne. He hit him on the helm on hight That alle the floures feir and bright</p>	<p>Until it was high noon. Duke Berard was in furious spirits; He struck at Guy as if he were berserk, Hoping to take his life. He hit him on the helmet in a rush So that all the flowers, fair and bright, Were made to scatter apart. He carved the nose-guard in two And cut the face-guard as well Right down to his bare chin.</p>
<p>2490</p>	<p>He dede hem fleyghe atuinne. The nase he carf atuo And the venteyle he dede also Right to his bare chinne. </p>	<p>He carved the nose-guard in two And cut the face-guard as well Right down to his bare chin. ⁴²</p>

⁴² For a third time the rhyme scheme is broken, but the manuscript has no defect.

<p>2500</p>	<p>Sir Gii was wroth anon fot-hot And Berard on the helme he smot; To stond hadde he no space For bothe helmes he carf atuo And his heved he dede also In midward of the face. Thurth al his bodi the swerd bot Into the erthe wele half a fot, That seighe men in the place. Th[e s]oule went fro the bodi there, Th[e fol]k of the cite wel glad were, Th[ai] thonked our Lordes grace. Bifor th'emperour than com Sir Gii,</p>	<p>Sir Guy was instantly infuriated, And he slammed Berard on the helmet. He had no space to withstand it, For he carved both helmets in two And split his head as well In the middle of the face. Through all his body the sword ran Down into the earth a good half a foot; The men in that place saw that. The soul went out from the body there. The people of the city were overjoyed; They gave thanks for our Lord's grace.⁴³</p>
<p>2510</p>	<p>"Ihave wroken th'erl Tirri - The sothe thou might now sen - And defended him of that felonie Ogain the douke Berard of Pavia That was so stout and ken. Therefore the sothe ich ax thee Yif Tirri schal quite-cleymed be And have his lond ogen; And whoso ther ogain withstond He schal have schame of min hond</p>	<p>Then Sir Guy came before the emperor: "I have avenged Earl Thierry You can now see the fact of that— And defended him from that crime Against Duke Berard of Pavia, Who was so determined and keen. Therefore I ask the truth from you, Whether Thierry will be acquitted And have his land again. And whoever stands against this Will be shamed by my own hand, He may be certain of that."</p>
<p>2520</p>	<p>Wel siker may he ben." Th'emperour seyde, "Sikerly Thou hast wroken th'erl Tirri; Gret honour thou hast him don. Therefore when he is come His londes than al and some He schal have everichon." Than was Gii glad and blithe And kest of his armes also swithe, After him he thought to gon.</p>	<p>The emperor said, "For certain, You have vindicated Earl Thierry. You have done him great honor. Therefore, when he has come, He will have his lands, All and some, every bit of them." Then Guy was glad and joyful And cast off his armor as quickly, Intending to go after him.</p>
<p>2530</p>	<p>Th'emperour wald clothe him in gold Ac sikerliche he seyde he nold, His sclavain he axed anon. To toun he went in his way To finde Tirri yif he may In sorwe and care ful bounde. Into a chirche he him dede And fond him in a privé stede Liand on knes to grounde.</p>	<p>The emperor wished to clothe him in gold But he earnestly said he did not want it; He asked at once for his cloak. He went on his way to town To find Thierry if he could, Who was in sorrow and burdened by cares. He took himself into a church And found him in a secluded place, Lying on his knees on the ground.</p>
<p>2540</p>	<p>"Arise up, Tirri," he seyde tho, "To court thou schalt with me go Now ichave thee founde." Tirri anon his heved upbreyd And seyde, "Pilgrim hastow me treyd? Allas, that ich stounde! "Allas, allas!" than seyde he, "To what man may men trust be</p>	<p>"Rise up, Thierry," he said. "Now that I have found you, You will go to the court with me." Thierry lifted up his head in alarm And said, "Pilgrim, have you betrayed me? Alas, that very moment! Alas, alas!" he then said, "What man can one have trust in</p>

⁴³ There is legitimate page damage here in the Auchinleck, and some letters have been reconstructed.

2550	<p>To chese to his make? Thou that semed so stedefast To th'emperour me wraied hast, To sle me thou hast take. In ivel time was it to me That Y mi name told to thee; Allas that ich sake.” For sorwe that he hadde tho O word no might he speke mo Bot stode and gan to quake. “Tirri,” seyde Gii, “drede thee nothing, Thou schalt today here gode tiding Thurth grace of Godes sond.</p>	<p>To choose as his comrade? You, who seemed so steadfast, Have betrayed me to the emperor, And have decided to kill me. It was an evil moment for me When I told you my name. Alas that I gave myself away!” For the grief that he had then, He could not speak one more word, But stood and began to quake.</p>
2560	<p>The schrewed Douke Berard he is ded, Under the cité he is yleyde, Y slough him with min hond.” Tho was Tirri glad and blithe, To court he went also swithe For nothing wald he wond. “Sir emperour,” seyde Gii anon, “Now is Tirri comen hom To reseive his lond.” Th'emperour on him gan bihold And seyde to him with wordes bold, “Artow th'eryl Tirri? Where is now thi bold chere That whilom so douhti were And holden so hardi?” “Ya, sir,” he seyde, “icham he. Whilom Y was of gret boundé And helden ful douhti And now ich have al forlorn With miche sorwe on even and morn</p>	<p>“Thierry,” said Guy, “have no fear. You will hear some good news today, Through the grace of God’s command. The evil Duke Berard is dead; He is buried under the city. I killed him with my own hand.” Then Thierry was overjoyed and glad. Just as quickly they went to the court; They would not delay for anything. “Sir Emperor,” said Guy straightaway, “Now Thierry has come home To receive his lands.” The emperor began to look upon him And said to him with frank words, “Are you Earl Thierry? Where is your bold manner now, You who used to be so courageous And considered so hardy?” “Yes, sir,” he said, “I am he. I was once of great ability And respected for my manliness. And now I have lost everything To look for my friend Sir Guy, In great sorrow by evenings and mornings. I have looked for him in many lands But have never yet found anyone Who could tell any news of him. I know very well he is dead. May God Almighty and Saint Michael Carry his soul to bliss. But now I am told that this pilgrim Has killed Duke Berard. I am very pleased for it. Sir Emperor, I ask your mercy. For the love of God and our Lady, Grant me my lands under law.” Thirty earls, all courteous, And all the nobility in the palace And many barons together Cried for clemency to the brave emperor. The emperor looked on him And said, “Thierry, my friend, I hereby endow you with all your lands To hold with honor in your hand,</p>
2570	<p>To seke mi felawe Sir Gii. “Ich have him sought in mani lond Ac never man yete ich fond Can telle of him no sawe. He is dede ich wot ful wel, God Almighty and Seyn Mighel To blis his soule drawe. Ac now is it told me this pilgrim As slayn the douke Berardin; Therof icham ful fawe.</p>	<p>Sir Emperor, I ask your mercy. For the love of God and our Lady, Grant me my lands under law.” Thirty earls, all courteous, And all the nobility in the palace And many barons together Cried for clemency to the brave emperor. The emperor looked on him And said, “Thierry, my friend, I hereby endow you with all your lands To hold with honor in your hand,</p>
2580	<p>Sir Emperour, Y bid merci, For Godes love and our Levedi, Thou do me londes lawe.” Thritti erls wel curteys And alle the lordinges of the paylais And mani baroun afine Crid merci to th'emperour bold. Th'emperour gan him bihold And seyde, “Tirri, frende min, Here Y sese thee in al thi lond</p>	<p>With worthschip to held in thine hond</p>
2590	<p>With worthschip to held in thine hond</p>	<p>With worthschip to held in thine hond</p>
2600	<p>With worthschip to held in thine hond</p>	<p>With worthschip to held in thine hond</p>

	<p>Bi God and Seyn Martine. Bifor mi barouns Y graunt thee Steward of mi lond thou schalt be As was the douke Berardine.” Th’emperour kist him ful swete, Forgaf him his wrethe and his hete Bifor hem al there. When th’emperour and th’erl were at on The lordinges everichon</p>	<p>By God and by Saint Martin. And in front of my barons I proclaim That you will be steward of my land As Duke Berard was.” The emperor kissed him in friendship And let go his wrath and his anger Before all of them there. When the emperor and earl were at one, Every one of the lordings</p>
2610	<p>Wele blithe of hertes were. “Sir Tirri,” seyde th’emperour fre, “For thi fader soule tel thou me Astow art me leve and dere, Whennes is this pilgrim? Is he thin em or thi cosyin That faught for thee here?” “Sir Emperour,” seyde Sir Tirri, “So God me help and our Levedi For sothe withouten fayle</p>	<p>Was very pleased at heart. “Sir Thierry,” said the noble emperor, “If you are beloved and dear to me, On your father’s soul tell me, Where is this pilgrim from? Is he your uncle or your cousin Who fought for you here?” “Sir Emperor,” said Sir Thierry, “So help me God and our Lady, In truth without fail,</p>
2620	<p>Y no seighe never ere this pilgrim Bot this other day Y met with him And told him mi conseyl. He swore as tite bi Seyn Jon To thi court he wald gon The douk Berard to asayle. Ich wend wel litel than, Y plight, He hadde ben of michel might To hold with him batayle.” Th’emperour dede as a gode man</p>	<p>I never saw this pilgrim before Except the other day when I met him And told him my troubles. He swore as quickly that by Saint John, He would go to your court To confront Duke Berard. I had little idea then, I swear, He would be of such great strength To prevail against him in battle.” The emperor did as a good man does And took Thierry into his chamber</p>
2630	<p>And Tirri into his chaumber he nam And richeliche gan him schrede. He fond him wepen and armour bright And al that schuld falle to knight And feffed him with prede And fond him hors and stedes gode Of al his lond the best stode Hom with him to lede. Th’emperour wald the pilgrim athold Ac sikerliche he seyde he nold,</p>	<p>And had him dressed richly. He gave him weapons and shining armor And all that befits a knight, And furnished him with pride. And he gave him a horse and fine steeds, The best stock from all his lands, For him to lead home with him. The emperor wished to keep the pilgrim also, But he earnestly said he would not stay; He went home with Thierry. When Thierry had arrived home, He immediately wished to give All his lands to the pilgrim. But Sir Guy refused it all outright, For he had no love at all for riches To hold in his hand.</p>
2640	<p>With Tirri hom he yede. When Tirri was comen hom The pilgrim he wald anon Sesen in al his lond. And he forsoke it al outright For riches loved he no wight For to hold in hond. Th’erl as swithe his sond he sent Over al his lond verrament Til that his wiif he fond.</p>	<p>Just as swiftly, the earl sent his word Over all of his lands, in truth, Until his wife should be found. Soon she was found on an island, In a nunnery all that while, For fear of Berard’s rule. Then Thierry was a noble man! In all that land there were none better,</p>
2650	<p>Tho was sche founden in an ile In a nunri that while For doute of Berardes bond. Tho was Tirri a noble man In al that lond better nas nan</p>	<p>Then Thierry was a noble man! In all that land there were none better,</p>

2660	<p>As Y you tel may. Destrud were al his enemis, He liveth in michel joie and blis Also a prince in play. Anon Sir Gii him bithought That lenger wald he duelle nought; To Sir Tirri on a day He seyde to him in that tide, "Here nil Y no lenger abide, Ich mot wende in mi way. "O thing," he seyde, "Y pray thee, Out of the cité go with me Astow art hendi knight. Alon we shul go bothe yfere And swich tidinges thou schalt here</p>	<p>As I can tell you. His enemies were all destroyed. He lived in great joy and peace, Like a prince at his leisure. Soon Sir Guy resolved to himself That he would not dwell longer. One day with Sir Thierry He said to him at that time, "I will no longer stay here. I must go on my way." "But one thing," he said, "I ask of you. If you are a gracious knight, Go out of the city with me. We will go alone, the two of us, And you will hear such news That you will be amazed, in truth." The earl agreed with a willing heart And went with him out of the city, Straight along his way. And when they were out half a mile, Those men of great might Paused there for a little while.</p>
2670	<p>Thou schalt have wonder, aplight." Th'eryl him graunt with hert fre And went with him out of that cité In his way ful right. And when thai wer thennes half a mile Ther thai duelled a litel while Tho gomes of michel might. "Tirri," seyde Gii, "understond thou the, Thou art unkinde so thenketh me For Gii thi gode fere;</p>	<p>"Thierry," said Guy, "Hear my words. It seems to me that you are fickle Towards Guy, your loyal friend. Why have you not recognized him? In truth, your memory serves you badly. Was he not beloved and dear to you? Think of how he killed Duke Otoun And delivered you out of prison And made you free and clear, And how he found you nearly dead, With a pitiable appearance, As he rode through the forest. And how he aided your shining lady, And of the fifteen savage outlaws, And how he slayed them in a row, And swiftly killed the four knights. And how he anxiously brought you to town To have your wounds treated. And he assisted your father in battle And helped you both near and far, Though you had fallen so low. And now I have killed Berard the strong. I am Guy. You do me wrong. Why do you not know me?"</p>
2680	<p>Whi wiltow him knowe nought? Ywis, thou art ivel bithought, No was he thee leve and dere? Thenke he slough the douk Otoun And brought thee out of his prisoun And made thee quite and skere And hou he fond thee ded almost As he rode thurth a forest With a rewely chere. "And hou he socourde thi leman schene</p>	<p>Why have you not recognized him? In truth, your memory serves you badly. Was he not beloved and dear to you? Think of how he killed Duke Otoun And delivered you out of prison And made you free and clear, And how he found you nearly dead, With a pitiable appearance, As he rode through the forest. And how he aided your shining lady, And of the fifteen savage outlaws, And how he slayed them in a row, And swiftly killed the four knights. And how he anxiously brought you to town To have your wounds treated. And he assisted your father in battle And helped you both near and far, Though you had fallen so low. And now I have killed Berard the strong. I am Guy. You do me wrong. Why do you not know me?"</p>
2690	<p>And al the fifteen outlawes ken He slough hem al on rawe And slough the four knightes radde And thi bodi to toun ladde To leche thi woundes ful fawe; And he socourde thi fader in wer And halp thee bothe nere and fer Tho thou was fallen ful lawe. And now Y slough Berard the strong. Icham Gii, thou hast wrong.</p>	<p>Why do you not know me?" When the earl heard him speak so He began to weep with both eyes And fell faint to the ground. "For God's love," he said, "forgive me. I am sick at heart now, In sorrow and overcome by guilt. I might have known you full well before. In all this world there is no man but you</p>
2700	<p>Why niltow me nought knawe?" When th'eryl herd him speke so Wepen he gan with eyghen to And fel aswon to grounde. "For Godes love," he seyde, "merci. Ivel at ese now am Y In sorwe and care ful bounde. Ful wele might Y knowe thee ar now, In al this warld was man bot thou</p>	<p>Why do you not know me?" When the earl heard him speak so He began to weep with both eyes And fell faint to the ground. "For God's love," he said, "forgive me. I am sick at heart now, In sorrow and overcome by guilt. I might have known you full well before. In all this world there is no man but you</p>

2710	<p>Ogain Berard durst founde. Merci, sir, <i>par charité</i>; That ich have misknowen thee Allas, allas, that stounde! “Merci!” he crid on his kne, Bothe for sorwe and for pité Wepen he bigan. He seyge his legges brosten ich del That whilom wer yhosed ful wel More sorwe made never man. Sir Gii went to him tho -</p>	<p>Who would dare face against Berard! Mercy, sir, for charity’s sake, For my failure to recognize you! Alas, alas, that time! “Forgive me!” he cried on his knee, Guy began to weep, Both in sadness and for compassion. He saw Thierry’s legs, blistered all over, That once were elegantly clothed; No man ever made greater lamenting. Sir Guy came near to him then,</p>
2720	<p>In his hert him was wo - And in his armes up him nam. Atuix hem was gret diol in that stounde, Bothe thai fel aswon to grounde For sorwe thai wex al wan. “Tirri,” seyde Sir Gii tho, “Thou schalt bileve and Y schal go; Y biteche thee heven-king Bot Ich have a sone, ywis - Y not whether he knight is</p>	<p>For his heart ached, And took him up in his arms. There was grief between them at that moment. Both of them fell in a swoon to the ground, And they grew pale for sorrow. “Thierry,” Sir Guy finally said, “You shall stay and I will go. I entrust you to Heaven’s king. But in truth, I have a son. I do not know whether he is a knight For he is only a youngster. If he ever has need of you, For my love, help him, I ask you in every way. I hope that he will be a good knight. I pray to Jesus, full of might, That He will grant him His blessing.”</p>
2730	<p>For he is bot a yongling - Yif he have ani nede to thee Help him for the love of me Y pray thee in al thing. Ich hope he schal be a gode knight, Y pray Jhesu ful of might He graunt him His blisceing.” “Merci, sir,” than seyde he, “For Godes love leve her stil with me Y pray thee <i>par amour</i>;</p>	<p>“Thierry,” Sir Guy finally said, “You shall stay and I will go. I entrust you to Heaven’s king. But in truth, I have a son. I do not know whether he is a knight For he is only a youngster. If he ever has need of you, For my love, help him, I ask you in every way. I hope that he will be a good knight. I pray to Jesus, full of might, That He will grant him His blessing.” “Mercy, sir,” Thierry answered then. “For God’s love, live here with me yet, I ask you, for kindness’ sake. I pledge my oath with my hand That I will endow you with all my land, Both in town and tower. I will be your man and serve you forever, While my life might last, To protect your honor. And if you will not, I will go with you. In faith, I would rather do so Than stay with the emperor.”</p>
2740	<p>Mi treuthe Y plight in thine hond Y schal thee sese in al mi lond Bothe in toun and tour. Thi man Y wil be and serve thee ay Ther while mi liif lest may To hold up thin honour. And yif thou no wilt, ichil with thee go; Ywis, ichave wele lever so Than bileve with th’emperour.” “Do oway, Sir Tirri, therof speke nought,</p>	<p>“Enough, Sir Thierry, no more talk of it. Your speech is all foolish thoughts! Go straight back home again. Do not be too proud, is my advice to you, To serve your lord in all his needs. Show this with all your might! Deprive no man of his land. If you do, you will fall into shame. You will assuredly be miserable. For if you rob a man of his goods, You will never see God’s face Nor come into Heaven’s light. Consider well Duke Berard, How proud he was because he was steward,</p>
2750	<p>Al idel speche it is thi thought. Wende ogain hom now right And be nought to prout Y thee rede To serve thi lord at al his nede Thou prove with thi might. Desirite no man of his lond; Yif thou dost thou gos to schond Ful siker be thou, aflight. For yive thou reve a man his fe Godes face schaltow never se</p>	<p>“Enough, Sir Thierry, no more talk of it. Your speech is all foolish thoughts! Go straight back home again. Do not be too proud, is my advice to you, To serve your lord in all his needs. Show this with all your might! Deprive no man of his land. If you do, you will fall into shame. You will assuredly be miserable. For if you rob a man of his goods, You will never see God’s face Nor come into Heaven’s light. Consider well Duke Berard, How proud he was because he was steward,</p>
2760	<p>No com in heven-light. “Bithenke thee wele of Douke Berard Hou prout he was for he was steward</p>	<p>Consider well Duke Berard, How proud he was because he was steward,</p>

2770	<p>And flemed thee out of lond And he now desirite is, With michel sorwe slayn, ywis, And schamelich driven to schond. Y schal gon and thou bileve schalt, Y biteche thee God that al thing walt And maked with His hond.” Thai kisten hem togider tho; Olive thai seyghen hem never eft mo As the gest doth ous understand. Gret sorwe thai made at her parting And kist hem with eithe wepeing; Thai wenten hem bothe atuo. Als swithe th’erl Tirri went him hom; Thre days he no ete mete non, In hert him was ful wo. And when the countas sikerly</p>	<p>And how he banished you out of the land And is now disinherited,⁴⁴ And slain with great sorrow indeed, And driven to ruin in disgrace. I shall go and you will stay. I commend you to God, who rules all things And made them with His hand.” The two then kissed each other. They never saw each other alive again, As the story has us understand. They made great sorrow at their parting And kissed with weeping eyes. They went their separate ways. As swiftly, Thierry took himself home. For three days he ate no food, For he was inconsolable at heart. And when the countess heard it said With certainty that it was Sir Guy Who had then gone from them, She reproached her lord day and night For not forcefully insisting he stay⁴⁵ And letting let him leave from there. Now Sir Guy went forth on his way Toward the sea, as swiftly as he could. For Thierry he sighed bitterly. He soon boarded a ship And sailed over the sea And traveled into England. At once he asked among the people About King Athelston And which land he was in. “He’s at Winchester, in truth,⁴⁶ And he has sent for his barons, Both small and great. Earls, barons, and bishops, Knights, priors, and abbots, Each one of them is at Winchester</p>
2780	<p>Herd seyng it was Sir Gii That than was went hem fro Sche upbreyd hir lord day and night That he no had holden him with strengthe And might / And laten him nought thennes gon. Now went Gii forth in his way Toward the see so swithe he may, For Tirri he siked sare. Into schip he went bilive, Over the se he gan drive, Into Ingland he gan fare.</p>	
2790	<p>The lond folk he axed anon After King Athelston In what cuntré he ware. “At Winchester verrament And after his barouns he hath sent, Bothe lasse and mare. “Erls, barouns, and bischopes, Knights, priours, and abbotes At Winchester thai ben ichon</p>	

⁴⁴ *And he now desirite is*: Duke Berard is of course more than disinherited, being dead. Presumably not only were his lands confiscated for high treason after threatening war against the emperor, but his descendents are permanently cut off from royal privilege. For a contemporary legal code concerning confiscation, see Nicole Clifton, trans., *Livre de Roi* (c. 1200), in *Crusader Institutions*, ed. Joshua Prawer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 433-4.

⁴⁵ 2783 is an especially long line, which is wrapped here into the next space. The line is a strange one as it suggests that Thierry’s wife is advocating using force to detain and reward Guy.

⁴⁶ *Winchester*: Winchester was the capitol of England in the late Anglo-Saxon period, and for long after was only second in importance to London. In *Havelock*, Athelwold also rules from Winchester (158). Winchester tradition places the contest between Guy and Colbrand on a field near Hyde Abbey, of which only a gatehouse remains. For more historical clues, see also the TEAMS note and Velma Bourgeois Richmond, “The Legend of Guy of Warwick,” in *Garland Studies in Medieval Literature* 14 (New York: Garland, 1996).

2800	<p>And han purvayd withouten lesing Thre days to ben in fasting To biseke God in tron He sende hem thurth His swet sond A man that were douhti of hond Ogain Colbrond to gon. Ther is the king and the barnage, ywis, For doute of her enemis That wayt hem forto slon. “For Sir Anlaf the king of Danmark</p>	<p>And has arranged, without a lie, To spend three days in fasting To call on the throne of God, That through His sweet grace He will send a man hardy in arms To face against Colbrand. The king is there with the baronage, truly, Because of fear of their enemies Who lie in wait to slaughter them. For Sir Anlaf, the king of Danmark,</p>
2810	<p>With a nost store and stark Into Ingland is come With fiften thousand knightes of pris, Alle this lond thai stroyen, ywis, And mani a toun han nome. A geaunt he hath brought with him Out of Aufrike stout and grim, Colbrond hat that gome. For him is al Ingland forlore Bot Godes help be bifore</p>	<p>Has come into England With an army, fierce and strong, And fifteen thousand picked knights. They are ravaging all the land, indeed, And have taken many a town. He has brought with him a giant Out of Africa, strong and grim. Colbrand is the name of that creature. Because of him all England is lost Unless God’s favor is before them To send them some help.</p>
2820	<p>That socour sende hem some. “To the king he hath sent his sond For to yeld him al Ingland And gif him trowage outright Yif he no wil nought finde a baroun, A geaunt other a champioun, Ogain Colbrond to fight, And therof thai han taken a day. Ac our king non finde may Erl, baroun, no knight,</p>	<p>Anlaf has sent word to the king To yield all of England to him And to give him outright tribute⁴⁷ If he does not produce a baron, A giant, or a champion, To fight against Colbrand, And for this they have set a day. But our king cannot find Any earl, baron, or knight, No squire or any officer, Who dares fight against the giant, So fearsome is he to look upon.”</p>
2830	<p>No squier, no serjaunt non Ogain the geaunt dar gon So grim he is of sight.” Than seyde Sir Gii, “Whare is Herhaud? That in his time was so bald?” And thai answerd ful swithe. “To seche Gyes sone he is fare That marchaunce hadde stollen thare, For him he was unblithe.” “And where is th’erl Rohaut of pris?”</p>	<p>Then Sir Guy said, “Where is Herhaud, Who was so bold in his time?” And they answered promptly, “He has set out to look for Guy, Who was stolen away by traders. For him he was inconsolable.” “And where is the renowned Earl Rohaud?”</p>
2840	<p>And thai answerd, “Dede he is - A gode while is go sithe - And Feliis his douhter is his air, So gode a levedi no so fair, Ywis, nis non olive.” Gii went to Winchester a ful gode pas Ther the king that time was To held his parlement; The barouns weren in the halle.</p>	<p>And they answered, “He is dead— It has been a good while since— And Felicia, his daughter, is his heir. There’s no lady so good or fair Indeed, none alive.” Guy went to Winchester in great haste Where the king was at that time To hold his parliament. The barons were in the hall.</p>

⁴⁷ *Trowage outright*: Tribute could be an extremely burdensome protection racket. In 1012, following a sack of Canterbury, King Athelred paid the Danes off with 17,900 kg of silver.

2850	<p>The king seyde, "Lordinges alle, Mine men ye ben verrament, Therefore ich ax withouten fayl Of this Danis folk wil ous aseyl Ich biseche you with gode entent, For Godes love Y pray you Gode conseyl give me now Or elles we ben al schent. "For the king of Danmark with wrong With his geaunt that is so strong He wil ous al schende.</p>	<p>The king said, "Lordings, all, You are my men, truly. Therefore I ask you, without fail, About these Danes who are attacking us. I ask you, in good faith, And for God's love I beseech of you That you will give me good counsel, Or else we will all be finished. For the king of Denmark, Along with his giant who is so strong, Will unjustly destroy us all.</p>
2860	<p>Therefore ich axi you ichon What rede is best forto don Ogaines hem forto wende? Yif he overcom ous in batayle He wil slen ous alle saunfeyle And strouen al our kende. Than schal Ingland evermo Live in thraldom and in wo Unto the warldes ende. "Therefore ich axi you now right</p>	<p>Therefore I ask each one of you, What course is the best to follow To take against them? If they overcome us in battle They will slay us all, without doubt, And destroy all our people. Then England will forevermore Live in servitude and in woe Until the end of the world. Therefore I ask you right now If you know any knight of ours Who is so stout and bold To dare to take in hand the battle To fight against Colbrand. He would have half my land, With all the cities that lie in it, For him and his heirs forevermore, To have if he wanted."</p>
2870	<p>Yif ye knowe our ani knight That is so stout and bold That the batayle dar take an hond To fight ogain Colbrond. Half mi lond have he schold With alle the borwes that lith therto, To him and to his aires evermo To have yive he wold." Stil seten erls and barouns As men hadde schaven her crounes;</p>	<p>The earls and barons sat silently, Like monks who had shaved their heads. No one would give an answer. "Alas that I was ever born!" said the king. "All my joy is lost; It is woe to be alive! Is there no knight in all my land Who will fight against the giant? My heart will break into five! Alas, Sir Guy of Warwick! If I had given you half my land freely, To hold without grievance, Then all would be well. But for sure now the Danish men Will drive me to sorrow, all of them." When it was night they went to bed. The king, for sorrow and for fear, Wet his face with tears. All night long he had no sleep at all But continually prayed to Jesus Christ, Who was beloved and dear to him, That he would send through His grace A man to fight with Colbrand If it were His will.</p>
2880	<p>Nought on answeere nold. "Allas," seyde the king, "that Y was born. Al mi joie it is forlorn, Wel wo is me olive. Now in al mi lond nis no knight Ogaines a geant to hold fight Mine hert wil breken on five. Allas of Warwike Sir Gii Y no hadde geven thee half mi lond frely To hold withouten strive;</p>	<p>The earls and barons sat silently, Like monks who had shaved their heads. No one would give an answer. "Alas that I was ever born!" said the king. "All my joy is lost; It is woe to be alive! Is there no knight in all my land Who will fight against the giant? My heart will break into five! Alas, Sir Guy of Warwick! If I had given you half my land freely, To hold without grievance, Then all would be well. But for sure now the Danish men Will drive me to sorrow, all of them." When it was night they went to bed. The king, for sorrow and for fear, Wet his face with tears. All night long he had no sleep at all But continually prayed to Jesus Christ, Who was beloved and dear to him, That he would send through His grace A man to fight with Colbrand If it were His will.</p>
2890	<p>Wele were me than bifalle. Ac certes now the Danis men alle To sorwe thai schul me drive." When it was night to bedde thai yede; The king for sorwe and for drede With teres wett his lere. Of al that night he slepe right nought Bot ever Jhesu he bisought That was him leve and dere He schuld him sende thurth His sond</p>	<p>Then all would be well. But for sure now the Danish men Will drive me to sorrow, all of them." When it was night they went to bed. The king, for sorrow and for fear, Wet his face with tears. All night long he had no sleep at all But continually prayed to Jesus Christ, Who was beloved and dear to him, That he would send through His grace A man to fight with Colbrand If it were His will.</p>
2900	<p>A man to fight with Colbrond Yif it Is wille were. And Jhesus Crist ful of might</p>	<p>And Jesus Christ, full of might,</p>

2910	<p>He sent him a noble knight As ye may forward here. Ther com an angel fram heven-light And seyde to the king ful right Thurth grace of Godes sond. He seyde, "King Athelston, slepestow? Hider me sent thee King Jhesu To comfort thee to fond.</p>	<p>Did send him a noble knight, As you will learn from here on. An angel from Heaven's light appeared And spoke directly to the king Through the grace of God's command. He said, "King Athelston, are you asleep? I am sent here by King Jesus To attempt to comfort you.</p>
2920	<p>Tomorwe go to the north gate ful swithe, A pilgrim thou schalt se com bilive When thou hast a while stond. Bid him for Seynt Charité That he take the batayl for thee And he it wil nim on hond." Than was the king glad and blithe, Amorwe he ros up ful swithe And went to the gate ful right.</p>	<p>Tomorrow, go quickly to the north gate. When you have stood for a while, You will see a pilgrim coming before long. Ask him, for Saint Charity's sake, To accept the battle for you And he will take it into his hand." The king was glad and at peace then. In the morning he hurriedly rose And went straight to the gate.</p>
2930	<p>Tuay erls went with him tho And tuay bischopes dede also. The weder was fair and bright. Opon the day about prime The king seighe cum the pilgrim Bi the sclavayn he him plight. "Pilgrim," he seyde, "Y pray thee To court wende thou hom with me And ostel ther al night." "Be stille, sir," seyde the pilgrim, "It is nought yete time to take min in, Also God me rede."</p>	<p>Two earls went there with him And two bishops did as well. The weather was fair and bright. At the break of daylight, The king saw the pilgrim coming; He grasped him by his cloak. "Pilgrim," he said, "I ask you To come home with me to the court And lodge there all night." "Let me be, sir," said the pilgrim, "It is not time yet to take my room, So may God help me."</p>
2940	<p>The king him bisought tho And the lordinges dede also, To court with hem he yede. "Pilgrim," quath the king, "<i>par charité</i>, Yif it be thi wil understond to me, Y schal schewe thee al our nede: The king of Danmark with gret wrong Thurth a geaunt that is so strong Wil strou al our thede.</p>	<p>The king then implored him, And the lordings did as well, That he go with them to court. "Pilgrim," said the king, "for charity's sake, If it be your will, listen to me; I will explain to you all our need. With great injustice the king of Denmark, Through a giant who is so strong, Will destroy all our nation.</p>
2950	<p>"And whe han taken of him batayle On what maner, saunfayle, Y schal now tellen thee. Thurth the bodi of a knight Ogains that geaunt to hold fight Schal this lond aquite be. And pilgrim for Him that dyed on Rode And that for ous schadde His blod To bigge ous alle fre, Take the batayle now on hond And save ous the right of Ingland For Seynt Charité." "Do way, leve sir," seyde Gii, "Icham an old man, a feble bodi; Mi strengthe is fro me fare." The king fel on knes to grounde</p>	<p>And we have agreed to combat with him, The manner of which, without fail, I will tell you now. This land will be spared Through the body of a knight Who will face against the giant. Pilgrim, for He who died on the Cross, And who shed His blood for us To redeem us all into freedom, Accept the battle into your hand, And save us the right of England For Saint Charity!" "Enough, good sir!" said Guy, "I am an old man with a feeble body; My strength has gone from me." The king fell on his knees to the ground</p>

2960	<p>And crid him merci in that stounde Yif it his wille ware, And the barouns dede also, O knes thai fellen alle tho With sorwe and sikeing sare. Sir Gii biheld the lordinges alle And whiche sorwe hem was bifalle, Sir Gii hadde of hem care. Sir Gii tok up the king anon And bad the lordinges everichon Thai schuld up stond, And seyde, "For God in Trinité And forto make Ingland fre 2970 The batayle Y nim on hond." Than was the king ful glad and blithe And thonked Gii a thousand sithe And Jhesu Cristes sond. To the king of Danmark he sent than And seyde he hadde founden a man To fight for Ingland. The Danismen busked hem yare Into batayle forto fare, To fight thai war wel fawe. 2980 And Gii was armed swithe wel In a gode hauberk of stiel Wrought of the best lawe. An helme he hadde of michel might With a cercle of gold that schon bright With precious stones on rawe. In the frunt stode a charbukel ston As bright as ani sonne it schon That glemes under schawe. On that helme stode a flour 2990 Wrought it was of divers colour, Mirie it was to bihold. Trust and trewe was his ventayle Gloves and gambisoun and hosen of mayle As gode knight have scholde; Girt he was with a gode brond Wele kerveand biforn his hond; A targe listed with gold Portreyd with thre kinges corn That present God when He was born, 3000 Mirier was non on mold. And a swift-ernand stede Al wrin thai dede him lede, His tire it was ful gay. Sir Gii opon that stede wond With a gode glaive in hond And priked him forth his way. And when he com to the plas Ther the batayl loked was Gii light withouten delay 3010 And fel on knes down in that stede</p>	<p>And begged for mercy in that place, If it were his will, And the barons did the same. They all fell to their knees With sorrow and bitter sighs. Sir Guy looked upon all the lords, And the woe that had befallen them, And had compassion for them. Sir Guy brought the king to his feet And told the lordings, each of them, That they should stand up, And said, "For God in Trinity, And to make England free, I will take the battle into my hand." Then the king was glad and at peace And thanked Guy a thousand times And Jesus Christ's providence. He then sent word to the king of Denmark And said he had found a man To stand for England. The Danish quickly readied themselves To go forward into battle. They were very eager to fight. And Guy was armed to the full In a sturdy mail coat of steel, Fashioned in the finest manner. He had a helmet of great strength, With a circle of gold that shone bright With precious stones in a row. In the front stood a carbuncle stone, Which shone as bright as any sun That gleams under shadows. On that helmet stood a flower Which was crafted of various colors. It was beautiful to behold. His face-guard was firm and strong, With gloves and jacket and mail-hose, As a good knight should have. He was fitted with a good blade Which would edge sharp before his hand, And with a shield bordered with gold, Portrayed with three carved magi Who brought gifts to God when He was born. There were none more beautiful on earth! And they led a fast-galloping steed, All outfitted, to him. His attire was very handsome. Sir Guy mounted upon that steed With a firm spear in hand And spurred forth on his way. And when he came to the place Where the battle was agreed, Guy dismounted without delay And fell down on his knees in that place</p>
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	<p>And to God he bad his bede He schuld ben his help that day. “Lord,” seyde Gii, “that rered Lazeroun And for man tholed passioun And on the Rode gan blede, That saved Sussan fram the feloun And halp Daniel fram the lyoun, Today wisse me and rede. Astow art mighti heven-king 3020 Today graunt me thi blisseing And help me at this nede; And Levedi Mari ful of might Today save Inglondes right And leve me wele to spede.” When the folk was samned bi bothe side The to kinges with michel pride After the relikes thai sende, The corporas and the Messe gere. 3030 On the halidom thai gun swere With wordes fre and hende. The king of Danmarke swore furst, ywis, Yif that his geant slayn is To Danmarke he schal wende And never more Inglond cum withinne No non after him of his kinne Unto the warldes ende. Sethen swore the king Athelston And seyde among hem everichon Bi God that al may weld, 3040 Yif his man ther slayn be Or overcomen that men may se Recreaunt in the feld, His man he wil bicom an hond And alle the reme of Inglond Of him forto helde And hold him for lord and king With gold and silver and other thing Gret trowage him forto yelde.</p>	<p>And made his prayer to God That He would be his help that day. “Lord,” said Guy, “who raised Lazarus, And suffered death for man, And bled on the Cross, Who saved Susanna from the lying men,⁴⁸ And protected Daniel from the lion, Guide me and aid me today. As You are the mighty king of Heaven,⁴⁹ Grant me Your blessing today And help me in my need. And Lady Mary, full of might, Save England today And grant me grace to succeed.” When the people were gathered on both sides The two kings, with regal pride, Sent for the holy relics,⁵⁰ The altar cloth, and the implements of mass. On the sacred relics they swore With words that were noble and devout. The king of Denmark swore first, in truth, That if his giant were slain He would return to Denmark And never again come into England, Nor any of his kin after him, Until the end of the world. Then King Athelston swore And said before every one of them That by God, who rules all, If his man were slain there Or overcome so that men might see him Defeated on the field, He would become Anlaf’s man And all the realm of England Would be for him to hold, And he would obey him as lord and king. He would yield great tribute to him With gold and silver and other goods.</p>
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⁴⁸ *That saved Sussan fram the feloun*: The reference is to an extra-biblical (but canonical for Catholics) addition to *Daniel* where two voyeurs watch a Hebrew wife, Susanna, bathing. The two threaten a false charge of adultery unless she has sex with them, without success. The young Daniel cleverly cross-examines the two in court, and when their stories conflict they are exposed and put to death. All three people—Lazarus, Susanna, and Daniel—are examples Guy appeals to of God aiding those facing extreme odds.

⁴⁹ *Astow art mighti heven-king*: The *Guy* poet seems to often use *astow* with the sense of ‘if,’ but here and in line 1221 where Guy is addressing God he is unlikely to be asking God to prove Himself, even rhetorically. *Deut.* 6:16: “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.”

⁵⁰ If Anlaf was historically the Danish king Olaf Tryggvason, as scholars have suggested, having a Viking peaceably swear on holy relics would not have been far-fetched, as Tryggvason was a Christian. Colbrand, perhaps a slave or mercenary, swears by Apollyon (3187). See note.

3050	<p>When thai had sworn and ostage founde Colbrond stirt up in that stounde, To fight he was ful felle.</p>	<p>When they had sworn and exchanged hostages Colbrand started up at that moment; He was fierce and keen to fight.</p>
	<p>He was so michel and so unrede That non hors might him lede In gest as Y you telle.</p>	<p>He was so monstrous and so ugly That no horse might carry him, As it is in the story as I tell you.</p>
	<p>So mani he hadde of armes gere Unnethe a cart might hem bere The Inglisse forto quelle.</p>	<p>He had so much weaponry To kill the English That his cart could barely hold it.</p>
3060	<p>Swiche armour as he hadde opon, Ywis, no herd ye never non Bot as it ware a fende of Helle.</p>	<p>You never heard of anyone Who had such armor upon him, indeed, Unless it were a fiend from Hell.</p>
	<p>Of mailes was nought his hauberk, It was al of another werk That mervail is to here.</p>	<p>His coat was not of chain mail; It was of another kind of workmanship That is astonishing to hear.</p>
	<p>Alle it were thicke splentes of stiel, Thicke yjoined strong and wel, To kepe that fendes fere.</p>	<p>It was all thick plates of steel, Tightly joined, strongly and firmly, To protect that devil's comrade.</p>
	<p>Hossen he hadde also wele ywrought Other than splentes was it nought Fram his fot to his swere.</p>	<p>He had finely crafted leg hose as well; It was nothing but steel plates, From his foot to his neck.</p>
3070	<p>He was so michel and so strong And therto wonderliche long In the world was non his pere.</p>	<p>He was so enormous and so strong And so incredibly tall; There was no one in the world his peer.</p>
	<p>An helme he hadde on his heved sett And therunder a thicke bacinet; Unsemly was his wede.</p>	<p>He had a helmet set on his head, And underneath a thick subhelmet.⁵¹ His appearance was hideous!</p>
	<p>A targe he had wrought ful wel - Other metel was ther non on bot stiel - A michel and unrede.</p>	<p>He had a shield that was skilfully wrought; It was huge and menacing. He had no other metal on except steel.</p>
3080	<p>Al his armour was blac as piche Wel foule he was and lothliche, A grisely gom to fede.</p>	<p>All his armor was as black as pitch; He was foul and loathsome, A grisly creature to nourish.</p>
	<p>The heighe king that sitteth on heighe That welt this warld fer and neighe Made him wel ivel to spede.</p>	<p>The high king who sits on high Who rules this world, near and far, Made him a fearsome opponent to defeat.</p>
	<p>A dart he bar in his hond kerveand And his wepen about him stondand Bothe bihinde and biforn</p>	<p>He bore a cutting spear in his hand, And his weapons stood about him, Both behind and before him:</p>
3090	<p>Axes and gisarmes scharp ygrounde And glaives forto give with wounde To hundred and mo ther worn.</p>	<p>Axes and halberds, sharply ground, And spears to give wounds with. There were two hundred and more!</p>
	<p>The Inglis biheld him fast. King Athelston was sore agast Inglond he schuld have lorn</p>	<p>The English beheld him intently. King Athelston was sorely afraid That he would lose England,</p>
	<p>For when Gii seighe that wicked hert He nas never so sore aferd</p>	<p>For when Guy saw his wicked heart He was never so sorely afraid</p>

⁵¹ *Bacinet*: A bascinet was an open-faced subhelmet, which became popular in the fourteenth century as full helmets could be unwieldy in hand-to-hand combat. Many of the military details in *Guy* are cheerfully anachronistic. Chain mail was in use, but Colbrand wearing plate armor in the eleventh century would have been impossible.

	<p>Sethen that he was born. Sir Gii lepe on his stede fot-hot And with a spere that wele bot To him he gan to ride. 3100 And he schet to Gii dartes thre, Of the tuay than failed he, The thridde he lete to him glide, Thurth Gyes scheld it glod And thurth his armour withouten abod Bituene his arme and side And quitelich into the feld it yede The mountaunce of an acre brede Er that it wald abide. 3110 Sir Gii to him gan to drive That his spere brast afive On his scheld that was so bounde; And Colbrond with michel hete On Gyes helme he wald have smite, And failed of him that stounde; Bituix the sadel and the arsoun The strok of that feloun glod adoun Withouten wem or wounde. 3120 That sadel and hors atuo he smot, Into the erthe wele half a fot And Gii fel down to grounde. Sir Gii as tite up stirt As man that was agremed in hert, His stede he hadde forlore. On his helme he wald hit him tho Ac he no might nought reche therto Bi to fot and yete more, Bot on his schulder the swerd fel doun And carf bothe plates and hauberjoun With his grimli gore. 3130 Thurth al his armour stern and strong He made him a wounde a spanne long That greved him ful sore. Colbrond was sore aschame And smot Gii with michel grame. On his helm he hit him tho That his floures everichon And his gode charbukel ston Wel even he carf atuo. Even ato he smot his scheld 3140 That it fleyghe into the feld. When Gii seyge it was so That he hadde his scheld forlorn, Half bihinde and half biforn, In hert him was wel wo. And Gii hent his swerd an hond And heteliche smot to Colbrond - As a child he stode him under. Open the scheld he yave him swiche a dent Bifor the stroke the fiir out went</p>	<p>In all the time since he was born. Sir Guy leaped on his steed in haste And with a spear that cut strong He began to ride to him. The giant shot three spears at Guy. With the first two they failed him; The third that he let fly Pierced through Guy's shield And through his armor without stopping, Between his arm and side, And it went completely across the field, The distance of an acre across, Before it would drop. He charged on Sir Guy So that his spear burst into five pieces Against his shield which was so firm. And Colbrand would have struck On Guy's helmet with great fury, But he missed in that moment. The murderer's stroke cut down Between the saddle and the pommel, Without injury or wound to Guy. But he cut the saddle and horse into two, Slicing into the earth a good half a foot, And Guy fell down to the ground. Sir Guy started up just as quickly, As a man who was enraged in heart, For he had lost his steed. He wanted to hit the giant on the helmet, But he could not reach it By two feet and even more. Yet the sword came down on his shoulder And carved both armor and mail coat With his deadly weapon. Through all his armor, grim and strong, He made a wound a hand-width's long; That grieved the giant sorely. Colbrand was greatly ashamed And struck at Guy with hot rage. He hit him on his helmet So that each one of his flowers And his good carbuncle stone Were split evenly in two. He cut his shield squarely in two So that it flew onto the field. When Guy saw what had happened, That he had lost his shield, With a half behind and half before him, He was full of woe at heart. But Guy gripped his sword in hand And ferociously struck at Colbrand, Standing under him like a child. Upon the shield he gave him such a blow That the sparks flew from the stroke</p>
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3150	As it were light of thonder. The bondes of stiel he carf ichon And into the scheld a fot and half on With his swerd he smot asunder, And with the out-braiding his swerd brast. Thei Gii were than sore agast It was litel wonder. Tho was Gii sore desmayd And in his hert wel ivel ypayd For the chaunce him was bifalle,	As if it was lightning from thunder. He cut each one of the steel bonds, And with his sword he parted the shield, Carving a foot and a half on into it. But on drawing it out his sword broke. If Guy was sorely terrified then, It would be little wonder. Guy was badly dispirited then And in his heart felt displeased With the fortune that had befallen him.
3160	And for he hadde lorn his gode brond And his stede upon the sond To our Levedi he gan calle. Than gun the Danis ost Ich puken other and make bost And seyde among hem alle, “Now schal the Inglis be slain in feld; Gret trouage Ing lond schal ous yeld And evermore ben our thral.”	For he had lost his good blade And his steed was upon the ground. To our Lady he began to call. Then the Danish host Began to jostle each other and boast, And talked among each other, “Now the English will be slain on the field! England will yield to us great tribute And will be our servant forevermore.”
3170	“Now, sir knight,” seyde Colbrond, “Thou hast lorn thi swerd in thine hond, Thi scheld and eke thi stede. Do now wele, yeld thee to me And smertlich unarme thee; Cri merci Y thee rede. And for thou art so douhti knight Thou durst ogain me held fight To mi lord Y schal thee lede And with him thou schalt acorded be, In his court he wil hold thee	“Now, sir knight,” said Colbrand, “You have lost the sword from your hand, Your shield, and also your horse. Take the best course and yield to me And unarm yourself sharply. I advise you to cry for mercy. And because you are so worthy a knight That you dare to fight against me, I will take you to my lord And you will be reconciled to him. He will hold you in his court And supply you with your needs.”
3180	And finde that thee is nede.” “Do way,” seyde Gii, “therof speke nought. Bi Him that al this world hath wrought Ich hadde lever thou were anhong. Ac thou hast armes gret plenté, Ywis, thou most lene me On of thine axes strong.” Colbrond swore bi Apolin, “Of al the wepen that is min Her schaltow non afong.	“Enough,” said Guy, “Speak no more of that. By Him who created all this world, I would prefer that you were hanged! But you have weapons in great plenty. Truly, you must lend me One of your strong axes.” Colbrand swore by Apollyon, ⁵² “Of all the weapons that are mine, You will get nothing here. If you will not do as I now advise, You will die an unpleasant death Before very long.”
3190	Now thou wilt nought do bi mi rede Thou schalt dye on ivel dede Er that it be ought long.” When Gii herd him speke so Al sone he gan him turn tho And to his wepen he geth Ther his axes stode bi hemselve; He kept on with a wel gode helve	When Guy heard him speak so, At once he turned on his feet And went for the giant’s weapons Where his axes stood by themselves. He seized one with a fine, strong handle,

⁵² *Apolin*: Apollyon, the angel of the bottomless pit of Hell. See also *Bevis*, 558. As usual, the poet groups together all non-Christians as having the same polytheistic deities. Colbrand may also be an African Saracen, as the Vikings traded in the mediterranean.

3200	<p>The best him thought he seth, To Colbrond ogain he ran And seyde, "Traitor," to him than, "Thou schalt han ivel deth. Now ich have of thi wepen plenté Wherewith that Y may were me Right maugré al thin teth." Colbrond than with michel hete On Gyes helme he wald have smite With wel gret hert tene Ac he failed of his dint</p>	<p>The best that he thought he saw. He ran back to Colbrand And then said to him, "Traitor! You will have a shameful death! From your weapons in plenty, I have what I need to defend myself, Despite all your blustering!" Colbrand then, in great rage, Would have struck on Guy's helmet With furious anger at heart. But he missed in his blow</p>
3210	<p>And the swerd into the erthe went A fot and more, Y wene. And with Colbrondes out-draught Sir Gii with ax a strok him raught A wounde that was wele sene. So smertliche he smot to Colbrond That his right arme with alle the hond He strok of quite and clene. When Colbrond feld him so smite He was wel wroth ye may wel wite, He gan his swerd up fond</p>	<p>And the sword went into the dirt A foot and more, I believe. And with Colbrand's reach overextended, Sir Guy caught him with a stroke of his axe With a wound that was clear to see. So sharply did he slash at Colbrand That his right arm with all the hand Was cut off fully and cleanly. When Colbrand felt himself injured so, He was incensed, you might well understand. He picked up his sword And with his left hand he heaved it up.</p>
3220	<p>And in his left hond op it haf And Gii in the nek a strok him gaf As he gan stoupe for the brond That his heved fro the bodi he smot And into the erthe half a fot Thurth grace of Godes sond. Ded he feld the glotoun thare. The Denis with sorwe and care Thai dight hem out of lond. Blithe were the Inglis men ichon.</p>	<p>But Guy gave him a stroke in the neck As he was stooping for his blade So that he hacked his head from the body And cut into the earth half a foot Through the grace of God's favor. He felled the rogue dead there. The Danish, with sadness and regret, Took themselves out of the land. Each one of the Englishmen were glad.</p>
3230	<p>Erls, barouns, and King Athelston, Thai toke Sir Gii that tide And ladde him to Winchester toun With wel fair processiou Over al bi ich a side. For joie belles thai gun ring <i>Te Deum laudamus</i> thai gun sing And play and michel pride.</p>	<p>Earls, barons, and King Athelston Took Sir Guy on that day And brought him to Winchester town With a stately procession At every place on each side. They rang bells for joy They sang <i>Te Deum Laudamus</i>⁵³ And rejoiced with great pride.</p>
3240	<p>Sir Gii unarmed him and was ful blithe; His sclavain he axed also swithe, No lenger he nold abide. "Sir pilgrim," than seyde the king, "Whennes thou art withouten lesing? Thou art douhti of dede, For thurth douhtines of thin hond Thou hast saved al Inglond. God quite thee thi mede,</p>	<p>Sir Guy unarmed himself and was happy. Just as quickly, he asked for his cloak. He would not stay any longer. "Sir pilgrim," the king said then, "Where are you from, without lying? You are courageous in deeds, For through the might of your hand You have saved all England. May God give you your reward!</p>

⁵³ *Te Deum laudamus*: "Thee God We Praise," an early Christian hymn used either in liturgy or in celebration.

3250	<p>And mi treuthe Y schal plight thee, So wele Y schal feffe thee Bothe in lond and lede That of riches in toun and tour Thou schalt be man of mest honour That woneth in al mi thede.” “Sir King,” seyde the pilgrim, “Of alle the lond that is tin Y no kepe therof na mare Bot now ichave the geant slain, Therof, ywis, icham ful fain, Mi way ichil forth fare.”</p>	<p>And I will pledge you my oath That I will endow you so well Both in land and people, That in riches in town and tower, You will be the man of highest honor Who lives in all my realm.” “Sir King,” said the pilgrim, “Of all the land that is yours, I do not want any of it. But now that I have slain the giant, For that, in truth, I am content. I will go forth on my way.”</p>
3260	<p>“Merci, sir,” the king seyde than, “Tel me for Him that made man - For nothing thou ne spare - Tel me what thi name it be, Whennes thou art and of what cuntré Or Y schal dye for care.” “Sir King,” he seyde, “Y schal tel it thee. What mi right name it be Thou schalt witen anon; Ac thou schalt go with me yfere That no man of our conseyl here</p>	<p>“Mercy, sir,” the king then replied, “for He who made man, tell me, And do not hold back for anything. Tell me what your name is, Where you come from and what land, Or I will die for distress.” “Sir King,” he said, “I will tell you. You will soon know What my rightful name is. But the two of us will go together So that no man will hear our conversation Except for you and I alone.”</p>
3270	<p>Bot thou and Y alon.” The king him graunted and was blithe, He comand his folk also swithe No wight with him to gon. Out of the toun than went he Wele half a mile fram that cité And ther made Gii his mon. “Sir King,” seyde Gii, “understond to me. O thing Y schal now pray thee Astow art curteys and hende:</p>	<p>The king granted him that and was pleased. He commanded his people as promptly That no one was to go with him. Out of the town they then went, A full half a mile from the city, And there Guy made his request. “Sir King,” said Guy, “understand me. I will ask one thing of you now, If you are courteous and faithful. If I tell you my name, You must not reveal me to any man Until this year has come to the end. Guy of Warwick is my name, truly. I was once your own knight And you held me as your friend. And now I am such as you can see. I entrust you to God in Heaven, And I will go forth on my way.”</p>
3280	<p>Yif Y mi name schal thee sayn That to no man thou no schalt me wrayn To this yere com to th’ende. Gii of Warwike mi nam is right, Whilom Y was thine owen knight And held me for thi frende; And now icham swiche astow may see. God of Heven biteche Y thee, Mi way Y wil forth wende.” When the king seighe sikerly</p>	<p>When the king saw clearly That it was the good Guy Who was departing from him, He fell down on his knees to the ground. He cried out in that moment, “Dear Sir Guy, mercy! For God’s love, stay with me And I give you my promise That on this day I will Endow and give into your hand Half the realm of England! For God’s love, do not say no.”</p>
3290	<p>That it was the gode Gii That fro him wald his way On knes he fel adoun to grounde, “Leve Sir Gii,” in that stounde, “Merci,” he gan to say. “For Godes love bileve with me And mi treuthe Y schal plight thee That Y schal this day Sese and give into thine hond Half the reme of Ingland;</p>	<p>For God’s love, do not say no.”</p>
3300	<p>For Godes love say nought nay.”</p>	<p>For God’s love, do not say no.”</p>

3310	<p>“Sir King,” seyð Gii, “Y nil nought so. Have thou thi lond for evermo And God Y thee biteche; Ac yif Herhaud to this lond com And bring with him Reynbroun mi sone Help him Y thee biseche. For thai er bothe hende and fre, On Herhaud thou might trust thee To take of thine fon wreche.” Thai kisten hem togider tho Al wepeand thai wenten ato Withouten ani more speche. The king wel sore wepe for pité And went him hom to his meyne With a mournand chere. His folk ogaines him gan gon And asked the king sone anon What man the pilgrim were. Thai seyð, “He is a douhti knight. Wald Jhesu ful of might He wald leve with ous here.” The king seyð, “Al stille ye be. What he is your non schal wite for me, Iwis, of al this yere.” Sir Gii went in his way forth right, Oft he thonked God Almighty That the geaunt was slawe. To Warwike he went to that cité Ther he was lord of that cuntré</p>	<p>“Sir King,” said Guy, “I will not have it. Have your land forevermore, And I commend you to God. But if Herhaud comes to this land And brings with him my son Reinbroun, I ask that you help him. For they are both gracious and noble. You may place your trust in Herhaud To take revenge on your foes.” They then kissed together, And with weeping they separated Without any more speech. The king wept bitterly for regret And went home to his household With a grieving demeanor. His people came to him And asked the king soon after What man the pilgrim was. They said, “He is a valiant knight. If only Jesus, full of might, would grant That he would live here with us.” The king said, “Be still, all of you. None of you will learn from me who he is, In truth, for all this year.” Sir Guy went straight on his way, Constantly thanking God Almighty That the giant was defeated. He went to the city of Warwick, Where he was lord of that country, To hold rightfully. He was recognized there by no one When he came to the castle gates, For which he was very happy.⁵⁴ He mixed among the poor men Who were there in one place And seated in a row. And the countess, Felicia, was there. In this world there was no better woman, In the story as we read. For love of her lord, she cared for Thirteen poor men and more yet. Each day she fed them⁵⁵ With the hope that God and our Lady</p>
3320	<p>To hold with right lawe. He nas knowen ther of no man When he to the castel gates cam, Therof he was ful fawe. Among the pouer men he him dede Ther thai weren up in a stede And sett him on a rawe. And Feliis the countas was ther than. In this world was non better wiman, In gest as so we rede,</p>	<p>To hold rightfully. He was recognized there by no one When he came to the castle gates, For which he was very happy.⁵⁴ He mixed among the poor men Who were there in one place And seated in a row. And the countess, Felicia, was there. In this world there was no better woman, In the story as we read. For love of her lord, she cared for Thirteen poor men and more yet. Each day she fed them⁵⁵ With the hope that God and our Lady</p>
3330	<p>For thritten pouer men and yete mo For hir lordes love sche loved so, Ich day sche gan fede With than God and our Levedi</p>	<p>For love of her lord, she cared for Thirteen poor men and more yet. Each day she fed them⁵⁵ With the hope that God and our Lady</p>

⁵⁴ Here begins another “returning hero in humble disguise” narrative. As TEAMS notes, the motif was popular in ancient literature from Odysseus’ return to Ithaca to similar scenes in *King Horn* and *Bevis of Hampton*. Yet unlike the normal sequence where the hero secretly does reconnaissance and builds dramatic suspense, here Guy faces no danger and never reveals himself.

⁵⁵ *Ich day sche gan fede*: The act is not a dainty extravagance like Chaucer’s Prioress feeding her dog with white bread (I.147). Woolgar notes that “Alms from the table were a major element in charity associated with the great household.” C.M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 154, quoted in TEAMS.

3350	<p>Schuld save hir lord Sir Gii And help him at his nede. Sche no stint noither day no night, For him sche bisought God Almighty With bedes and almos dede. On a day the levedi went to mete And bad men schuld biforn hir fete Hir pouer men al biden. And men brought hem everichon And Gii of Warwike was that on Of tho ich thritten.</p>	<p>Would protect her lord, Sir Guy, And help him in his need. She did not cease either day or night. For him she looked to God Almighty With prayers and charitable deeds. One day the lady went to dinner And asked her men to bring Her poor men all together before her. And men brought each one of them, And Guy of Warwick was one Of those thirteen.</p>
3360	<p>In his hert he hadde gret care That he schuld be knawen thare Of hem that hadde him sen; Ac ther was non so wise of sight That him ther knowe might So misais he was and lene. The levedi biheld him inliche Hou mesays he was sikerliche. Curteys sche was and hende, Of everich mete of everich dring That sche ete of herself withouten lesing Sche was him ful mende; Of hire bere and of hir wine In hir gold coupe afine Oft sche gan him sende</p>	<p>In his heart he had great anxiety That he would be recognized there By those who had seen him. But he was so thin and wretched That there were none so discerning in sight Who might know him there. The lady examined him carefully, Observing how desolate he truly was. She was courteous and generous. With every dish, with every drink, That she ate herself, without a lie, She was mindful of him. She often sent him servings Of her beer and of her wine, In her fine gold cup, And invited him to come each day.</p>
3370	<p>And bad him ich day com he schold, Mete and drink sche finde him wold Unto his lives ende. Sir Gii thonked that levedi oft Bot alle another was his thought Than he wald to hir say. When the grace were yseyd And the bordes adoun layd Out of toun he went his way. Into a forest wenden he gan</p>	<p>She would provide him with food and drink Until his life's end. Sir Guy thanked that lady often, But his thoughts were all different From what he said to her. When the grace was said And the table laid down,⁵⁶ He had made his way out of town. He traveled into a forest</p>
3380	<p>To an hermite he knewe er than To speke him yif he may. And when he thider comen was The gode hermite thurth Godes grace Was dede and loken in clay. Than thought Sir Gii anon That wald he never thennes gon Therwhiles he war olive. With a prest he spac of that cuntray That dede him Servise ich day</p>	<p>To find a hermit he had known before To speak with him if he might. But when he had arrived there, The good hermit, through God's grace, Was dead and buried in the earth's clay. Then Sir Guy decided at once That he would never go from there While he was still alive. He spoke with a priest of that country Who performed Mass for him each day</p>
3390	<p>And of his sinnes gan schrive. With him he hadde ther a page</p>	<p>And absolved him of his sins. With him there he had a page</p>

⁵⁶ *The bordes adoun layd*: Medieval tables were not permanent fixtures, but could be quickly stored and assembled for meals. Chaucer's hungry Franklin is unusual in that his table "stood redy covered al the longe day" (I.354).

	<p>That served him in that hermitage Withouten chest and strive. No lenger was he lives there Bot nighen monethes of a yere As ye may listen and lithe. In slepe as Gii lay anight God sent an angel bright Fram Heven to him thare.</p> <p>3400 “Gii,” seyde the angel, “slepestow? Hider me sent thee King Jhesu To bid thee make thee yare, For bi the eightenday at morwe He schal deliver thee out of thi sorwe Out of this world to fare. To Heven thou schalt com Him to And live with ous evermo In joie withouten care.” When Gii was waked of that drem</p> <p>3410 Of an angel he seighe a glem. “What artow?” than seyde he. The angel answerd, “Fram Heven Y cam, Mighel is mi right nam. God sent me to thee To bid thee make thee redi way, Bi the eightenday thou schalt day Wel siker maughtow be. And Y schal feche thi soule ful even And bere it to the blis of Heven With grete solempneté.”</p> <p>3420 The angel goth forth and Gii bileft stille, His bedes he bad with gode wille To Jhesu Heven-king. And when his term was nere gon His knave he cleped to him anon And seyde withouten lesing, “Sone,” he seyde, “Y pray now thee Go to Warwike that cité Withouten more duelling;</p> <p>3430 And when thou comest ther Y thee biseche Gret wele the countas with thi speche And take hir this gold ring. “And say the pilgrim hat hir biforn That hir mete was to born On the pouer mannes rawe, Gret hir wele in al thing And sende to hir this gold ring Yif that sche wil it knawe. Als son as sche hath therof a sight</p> <p>3440 Sche wil it knawe anonright And be therof ful fawe. Than wil sche ax ware Y be. Leve sone, for love of me, The sothe to hir thou schawe. “And say icham for Godes love</p>	<p>Who served him in that hermitage Without disagreement or strife. He lived there no longer Than nine months of a year, As you may listen and hear, When, as Guy lay at night in sleep, God sent a shining angel From Heaven to him there.</p> <p>“Guy,” said the angel, “Are you sleeping? I am sent here by King Jesus To tell you to make yourself ready, For by eight days from tomorrow He will deliver you out of your sorrows To travel out of this world. You will come to Him in Heaven And live with us forevermore In joy without worry.” When Guy awoke from that dream, He saw the gleam of an angel. “Who are you?” he said then. The angel answered, “I come from Heaven. Michael is my right name. God sent me to you To tell you to be ready to go directly. By the eighth day you will pass from here, You can be very certain. And I will fetch your soul just so And bear it to the bliss of Heaven With great ceremony.” The angel departed and left Guy in stillness. He made his prayers with good will To Jesus, Heaven’s king. And when his time was nearly gone, He called his servant to him at once And said to him without lying, “Son,” he said, “I ask you now, Go to the city of Warwick Without any more delay. And when you get there I implore you, Greet the countess well in your speech And give her this gold ring. And tell her the pilgrim who ate before her, Who was invited to her dinner In the company of the poor men, Greets her courteously in every way And sends her this gold ring, If she will recognize it. As soon as she has sight of it, She will know it instantly And be joyful for it. Then she will ask where I am. Dear son, for my love, Show her the truth. And say I have, for God’s love,</p>
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3450	<p>In the forest hermite bicomie Mine sinnes forto bete; And bid hir for the love of me That sche com hider with thee For nothing sche no lete. And when ye com ye finde me dede Do me never hennes lede Bot grave me here in grete. And after sche schal dye, ywis, And com to me into Heven-blis Ther joies her ful swete.” The knave went forth anon, Into Warwike he gan gon Bifor that levedi fre.</p>	<p>Become a forest hermit To atone for my sins. And ask her, for her love of me, That she come here with you, And that she delay for nothing. And if you come and find me dead, Do not ever carry me away, But bury me here in the earth. After then she will die, certainly, And come into Heaven’s bliss To hear sweet joys with me there.” The servant boy went forth at once. He went into Warwick To appear before that noble lady. And when he had found the lady, He fell to his knees on the ground And said, “Listen to me. The pilgrim that ate before you, Who was given your food, Is now a hermit. He greets you well in every way And sends you this gold ring As a token of him.” The lady took the ring into her hand And looked at it and paused To read the letters. “Oh, for certain!” exclaimed the lady, “This is the ring I gave my lord Sir Guy When he went from me!” She was overcome with grief, in truth, And when she arose She rushed up to the servant. “Dear son,” she said, “I beg of you, Where is that pilgrim? Tell me And gold will be your reward.” “My lady,” said the servant quickly, “I left him in the forest. Just now I came from him in the hermitage Where he is nearly dead. On his behalf I brought the message. In truth, he told me to do so And asked that you come to him, For the same true love That was between you two. Never have him taken away But bury him right there in the earth’s clay. You will see him alive no more.” The lady was glad for that news And thanked Jesus, Heaven’s king, And was overjoyed at heart That she would see her lord, Sir Guy. But she was in anguish for one thing, That he should die so soon. They made ready to go</p>
3460	<p>And when he hadde that levedi founde On knes he fel adoun to grounde And seyde, “Listen to me, The pilgrim that ete thee biforn That thi mete was to born An hermite now is he. He greteth thee wele in al thing And sent thee this gold ring In sum tokening to be.” The levedi tok that ring an hond And loked theron and gan withstond The letters forto rede. “Ow, certes,” quath the levedi, “This ring Y gaf mi lord Sir Gii When he fro me yede.” For sorwe sche fel aswon, ywis, And when that sche arisen is To the knave sche gan spede. “Leve sone,” sche seyde, “Y pray thee Wher is that pilgrim telle thou me And gold schal be thi mede.” “Madame,” seyde the knave ful skete, “In the forest ichim lete, Right now Y com him fro. He is ner ded in the hermitage, On his halve Y make the message; Ywis, he bad me so And bad thou schust to him come, For that ich trewe love That was bituene you tuo Do him never lede oway Bot biri him right ther in clay, Olive sestow him no mo.” The levedi was glad of that tiding And thonked Jhesu Heven-king And was in hert ful blithe That sche schuld sen hir lord Sir Gii; Ac for o thing sche was sori That he schuld dye so swithe. Thai made hem redi forto wende</p>	<p>And when he hadde that levedi founde On knes he fel adoun to grounde And seyde, “Listen to me. The pilgrim that ate before you, Who was given your food, Is now a hermit. He greets you well in every way And sends you this gold ring As a token of him.” The lady took the ring into her hand And looked at it and paused To read the letters. “Oh, for certain!” exclaimed the lady, “This is the ring I gave my lord Sir Guy When he went from me!” She was overcome with grief, in truth, And when she arose She rushed up to the servant. “Dear son,” she said, “I beg of you, Where is that pilgrim? Tell me And gold will be your reward.” “My lady,” said the servant quickly, “I left him in the forest. Just now I came from him in the hermitage Where he is nearly dead. On his behalf I brought the message. In truth, he told me to do so And asked that you come to him, For the same true love That was between you two. Never have him taken away But bury him right there in the earth’s clay. You will see him alive no more.” The lady was glad for that news And thanked Jesus, Heaven’s king, And was overjoyed at heart That she would see her lord, Sir Guy. But she was in anguish for one thing, That he should die so soon. They made ready to go</p>
3470	<p>“Ow, certes,” quath the levedi, “This ring Y gaf mi lord Sir Gii When he fro me yede.” For sorwe sche fel aswon, ywis, And when that sche arisen is To the knave sche gan spede. “Leve sone,” sche seyde, “Y pray thee Wher is that pilgrim telle thou me And gold schal be thi mede.” “Madame,” seyde the knave ful skete, “In the forest ichim lete, Right now Y com him fro. He is ner ded in the hermitage, On his halve Y make the message; Ywis, he bad me so And bad thou schust to him come, For that ich trewe love That was bituene you tuo Do him never lede oway Bot biri him right ther in clay, Olive sestow him no mo.” The levedi was glad of that tiding And thonked Jhesu Heven-king And was in hert ful blithe That sche schuld sen hir lord Sir Gii; Ac for o thing sche was sori That he schuld dye so swithe. Thai made hem redi forto wende</p>	<p>“Oh, for certain!” exclaimed the lady, “This is the ring I gave my lord Sir Guy When he went from me!” She was overcome with grief, in truth, And when she arose She rushed up to the servant. “Dear son,” she said, “I beg of you, Where is that pilgrim? Tell me And gold will be your reward.” “My lady,” said the servant quickly, “I left him in the forest. Just now I came from him in the hermitage Where he is nearly dead. On his behalf I brought the message. In truth, he told me to do so And asked that you come to him, For the same true love That was between you two. Never have him taken away But bury him right there in the earth’s clay. You will see him alive no more.” The lady was glad for that news And thanked Jesus, Heaven’s king, And was overjoyed at heart That she would see her lord, Sir Guy. But she was in anguish for one thing, That he should die so soon. They made ready to go</p>
3480	<p>“Ow, certes,” quath the levedi, “This ring Y gaf mi lord Sir Gii When he fro me yede.” For sorwe sche fel aswon, ywis, And when that sche arisen is To the knave sche gan spede. “Leve sone,” sche seyde, “Y pray thee Wher is that pilgrim telle thou me And gold schal be thi mede.” “Madame,” seyde the knave ful skete, “In the forest ichim lete, Right now Y com him fro. He is ner ded in the hermitage, On his halve Y make the message; Ywis, he bad me so And bad thou schust to him come, For that ich trewe love That was bituene you tuo Do him never lede oway Bot biri him right ther in clay, Olive sestow him no mo.” The levedi was glad of that tiding And thonked Jhesu Heven-king And was in hert ful blithe That sche schuld sen hir lord Sir Gii; Ac for o thing sche was sori That he schuld dye so swithe. Thai made hem redi forto wende</p>	<p>“Oh, for certain!” exclaimed the lady, “This is the ring I gave my lord Sir Guy When he went from me!” She was overcome with grief, in truth, And when she arose She rushed up to the servant. “Dear son,” she said, “I beg of you, Where is that pilgrim? Tell me And gold will be your reward.” “My lady,” said the servant quickly, “I left him in the forest. Just now I came from him in the hermitage Where he is nearly dead. On his behalf I brought the message. In truth, he told me to do so And asked that you come to him, For the same true love That was between you two. Never have him taken away But bury him right there in the earth’s clay. You will see him alive no more.” The lady was glad for that news And thanked Jesus, Heaven’s king, And was overjoyed at heart That she would see her lord, Sir Guy. But she was in anguish for one thing, That he should die so soon. They made ready to go</p>
3490	<p>Do him never lede oway Bot biri him right ther in clay, Olive sestow him no mo.” The levedi was glad of that tiding And thonked Jhesu Heven-king And was in hert ful blithe That sche schuld sen hir lord Sir Gii; Ac for o thing sche was sori That he schuld dye so swithe. Thai made hem redi forto wende</p>	<p>Do him never lede oway Bot bury him right there in the earth’s clay. You will see him alive no more.” The lady was glad for that news And thanked Jesus, Heaven’s king, And was overjoyed at heart That she would see her lord, Sir Guy. But she was in anguish for one thing, That he should die so soon. They made ready to go</p>

3500	<p>With knightes and with levedis hende. On a mule thai sett hir sithe And with al the best of that cité To th'ermitage went sche As ye may listen and lithe. To th'ermitage when thai come Ther thai light al and some And in sche went wel even. When that sche seighe hir lord Sir Gii Sche wept and made doleful cri</p>	<p>With knights and with lovely ladies. They set her on a mule, And with all the finest of the city She went to the hermitage, As you may listen and learn. When they had come to the hermitage They dismounted, all and some, And she went straight inside. When she saw her lord, Sir Guy, She wept and made a doleful cry</p>
3510	<p>With a ful reweful steven. Sir Gii loked on hir thare, His soule fram the bodi gan fare. A thousand angels and seven Underfenge the soule of Gii And bar it with gret molodi Into the blis of Heven. Than was that levedi ful of care For hir lord was fram hir fare, "Allas!" it was hir song.</p>	<p>With a mournful voice. As Sir Guy looked on her there, His soul began to pass from his body. A thousand angels and seven Received the soul of Guy And bore it with great melody Into the bliss of Heaven. Then the lady was full of grief, For her lord had gone from her, And "Alas!" was her refrain.</p>
3520	<p>Sche kist his mouthe, his chin also, And wepe with hir eighen to And hir hondes sche wrong. Gret honour dede our Lord for Gii: A swete brathe com fram his bodi That last that day so long That in this world spices alle No might cast a swetter smalle As then was hem among. The levedy as tite dede send hir sond</p>	<p>She kissed his mouth, and his chin as well, And wept with both her eyes And wrung her hands. Our Lord performed a great honor for Guy. A sweet scent came from his body That lasted all that day, So that of all the spices in this world, None could have cast a sweeter fragrance Than was among them. The lady swiftly sent her summons To the bishops and abbots of the land,</p>
3530	<p>After bischopes, abotes of the lond, The best that might be founde, And when thider was com that fair ferred To Warwike thai wald him lede As lord of michel mounde. Bot al the folk that ther was No might him stir of that plas Ther he lay on the grounde. An hundred men about him were No might him nought thennes bere</p>	<p>The best that might be found. And when that fair company had arrived To Warwick, they wished to honor him As a lord of great authority. But all the people who were there Could not move him from that place Where he lay on the ground. A hundred men were around him But could not bear him away From there for his heaviness.</p>
3540	<p>For hevihed that stounde. Than seyde the levedi, "Lete him be stille; Never more remoun him Y nille No do him hennes lede. He sent me bode with his page To biri him in this hermitage Simpliche withouten prede." Thay tok a through of marbel ston And leyde his bodi therin anon Atird in knightes wede.</p>	<p>Then the lady said, "Let him be. I will never have him moved Or allow him to be taken away. He sent me his decree with his page To bury him in this hermitage, Simply, without showiness." They took a box of marble stone And laid his body inside, Attired in knight's clothes.</p>
3550	<p>Fair servise than was thare Of bischopes, abbotes that ther ware, And clerkes to sing and rede. When thai hadde birid his bodi anon,</p>	<p>There was a stately funeral With the bishops and abbots who were there, And clerks to sing and read. When they had buried his body,</p>

3560	<p>The gret lordinges everichon Hom thai gun wende, Ac the levedi left stille thare; Sche nold never thennes fare, Sche kidde that sche was kende. Sche lived no lenger sothe to say Bot right on the fiftenday Sche dyed that levedi hende And was birid hir lord by And now thai er togider in compeynie In joie that never schal ende. When Sir Tirri herd telle this That Gii his fere ded is And birid in the clay, He com to this lond withouten lesing And bisought Athelston the king</p>	<p>Every one of the great lords Left to go home. But the lady still remained And would never leave from there. She showed that she was faithful. She lived little longer, truth be told, But right on the fifteenth day That gracious lady died⁵⁷ And was buried beside her lord. And now they are united together In joy that will never end. When Sir Thierry heard it said That Guy, his friend, was dead And buried in the earth, He came to this land, without a lie, And implored Athelston the king For his body to transport away. He willingly granted it to Thierry. He traveled with the body into Lorraine, Into his own country.⁵⁸</p>
3570	<p>His bodi to leden oway. He it graunted him ful yare, Into Lorain with him gan fare Into his owen cuntray. An abbay he lete make tho Forto sing for hem to Ever more til Domesday. Now have ye herd lordinges of Gii That in his time was so hardi And holden hende and fre,</p>	<p>He had an abbey founded there To sing prayers for Guy and his lady Evermore until Judgment Day. Now you have heard, sirs, about Guy, Who during his days was so valiant And admired as gracious and noble. He forever loved truth and justice And with all his might he served God, Who sits in Trinity. And thus on his last day He went to the joy that lasts forever And evermore shall be. Now may God help us to live So that we may come to that bliss! For the sake of God's love, amen.</p>
3580	<p>And ever he loved treuthe and right And served God with al his might That sit in Trinité. And therefore at his ending-day He went to the joie that lasteth ay And evermore schal be. Now God leve ous to live so That we may that joie com to.</p>	<p>And thus on his last day He went to the joy that lasts forever And evermore shall be. Now may God help us to live So that we may come to that bliss! For the sake of God's love, amen.</p>
3588	<p><i>Amen, par charité.</i></p>	

⁵⁷ Felicia lives another fifteen days, the same length of time that she and Guy were together in marriage (221).

⁵⁸ The last scene is somewhat puzzling, as both Guy and Felicia gave orders not to be moved, but it fits the conventional romance ending of being sung over in prayer by clerics, in the same way that *Amis and Amiloun* and *Bevis of Hampton* close.

Numerological and Structural Symbolism in the Stanzaic *Guy of Warwick*

Lévi-Strauss argued that binaries are a natural means of structuring experience, and medieval romance often employs them as useful narrative apparatuses. *Amis and Amiloun* has corresponding names and subplots, and *Havelock* has two parallel kings and usurping stewards. Broadly, medieval romance commonly builds itself on dual halves dealing with the hero's exile and return. The use of matching narrative patterns also has meaning in the Auchinleck stanzaic *Guy of Warwick*. Burton argues that the poem can be interpreted as corresponding halves in which Guy first seeks out and achieves marital bliss in Felice and then attains heavenly bliss in God.¹ The scene in the stanzaic *Guy* where the hero gazes prayerfully at the stars while marooned at sea on his bed (2347-64) similarly forms "the structural mid-point of the narrative,"² matching Guy's soul-searching contemplation of the heavens at the beginning of the story. Christians and pagans form an additional good/evil binary throughout romance, and in *Bevis of Hampton* confusing the binary's limits brings particular dangers to the hero.

Such binaries may serve no purpose beyond apposition in rhetoric or contrast or completion in narrative, and triple sequences might also simply fulfill the seemingly basic human need to derive a sense of series or predictability from disconnected events. Triplets are used in music, jokes, and stories to form familiar groupings and fairy tales often employ sets of three whether the tale features pigs, bears, or blind mice. Within romance, repetition has narrative functions of emphasis and perhaps political submeanings. Wittig suggests that "within the repeated patterns of formulaic language

¹ Julie Burton, "Narrative Patterning and *Guy of Warwick*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 110.

² Alison Wiggins, *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick* (TEAMS), note to line 2347-48.

there is a kind of psychological comfort, an assurance that the social institutions in which the audience has invested itself are stable and secure,³ and Crane cites *King Horn* as a narratively repetitive poem endorsing a conservative view of kingship.⁴ Yet the stanzaic *Guy* seems to call special attention to triple sequences and numbers in themselves as signifiers. In key places the poet wants us to see that he uses a number purposefully for levels of interpretation above the narrative. Thus I would like to examine how *Guy* uses numerological symbolism to overlay additional meaning in the text.

In the stanzaic *Guy* the protagonist undergoes three armed battles. Earl Jonas laments to Guy that his heart will break into three pieces (864) after relating that he fought three hundred Saracens (619) and was taken prisoner. Colbrand throws three spears at Guy (3100). At what point do such numbers cease being meaningful and become random or metrical decisions? Finding numerical symbolism risks overanalysis by reading in significances that the poet may not have intended or contemplated. Such critical decisions must remain somewhat speculative, but one approach which may be helpful is to point out those places in the texts where the poet seems to emphasize a numerical grouping of subplots for thematic purposes or where a number reference goes suspiciously beyond metrical fit or capriciousness and implies a secondary meaning supported by the text as a whole.

Numerous precedents exist for numerological significations in medieval literature based on the central importance of numbers to medieval aesthetics and thought.

³ Susan Wittig, *Stylistic and Narrative Structures in the Middle English Romances* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 44, quoted in Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 30.

⁴ Crane, 30.

Mathematics encompassed more than its modern utilitarian functions and described eternal correspondences in nature, such as that between seven spheres, seven days of the week, and seven musical notes.⁵ The early church fathers Christianized the pagan numerology of Pythagoras and its Babylonian practitioners, situating numbers as a means of comprehending the intelligent plan of God's creation. Augustine equated numbers with wisdom, Boethius established the quadrivium based on four fields of mathematical pursuit, and Macrobius called numbers "the first example of perfect abstraction."⁶ Arithmetic crossed what would now be rigid disciplinary divides between the sciences and humanities until eventually shedding its theological dimensions in later centuries, but in the medieval period literary allegory was read as multiple levels of meaning forming a sophisticated numerical structure, giving what Peck calls delight through "proportion and symmetrical conjunction."⁷

The eternal beauty of numbers informs the higher levels of meaning of numerous medieval poems as a controlling structural device. Dante's tripartite division in *The Divine Comedy* suggests the Christian Trinity and threes abound as perfect numbers. The comedy has three sections, Hell has three stages, and the meter is terza rima, first known in use from the work. Dante has three escorts who also imply identification with the Trinity.⁸ *Pearl* employs twelves rather than threes and dates much later than Auchinleck

⁵ Russell A. Peck, "Number as Cosmic Language," in *Essays in the Numerical Criticism of Medieval Literature*, ed. Carolyn D. Eckhardt (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1980), 18.

⁶ Macrobius, *Somnium Scipionus*, quoted in Peck, 15. Peck has extended discussions of Augustine's writings about numbers (especially pages 17, 30) and Boethius (21).

⁷ Peck, 48.

⁸ T. K. Seung, "The Epic Character of the *Divina Commedia* and the Function of Dante's Three Guides," *Italica* 56:4 (1979): 353.

Guy,⁹ but displays an unparalleled technical precision in its numerical religious significations:

...the New Jerusalem has twelve tiers in its foundation and is also twelve furlongs long; the poem itself, 1212 lines long, is a composite of twelves. Concepts of perfection and blemish parlayed through the image of the pearl are also graphed through number. Comprising twenty sets of five, the stanzas are grouped to add up to 100, a number of perfection.¹⁰

In turning from *Pearl* to *Guy* the reader sees a crossing of genres, as *Guy* is neither extended religious allegory nor a dream vision. The hero evolves as a character throughout the story to such an extent that Mehl classifies the work as a sort of proto-novel.¹¹ Yet the stanzaic *Guy* plainly borrows from hagiographic forms in the hero's representation as a penitential *miles Christi*, and the poem has a denouement very different from the usual romance frame of marriage and land. The story itself has apparent origins in eastern legends of St. Alexis rather than secular history or folktale. A close examination of the poem reveals that its narrative structure evokes numerological meanings supporting its homiletic purposes which lack the craftsmanship of the *Pearl* poet but are no less present or significant.

Much as *The Divine Comedy* has a triple division, reading the stanzaic *Guy* as a three-battle sequence evoking the perfection of the Trinity is consistent with *Guy*'s exemplary service as a saintly knight-pilgrim. The claimed repetition of romance has

⁹ Bowers posits 1395 by finding thematic links between the poem and the Ricardian court, and few date *Pearl* to before the 1380s. John Bowers, "Pearl in Its Royal Setting: Ricardian Poetry Revisited," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 17 (1995): 111-55.

¹⁰ Sarah Stanbury, ed., introduction to *Pearl* (TEAMS).

¹¹ Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), vi.

been adduced as evidence of its childishness or the poverty of the writer's ability or materials. However, when scenes are so close as to form clear groupings, something else is happening. Baugh catalogs thirty-five recurring actions in the three battle scenes of stanzaic *Guy*.¹² Although the following list alters sequence, using a few selected elements from Baugh's list suggests deliberate patterns:

<i>They crash together</i>		
and smiten togider with dentes grete (1157)	with hard strokes forto drive / thai gun hem to asayle (2477-9)	Sir Gii to him gan to drive / that his spere brast afive (3109-10)
<i>Some armor jewels fly off</i>		
alle the stones of michel might / fleyghe doun in the feld (1193-4)	alle the floures feir and bright / he dede hem fleyghe atuinne (2489-90)	his floures everichon / and his gode charbukel ston / wel even he carf atuo (3136-8)
<i>Spear breaks, horse is killed</i>		
the stedes nek he dede also (1202)	and lopen togider til schaftes brest (2222)	that sadel and hors atuo he smot (3118)
<i>Both fight as if crazed</i>		
and ferd as thai wer wode (1158)	leyd on as thai were wode (2228)	—
<i>Prayers</i>		
"Lord," seyde Gii, "God Almight" (1216)	"Lord, merci," Tirri gan say (2281)	to our Levedi he gan calle (3162)
<i>Opponent taunts hero</i>		
trewelich yeld thou thee to me (1466)	thi wordes that er so prout / schal be ful dere aboutht (2129-30)	do now wele, yeld thee to me (3172)
<i>Opponent's limb chopped off</i>		
the right arme with the swerd fot-hot (1570)	—	his right arme with alle the hond / he strok of quite and clene (3115- 6)
<i>Enemy decapitated</i>		
he strok of his heved (1596)	bothe helmes he carf atuo / and his heved he dede also (2500-1)	his heved fro the bodi he smot (3223)

Baugh argues that such parallels indicate the formulaic phrasings of the minstrel.

Ellis dismisses the complete *Guy of Warwick* as "one of the dullest and most tedious of

¹² Albert C. Baugh, "Improvisation in the Middle English Romance," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103:3 (1959): 426-27.

our early romances,”¹³ equally implying a lack of significance in the poem’s triple battles. Yet again an incompetent poet might depict repeated narrative tropes with unimaginative blandness, but to have segments match so closely implies more intelligence. In each third of stanzaic *Guy* the hero encounters a helpless victim who makes an equivalent “woe is me” lament (550, 1737, 2883) and saves his life through defeat of an evil, deceitful foe in combat. Guy performs a Christlike descent into death to redeem Jonas from a “devel fram helle” (1139), as well as in saving Thierry and then all of England from enemies with equally Satanic attributes. In all three scenes Guy freely chooses to take on the battle for others, and in interceding for Thierry, Guy needs to goad and manipulate the hotheaded steward into letting him enter a dispute which is essentially not his business.

Moreover, each victim has to some extent sinned into their difficulties. Jonas acts pridefully against Triamour, displaying a certain hubris—“we suwed him with maistrie / into his owen lond” (614-15). Thierry does not deserve the steward’s malice but also betrays a slight “michel prede” (1798). Athelston’s barons are cowards who shirk their duty and sit silently “as men hadde schaven her crounes” (2879) while the kingdom is threatened, much as Beowulf shames Unferth in stating that Grendel only prevails because “he hafað onfunden þæt he þa fæhðe ne þearf / atole ecgþræce eower leode / swiðe onsittan” (“he has found out that he need not fear much fight or any fierce storm of swords from your people!” 595-7). Guy undertakes the “punishment” of each sin, and his doing so three times has suggestive meaning. As Guy prepares to face Colbrand he

¹³ George Ellis, Introduction to *Guy of Warwick*, in *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, Vol. 2 (London: 1811), 4-5.

carries “a targe listed with gold / portreyd with thre kinges corn / that present God when He was born” (2997-9).

Numerous romances have some form of triple sequence, yet they usually lack either the hagiographic intent of *Guy* or close narrative equivalence in their groupings. In *King Horn* the hero fights three battles with Saracens, but the scenes do not match in sequence, length, or intensity. The first and third struggles are routine and brief compared to the heightened dramatic tension of the second battle in Ireland when Horn “bivo him sagh he stonde / that driven him of lond / and that his fader slogh” (“saw standing before him those who drove him out of his land and murdered his father,” 877-9). The hero of *Floris and Blancheflor* similarly stays with three hosts but Floris is a Muslim and has little interest in the poem beyond recovering his girlfriend. Only in the stanzaic *Guy* do the three parallel battles connect to the hero’s saintly signification.

A second aspect of the poem’s numerical meaning derives from its manuscript arrangement. The stanzaic *Guy* has dialectal as well as metrical differences from the couplet *Guy*. Mills argues that the poem derives from a different continental version of *Gui de Warewic* and had a separate existence apart from the couplet section.¹⁴ Yet the two portions of *Guy* and *Reinbroun* are clearly intended in a three-part continuum by their linear foliation while still being neatly parsable into separate tales, which is what Auchinleck intends in its formatting. Folio 146b of *Guy of Warwick* has a richly decorated *G* for “God graunt hem heven-blis” (1) and has the abrupt change from couplet to stanza form to indicate a transition into the second part of the tale. 167r has a decorated

¹⁴ Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale, ed., *Romance in Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), 215, quoted in Wiggins, TEAMS.

image and a title with *explicit* to indicate the beginning of *Reinbroun*.¹⁵ Moving *Reinbroun* to a separate poem in the codex additionally makes this linear configuration clearer by allowing the poet's focus to remain uncluttered on Guy's parallel search for Felice/grace.¹⁶ Yet the unique three-part division of the poem in Auchinleck might also suggest a numerical representation of the Trinity in miniature just as Dante ostensibly intends in his three comedies.

Single and recurring numbers within *Guy* are additionally invested with numerological meanings which support the poem's hagiographic themes. Christian scripture uses *forty* as an indefinite number but often employs it to denote times of trial: the ark floats forty days, Christ is tempted forty days, and the Hebrews wander the desert forty years. Similarly, Jonas has a year and forty days to find a challenger (770), Amoraunt has killed men in forty battles (1303), and Guy defeats forty thousand Saracens in battle (1334), all situations requiring fortitude. Guy appears in Felice's court as a beggar in a group of thirteen (3353) and his meekness unsubtly suggests Christ and his disciples. *Seven* has biblical associations with perfection and totality,¹⁷ being the number of the days of creation and the seven seals of Revelation. In the text "a thousand angels and seven" (3513) carry away Guy's soul. The poet might simply use the number conventionally. Mirroring Bevis' seven-year captivity, the steward threatens Guy with "seven winter" (2084) of imprisonment in his histrionic fury. Yet these *sevens* all seem

¹⁵ *Reinbroun*, at *The Auchinleck Manuscript*, National Library of Scotland, accessed 19 November 2010 at <http://auchinleck.nls.uk/mss/reinbrun.html>

¹⁶ Julie Burton, "Narrative Patterning and *Guy of Warwick*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 110.

¹⁷ See Peck, 61 for a list of theological and traditional associations with *seven*. Peck calls seven "a uniquely strong number because it is indivisible." The seven deadly sins are perilous but also suggest a sort of perfective trial.

thematically linked by the tempering and testing each hero undergoes through these trials, much as Jacob must work for Rachel for the same period (Gen. 29:20).

The ten incidences of the number *fifteen* in the poem remain puzzling. Earl Jonas has fifteen sons (580), they defeat fifteen emirs (604), Guy kills fifteen outlaws (2690), and Guy forces the expulsion of Anlaf's fifteen thousand knights (2812) in defeating Colbrand. Couplet *Guy* also has six *fifteens*. Signally, Guy and Felice's wedding feast, their time spent together as husband and wife, and the period of time which Guy predeceases Felice are all fifteen day spaces (211, 221, 3560). The poet twice uses the formula "on the fiftenday" to stress the ends of these periods. The matching numbers underscore the closure effected by paralleling the couple's marital happiness with their sanctified reunion at the moment of Guy's death. Yet the repeated use of *fifteen* as a determiner lacks a clear theological signification. A clue might be found in scholastic traditions involving *five*, which had special meaning as a "golden number" for Pythagorus and for Macrobius. One of its significations was the Pentateuch but also flesh and marriage,¹⁸ and Fleissner posits that Chaucer gives the Wife of Bath five husbands for such a reason.¹⁹ Now our argument becomes rather strained. But could *Guy's* numerical symbolism of the Trinity come into play if we notice $3 \times 5 = 15$? Such a conclusion might help to explain the poet's use of *fifteen* in exactly such moments where the poet stresses the perfection and completion of the action or time period.

Felice, Guy, and Reinbroun recall but ultimately do not stand for the elements of the Trinity any more than St. Bernard, Virgil, and Beatrice "are" Father, Son, and Holy

¹⁸ Peck, 24.

¹⁹ Fleissner, 129.

Ghost, and the poet might have thought the idea blasphemous. Doob gives the name *situational allegory* to the medieval device of giving characters temporary significations within narrative scenes. Thus “it is action and plot that matters in this type of allegory” which “adds richness to people or events without rigidly defining them.”²⁰ Felice moves Guy to selfless acts and reunites with him as his soul passes from his body (3512), but her allegorical connection to the Holy Trinity is otherwise limited. She has the nurturing, feminine presence of Beatrice but lacks understanding of Guy’s mission, questioning why he cannot seek grace while remaining with her and proposing that “chirches and abbays thou might make” (331) instead. Guy also suggests a Christ-like example but does not represent Christ. Although his cause is righteous Guy shows little saintly humility in nastily taunting the stupid steward into challenging him to combat, and he kills without regret where he needs to. The poet’s strength is Guy’s human touches which give his piety a personal intimacy.

Romance may have hagiographic influences but is not hagiography, a distinction medieval churchmen did not fail to point out strenuously. Rather, much of *Guy*’s popularity owed to the hero’s identity as a national hero. For much of the medieval period the fight between Guy and Colbrand was treated as actual history.²¹ The poem’s continued popularity into later centuries partly derived from its perceived historical roots in the real Warwickshire, where Guy’s alleged weapons were displayed to visitors.

Wilcox reads the poem as a means of working through the moral and military failures of

²⁰ Penelope B.R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar’s Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 168.

²¹ Ronald S. Crane, “The Vogue of *Guy of Warwick* from the Close of the Middle Ages to the Romantic Revival,” *PMLA* 30:2 (1915): 127.

the crusades by re-enacting them in an idealized past where Guy turns down booty instead of disgracefully fighting for it.²² Yet the stanzaic *Guy* clearly has a homiletic tone in Guy's search for penitence, and setting the story in a partly historical England might have made its didactic resonance even stronger.²³

This rather risky speculation on the stanzaic *Guy of Warwick* attempts to find meaning and value in one of the more dispensable romances in this collection, a poem reflecting the reality that medieval interests are not modern ones. As Dr. Johnson might say, few ever wished it longer. Numerological meanings in literature, so vital then, now "seem irksome to a modern sensibility."²⁴ Yet the poem was popular and has numerous rhetorical echoes in *Sir Thopas*, resulting in thorny but necessary questions of how Chaucer and his audience might have perceived *Guy*. We know that Chaucer was fond enough of numbers to write his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* for their calculation, and he would have developed a knowledge of numerology both from his translation of Boethius and through his interests in alchemy and astrology.²⁵ He exhibits a masterful familiarity with such models in his Parson who begins his prologue with a complex mathematical metaphor linking the sun's position at "degreës nyne and twenty" (X.4) to his pilgrims and he has protagonists such as Nicholas (I.3209) and the Man of Law (II.7-14) who also share his interest in mathematics.

²² Rebecca Wilcox, "Romancing the East: Greeks and Saracens in *Guy of Warwick*," McDonald, Nicola, ed., *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 221.

²³ David Klausner, "Didacticism and Drama in *Guy of Warwick*," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 6 (1975): 117.

²⁴ Peck, 50.

²⁵ R. F. Fleissner, "The Wife of Bath's Five," *Chaucer Review* 8:2 (1973): 132.

In a pre-printing era when manuscripts were produced as unique artifacts rather than being “published” in the modern sense,²⁶ scribes were less anxious to produce a standard text, particularly a romance, freeing themselves to innovate based on their own interpretation of the poem’s themes. The Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick* displays a unique structuring of content in its triple division and meaningful use of numerology. *Guy of Warwick* will never be accused of the sophistication of *Pearl*, but Chaucer might have noticed and appreciated the intelligent use of numbers in *Guy*. As a final and very tentative conjecture, although *Sir Thopas*’ fit headings themselves are editorial, Chaucer in turn gives the poem three sections, perhaps humorously placing the hero within his own trivial *Divine Comedy*.

²⁶ Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 10.

CHAPTER 7

Havelock the Dane

Havelock the Dane survives in one unique manuscript: Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 108 (c. 1300), with fragments in Cambridge University Library Add. 4407. I take as my text source Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, eds. *Havelock the Dane. Four Romances of England*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/danefrm.htm>. Selected editions include Walter William Skeat, ed. *The Lay of Havelock the Dane* (1868), French & Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930), Thomas J. Garbáty, ed., *Medieval English Literature* (1984) and G.V. Smithers, ed., *Havelock* (1987).

1	Herkneth to me, gode men - Wives, maydnes, and alle men - Of a tale that ich you wile telle, Wo so it wile here and therto dwelle. The tale is of Havelok imaked: Whil he was litel, he yede ful naked. Havelok was a ful god gome - He was ful god in everi trome; He was the wicteste man at nede	Pay attention to me, good men, Wives, maidens, and everyone else To a tale that I will tell you For whoever wants to stay and hear it. The story is about Havelock, Who when he was little went half-naked. Havelock was a good man, The best in every company. He was the bravest man in need
10	That thurte riden on ani stede. That ye mowen now yhere, And the tale you mowen ylere, At the biginnig of ure tale, Fil me a cuppe of ful god ale; And wile drinken, her I spelle, That Crist us shilde alle fro helle. Krist late us hevere so for to do That we moten comen Him to; And, witthat it mote ben so,	Who might ride on any steed! So that you may hear me, And so that you might know the tale, At the beginning of our story, Fill me a cup of your best ale. And while drinking, while I tell it, May Christ shield us all from Hell! May Christ protect us forever So that we might come to Him, And, so that it may be so, ¹
20	Benedicamus Domino! Here I schal biginnen a rym;	Let us praise the Lord! Here I'll begin the rhyme,

¹ *And, witthat it mote ben so*: TEAMS connects line 19 to 20, whereas Skeat feels that 19 continues 18. Skeat gives the word division as *and wit that it mote ben so*, “and see that it may be so.” Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Lay of Havelock the Dane* (London: Early English Text Society, 1868).

<p>30</p> <p>40</p> <p>50</p> <p>60</p>	<p>Krist us yeve wel god fyn! The rym is maked of Havelok - A stalworthi man in a flok. He was the stalwortheste man at nede That may riden on ani stede. It was a king bi are dawes, That in his time were gode lawes He dede maken and ful wel holden; Hym lovede yung, him lovede holde - Erl and barun, dreng and thayn, Knict, bondeman, and swain, Wydnes, maydnes, prestes and clerkes, And al for hise gode werkes. He lovede God with al his micht, And Holy Kirke, and soth ant richth. Richwise men he lovede alle, And overal made hem for to calle. Wreieres and wrobberes made he falle And hated hem so man doth galle; Utlawes and theves made he bynde, Alle that he micte fynde, And heye hengen on galwe-tre - For hem ne yede gold ne fee! In that time a man that bore Wel fifty pund, I wot, or more, Of red gold upon hiis bac, In a male with or blac, Ne funde he non that him misseyde, Ne with ivele on hond leyde. Thanne micthe chapmen fare Thuruth Englund wit here ware, And baldelike beye and sellen, Overal ther he wilen dwellen - In gode burwes and therfram Ne funden he non that dede hem sham, That he ne weren sone to sorwe brouth, And pouere maked and browt to nouth. Thanne was Engelsond at hayse - Michel was swich a king to preyse That held so Engelsond in grith! Krist of hevene was him with - He was Engelsondes blome. Was non so bold louerd to Rome That durste upon his bringhe Hunger ne here - wicke thinghe. Hwan he fellede hise foos, He made hem lurken and crepen in wros -</p>	<p>And may Christ give us a good end! The rhyme is about Havelock, A steady man to have in a group. He was the hardiest man in need Who might ride on any steed. There was a king in days of old, Who in his time made good laws And observed them well. He was loved by young, loved by old, By earl and baron, vassal and retainer,² Knight, bondsman, and servant, Widows, maidens, priests, and clerks, And all for his good works. He loved God with all his might, And the holy church, and truth and justice. He loved all righteous men, And everywhere had them at his call. He made traitors and robbers fail, And hated them like men hate bitter drink. Outlaws and thieves were bound, Any that he might find, And hung high on the gallows tree. He took neither gold nor any bribe from them. In that time a man who bore Upwards of fifty pounds, I guess, or more, Of red gold on his back, In a pouch, white or black, Would not meet anyone who would mistreat him, Or lay hands on him with evil intent. Back then merchants could travel Throughout England with their wares, And boldly buy and sell, Anywhere they wanted to stay. In fine towns and in the countryside They would not meet anyone to cause them harm Who would not soon be brought to ruin, Made poor, and reduced to nothing for it. England was at ease then. There was much to praise about such a king Who held England in such peace. Christ in Heaven was with him; He was England's bloom! There was no lord as far as Rome Who dared to bring to his people Hunger, invasion, or wicked causes. When the king defeated his enemies, He made them lurk and creep in corners.</p>
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² *Dreng and thayn*: The list seems to be in decreasing level of social rank from nobility (earl and baron), to non-noble landholders, down to non-free peasants (bondsmen). The food chain is complicated and evolves between Anglo-Saxon and Norman England, but Skeat states that a *dreng* held land in exchange for military service and a thane provided lesser services (note for line 31, page 88).

70	The hidden hem alle and helden hem stille, And didn't al his herte wille. Rich he lovede of alle thinge - To wronge might him noman bringe, Ne for silver ne for gold, So was he his soule hold. To the faderles was he rath - Wo so dede hem wrong or lath, Were it clerik or were it knichth, He dede hem sone to haven richth; And wo dide widuen wrong,	They all hid themselves and kept quiet, And did all his heart's will. But he loved justice above all things. No man could corrupt him into wrong, Not for silver or for gold, So faithful was he to his soul. To the orphaned he was their protector; Whoever did them wrong or harm, No matter if they were a cleric or knight, Was soon brought to justice by him. And as for anyone who did widows wrong, There was no knight so strong
80	Were he nevre knichth so strong, That he ne made him sone kesten In feteres and ful faste festen; And wo so dide maydne shame Of hire bodi or brouth in blame, Bute it were bi hire wille, He made him sone of limes spille. He was the beste knith at nede That hevere micthe riden on stede, Or wepne wagge or folc ut lede;	That he wouldn't soon have him thrown Into fetters and fasten them tightly. And as for whoever shamed a maiden By her body, or brought her into blame, Unless it was by her consent, He made him lose some of his limbs. ³ The king was the best knight in need Who might ever ride on a steed, Or hold a weapon, or lead out an army. He was never so afraid of any knights
90	Of knith ne havede he nevre drede, That he ne sprong forth so sparke of glede, And lete him knawe of hise hand dede, Hu he couthe with wepne spede; And other he refte him hors or wede, Or made him sone handes sprede And "Louerd, merci!" loude grede. He was large and no wicth gnedede. Havede he non so god brede Ne on his bord non so god shrede,	That he would not spring forth like sparks from fire And let them know by the deeds of his hand How he could be victorious with a weapon. With others he took their horses or fine clothes, ⁴ Or made them quickly spread their hands, And cry loudly, "Mercy, Lord!" He was generous and by no means stingy. He never had bread so good On his table or a morsel so fine
100	That he ne wolde thorwit fede Poure that on fote yede, Forto haven of Him the mede That for us wolde on Rode blede - Crist, that al kan wisse and rede That evere woneth in any thede. The king was hoten Athelwold. Of word, of wepne, he was bold. In Engeland was nevre knichth That betere held the lond to richth.	That he would not give it to feed The poor who went on foot, In order to receive from Him the reward That He bled on the Cross for us to have— Christ, who can guide and protect all Who ever live in any land. The king was called Athelwold. With speech and weapons he was bold. In England there was never a knight Who better held the land in justice.
110	Of his bodi ne havede he eyr Bute a mayden swithe fayr,	But he had fathered no heir Except for a very fair maiden

³ Although the Wife of Bath's knight is initially condemned to death for rape, sexual assault in Anglo-Saxon England was seen more as a property crime against the woman's family and would usually have resulted in a stiff fine. Here Athelwold's untypical strictness is lauded by the poet. See also the *Sir Degare & Orfeo* essay.

⁴ *Other he refte him hors or wede*: A victorious army despoiled the defeated. French and Hale note, "The practice was deplored by moralists as unchristian, but is a matter of course in the romances" (TEAMS). Here Athelwold receives no censure. Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1930), 78.

<p>120</p> <p>130</p> <p>140</p> <p>150</p>	<p>That was so yung that sho ne couthee Gon on fote ne speke wit mouthe. Than him tok an ivel strong, That he wel wiste and underfong That his deth was comen him on And saide, “Crist, wat shal I don? Louerd, wat shal me to rede? I wot ful wel ich have mi mede. Hw shal now my douhter fare? Of hire have ich michel kare; Sho is mikel in my thouth - Of meself is me rith nowt. No selcouth is thou me be wo: Sho ne can speke ne sho kan go. Yif scho couthe on horse ride, And a thousande men bi hire syde, And sho were comen intil helde And Engelsond sho couthe welde, And don hem of thar hire were queme, And hire bodi couthe yeme, Ne wolde me nevere ivele like, Ne though ich were in heveneriche.” Quanne he havede this pleinte maked, Therafter stronglike quaked. He sende writes sone onon After his erles evereichon; And after hise baruns, riche and poure, Fro Rokesburw al into Dover, That he shulden comen swithe Til him, that was ful unblithe, To that stede ther he lay In harde bondes nichth and day. He was so faste wit yvel fest That he ne mouthe haven no rest, He ne mouthe no mete hete, Ne he ne mouchte no lythe gete, Ne non of his ivel that couthe red - Of him ne was nouth buten ded. Alle that the writes herden</p>	<p>Who was so young that she could not Walk or speak with her mouth. Then he was taken by a violent illness,⁵ So that he knew well and understood That his death was coming. And he said, “Christ, what should I do? Lord, how should I be advised? I know full well I will have my reward, But how will my daughter fare? I have great concerns about her And she is much in my thoughts; I have no worries about myself. It is no wonder for You that I am anxious. She cannot speak, nor can she walk. If she knew how to ride a horse, With a thousand men by her side, And she came to age, She could rule England And do to others as she pleased And would know how to rule her body. I would otherwise never be at ease, Even if I were in Heaven’s realm.”⁶ When he had made this plea, He shivered strongly after.⁷ At once he sent out writs To his earls, each one of them, And to his barons, rich and poor, From Roxburgh through to Dover,⁸ That they should come quickly To him, as he was very ill, To the place where he lay In hard bonds, night and day. He was so trapped in death’s grip That he could have no rest. He could take no food, Nor might he have any comfort. No one could advise him in his gloom, For he was little more than dead. All who obeyed the writs</p>
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⁵ *Him tok an ivel strong*: ME romance seems to regularly use such poetic formulas for illness. See also *Bevis of Hampton*, 179 where the queen fakes her oncoming death. Yet in *Amis and Amiloun*, 503 Amis suffers from a *malady*.

⁶ The poet’s predilection for extended negative constructions, combined with ME’s tendency to pile on multiple negatives, sometimes results in confusing lines such as this. The poet may intend the *yif* in 126 to be more like *unless*, which would make the entire clause from 126 to 131 a conditional: “Unless she could rule England I would be unhappy even if I were in Heaven.”

⁷ French and Hale also note that the poet tends to omit pronouns (TEAMS). Again, combined with early ME’s weak distinction between single and plural pronouns, at times referents are less than clear.

⁸ *Rokesburw*: Roxburgh, about 70 km south of Edinburgh, was an often-disputed fort on the Scottish border. The expression suggests totality: “from sea to shining sea.”

	<p>Sorful and sori til him ferdn; He wrungen hondes and wepen sore And yerne preyden Cristes hore - That He wolde turnen him Ut of that yvel that was so grim. Thanne he weren comen alle Bifor the king into the halle, At Winchestre ther he lay, “Welcome,” he sayde, “be ye ay! 160 Ful michel thank kan I you That ye aren comen to me now.” Quanne he weren alle set, And the king aveden igret, He greten and gouleden and gouven hem ille, And he bad hem alle been stille And seyde that greting helpeth nouth, “For al to dede am ich brouth. Bute now ye sen that I shal deye, Now ich wille you alle preye 170 Of mi douter, that shal be Yure levedi after me, Wo may yemen hire so longe, Bothen hire and Engelonde, Til that she be wman of helde And that she mowe hir yemen and welde?” He answeredn and seyden anon, Bi Crist and bi Seint Jon, That th erl Godrich of Cornwayle Was trewe man wituten faile, 180 Wis man of red, wis man of dede, And men haveden of him mikel drede - “He may hire altherbest yeme, Til that she mowe wel ben quene.” The king was payed of that rede. A wol fair cloth bringen he dede, And thereon leyde the messebok, The caliz, and the pateyn ok, The corporaus, the messe-gere. Theron he garte the erl swere 190 That he sholde yemen hire wel, Withuten lac, wituten tel, Til that she were twelf winter hold And of speche were bold, And that she couthe of curteysye, Gon and speken of lovedrurye, And til that she loven muthe</p>	<p>Traveled to him in sorrow and grief. They wrung their hands and wept bitterly, And earnestly prayed for Christ’s grace, That He would release him From his illness which was so grim. When they had all come Before the king in the hall Where he lay at Winchester, “You are forever welcome!” he said. “I give you great thanks That you have come to me now.” When they were all seated And the king had greeted them, They wept and wailed and mourned, Until the king asked that they all be quiet, And said, “Crying does nothing to help, For I am brought to death. But now that you see that I am dying, I will ask you all now About my daughter, who will be Your sovereign lady after me. Who will guard her for a time, Both her and England, Until she is a woman of age,⁹ And can take care of and guide herself?” They answered and said at once, By Christ and by Saint John, That Earl Godrich of Cornwall Was a faithful man, without doubt, A wise man in counsel, a wise man in deed, And men had great deference for him. “He can best take care of her, Until she may be queen in full.” The king was pleased with that advice. He had a beautiful woolen cloth brought, And laid the mass-book on it, The chalice, and the Eucharist plate as well, And the communion cloth and vestments. Then he made the earl swear That he would protect her well, Without fail, without reproach, Until she was twelve years old¹⁰ And she was confident in speech And could understand court etiquette And the manners and speech of courtship, And until she might love</p>
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⁹ *Wman*: The MED has no other text with this spelling of *woman*, and it is used again in 281. The scribe tends to omit letters. Alternatively, Skeat has *winan*.

¹⁰ *Twelf winter hold*: A noble woman might have been eligible for marriage after first menstruation, between 12 and 15, although non-noble women would have married later. Shakespeare’s Juliet is similarly fourteen. But note line 259 where Godrich cynically delays her advancement until age 20.

200	<p>Wom so hire to gode thoucte; And that he shulde hire yeve The beste man that micthe live - The beste, fayreste, the strangest ok; That dede he him sweren on the bok, And thanne shulde he Engelond Al bitechen into hire hond.</p>	<p>Whoever she felt seemed best to her; And that he would give to her The highest man who might live, The best, fairest, and the strongest as well. All this the king had him swear on the book.</p>
210	<p>Quanne that was sworn on his wise, The king dede the mayden arise, And the erl hire bitaucte And al the lond he evere awcte - Engelonde, everi del -</p>	<p>And then he would bestow All of England into her hand. When that was sworn in this way, The king had the maiden rise, And committed her to the earl</p>
210	<p>And preide he shulde yeme hire wel. The king ne moucte don no more, But yerne preyede Godes ore, And dede him hoslen wel and shrive, I wot fif hundred sithes and five, And ofte dede him sore swinge And wit hondes smerte dinge So that the blod ran of his fleys, That tendre was and swithe neys. He made his quiste swithe wel And sone gaf it everil del.</p>	<p>Along with all the land he ever owned, Every part of England, And prayed that he would keep her well. The king could do no more, But earnestly prayed for God's grace And took communion and confession, Five hundred and five times, I know, And repeatedly scourged himself severely, And beat himself painfully with his own hands</p>
220	<p>Wan it was goven, ne micte men finde So mikel men micte him in winde, Of his in arke ne in chiste, In Engelond, that noman wiste; For al was yoven, faire and wel, That him was leved no catel.</p>	<p>So that the blood ran from his flesh, Which had been so tender and soft. He made his will out carefully, And soon after had every part affirmed. When it was executed, no man could find So much as a burial sheet to wrap him in Of his in any coffer or chest That anyone knew of in England.</p>
220	<p>Thanne he havede been ofte swngen, Ofte shriven and ofte dungen, "In manus tuas, Louerde," he seyde, Her that he the speche leyde,</p>	<p>So that no possessions were left to him. When he had been continually scourged, Confessed, and beaten, He said, "Into your hands, Lord,"¹¹ And set aside his words then.</p>
230	<p>To Jesu Crist bigan to calle And deyede biforn his heymen alle. Than he was ded, there micte men see The meste sorwe that micte be: Ther was sobbing, siking, and sor, Handes wringing and drawing bi hor. Alle greten swithe sore, Riche and poure that there wore, And mikel sorwe havenen alle - Levedeyes in boure, knictes in halle.</p>	<p>For everything was disposed of, fair and clear, So that no possessions were left to him. When he had been continually scourged, Confessed, and beaten, He said, "Into your hands, Lord,"¹¹ And set aside his words then.</p>
230	<p>Quan that sorwe was somdel laten And he havenen longe graten,</p>	<p>Everyone there wept bitterly, All the rich and poor that were there, And all had great sorrow, Ladies in chambers, and knights in the hall. When the mourning had subsided somewhat, And they had wept a long time,</p>
240	<p>Quan that sorwe was somdel laten And he havenen longe graten,</p>	<p>When he was dead, men could see The greatest sorrow that might be. There was sobbing, sighing, and grief, Hands wringing, and clutching of hair. Everyone there wept bitterly, All the rich and poor that were there, And all had great sorrow, Ladies in chambers, and knights in the hall. When the mourning had subsided somewhat, And they had wept a long time,</p>

¹¹ *In manus tuas, Louerde*: Christ's last words before death, in Luke 23:46: "Into your hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit." The poet emphasizes Athelwold's Christian saintliness with the reference and with his final acts of charity, although unlike Christ, Athelwold's penitential scourging is voluntary. Self-flagellation for mortification of the flesh was practiced in some austere monasteries until it grew into extremes such as the Flagellants lay movement of the fourteenth century. The church largely suppressed the practice afterward.

	<p>Belles deden he sone ringen, Monkes and prestes messe singen; And sauterer deden he manie reden, That God self shulde his soule leden Into hevene biforn his Sone, And ther wituten hende wone. Than he was to the erthe brouth, The riche erl ne foryat nouth</p>	<p>They soon after rang bells, Monks and priests sang mass, And they read out many psalm books, Praying that God Himself would lead his soul Into Heaven before His Son To live with Them there without end. After the king was delivered to the earth, The powerful earl overlooked nothing</p>
250	<p>That he ne dede al Engelond Sone sayse intil his hond, And in the castels leth he do The knictes he mighte tristen to, And alle the Englis dede he swere That he shulden him ghod fey beren: He yaf alle men that god thoucte, Liven and deyen til that him moucte, Til that the kinges dowter wore Twenti winter hold and more.</p>	<p>Until he soon had all of England Seized into his hand. He placed in the castles The knights which he could trust, And he forced all the English to swear That they would act in good faith to him. He gave men what seemed right to him, To live and die as he saw fit Until the king's daughter was Twenty years old or more.</p>
260	<p>Thanne he havede taken this oth Of erles, baruns, lef and loth, Of knictes, cherles, fre and thewe, Justises dede he maken newe Al Engelond to faren thorw Fro Dovere into Rokesborw. Schireves he sette, bedels, and greyves, Grith sergeans with longe gleyves, To yemen wilde wodes and pathes Fro wicke men that wolde don scathes,</p>	<p>When the earl had received this oath From earls and barons, fair and foul, From knights and laborers, free and bound, He had new justices appointed To travel through all England From Dover into Roxburgh.¹² He ordained sheriffs, church officers, and reeves, And peace sergeants with long lances, To guard the wild woods and paths From wicked men who would commit harm, And to have all at his beck and call, At his will, and at his mercy, So that no one would dare be against him, Not earl, baron, knight, or peasant. To be sure, in truth, he had an abundance Of people, weapons, and possessions. Truly, in a short while, All of England stood in awe of him; All of England was afraid of him, Like the cattle fears the prod.</p>
270	<p>And forto haven alle at his cri, At his wille, at hise merci, That non durste ben him ageyn - Erl ne barun, knict ne sweyn. Wislike for soth was him wel Of folc, of wepne, of catel: Sothlike, in a lite thrawe Al Engelond of him stod awe - Al Engelond was of him adrad, So his the beste fro the gad.</p>	<p>He ordained the king's daughter to flower And grew into the fairest woman alive. She was wise in all manners That were good and were cherished. The maiden was called Goldeboro, And for her many a tear would be wept. When Earl Godrich heard about the maiden, How well she was faring, How wise she was, how chaste, how fair, And how she was the rightful heir</p>
280	<p>The kinges douter bigan thrive And wex the fairest wman on live. Of alle thewes was she wis That gode weren and of pris. The mayden Goldeboru was hoten; For hire was mani a ter igroten. Quanne the Erl Godrich him herde Of that mayden - hw wel she ferde, Hw wis sho was, hw chaste, hw fayr, And that sho was the rithe eyr</p>	

¹² The *Havelock* poet writes before the expansion of justices in the fourteenth century, but throughout the medieval period the English citizenry had mixed feelings about such appointments as they brought both order and oppression. For a more extensive discussion see the essay on *Gamelyn*.

290	Of Engelond, of al the rike; Tho bigan Godrich to sike, And seyde, “Wether she sholde be Quen and levedi over me? Hwether sho sholde al Engelond And me and mine haven in hire hond? Datheit hwo it hire thave! Shal sho it nevere more have. Sholde ic yeve a fol, a therne, Engelond, thou sho it yerne?	Of England, of all the kingdom, Then Godrich began to complain, And griped, “Why should she be Queen and lady over me? Why should she have all England, And me and what’s mine, in her hand? Damn whoever lets her have it! ¹³ She will never see it happen. Should I give a fool, a serving wench, England, just because she wants it? Damn whoever hands it to her While I’m alive! She has grown too proud With the good food and royal clothes That I have too often given her. I have pampered her <i>too</i> well! It is not going to end as she thinks. Hope often makes a foolish man blind. I have a son, a handsome boy; He shall have all England! He shall be king! He will be sire, So long as I have a head on these shoulders!” When this treason was all thought out, His oath no longer meant anything to him. He let his promise go entirely, And after then did not care a straw for it. But before he would eat another thing, He ordered for her to be fetched From where she was at Winchester, And just like a wicked traitor Judas, He had her sent to Dover, Which stands on the seashore, And had her kept there In poverty and in wretched clothes. He had the castle guarded So that none of her friends Might come to speak with her, Anyone who might ever avenge her wrong. We will now leave Goldboro for a while, Who laments without ceasing, Where she lies in prison. May Jesus Christ, who brought Lazarus To life from the bonds of death, Release her with His hands! And grant that she might see him
300	Datheit hwo it hire yeve Evere more hwil I live! She is waxen al to prud, For gode metes and noble shrud, That hic have yoven hire to offte; Hic have yemed hire to softe. Shal it nouth ben als sho thenkes: Hope maketh fol man ofte blenkes. Ich have a sone, a ful fayr knave; He shal Engelond al have!	
310	He shal king, he shal ben sire, So brouke I evere mi blake swire!” Hwan this trayson was al thouth, Of his oth ne was him nouth. He let his oth al overga. Therof he yaf he nouth a stra, Bute sone dede hire fete, Er he wolde heten ani mete, Fro Winchester ther sho was, Also a wicke traytur Judas,	
320	And dede leden hire to Dovre, That standeth on the seis oure, And therhinne dede hire fede Poureluke in feble wede. The castel dede he yemen so That non ne michte comen hire to Of hire frend, with to speken, That hevere michte hire bale wreken. Of Goldeboru shul we now laten, That nouth ne blinneth forto graten	
330	Ther sho liggeth in prisoun. Jesu Crist, that Lazarun To live broucte fro dede bondes, He lese hire wit Hise hondes! And leve sho mote him yse	

¹³ *Datheit*: The poet repeatedly uses this epithet, which is perhaps a corruption of *odium Dei habet*, “May he have the hate of God,” or *Deu hat*, “God’s hate,” from Old French. Thomas J. Garbaty, *Havelock the Dane, Medieval English Literature* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), note to 296. See also Denise Battaglia, Esther Kaufmann, *et al.*, “You Can Say You to Me: English Politeness from the Middle Ages up to Now,” conference paper, *eHistLing* 1 (2004), accessed 22 June 2010 at http://www.ehistling.meotod.de/data/papers/group_d_pub.pdf.

	<p>Heye hangen on galwe tre That hire haved in sorwe brouth, So as sho ne misdede nouth. Say we now forth in hure spelle! In that time, so it bifelle,</p>	<p>Hanging high on the gallows tree, The man who brought her into sorrow, Even though she had done no wrong. Let us continue forth in our story. In that time, as it so happened, In the land of Denmark there was A rich and very powerful king. His name was Birkabeyn. He had many knights and attendants; He was a handsome and valiant man. He was the best knight in body Who ever might command an army, Or ride a horse, or handle a spear. He had three children by his wife, And he loved them as much as his life. He had a son and two daughters Who were, as it happened, very beautiful. But death, who spares no one, Neither rich nor poor, king nor emperor, Took him when he would rather live; But his days were complete, So that he could no longer remain, Not for gold, silver, or any gift. When the king realized this he quickly sent For priests from near and far, Canon priests and monks as well,¹⁴ To counsel and advise him, And to confess and absolve him While his body was still alive. When he was given the sacraments, With his will made and given for him, He had all his knights seated, For through them he would know Who might take care of his young children Until they could speak with their tongues, Walk and talk, and rise horses With knights and attendants by their sides. He spoke of this matter and soon chose A powerful man who was the truest Under the moon that he knew— Godard, the king's own friend— And said he might care for them best¹⁵ If he committed himself to them, Until his son could bear A helmet on his head and lead an army, With a strong spear in his hand,</p>
340	<p>Was in the lond of Denemark A riche king and swythe stark. The name of him was Birkabeyn; He havede mani knict and sweyn; He was fayr man and wict, Of bodi he was the beste knicth That evere micte leden uth here, Or stede on ride or handlen spere. Thre children he havede bi his wif - He hem lovede so his lif.</p>	
350	<p>He havede a sone, douhtres two, Swithe fayre, as fel it so. He that wile non forbere, Riche ne poure, king ne kaysere, Deth him tok than he best wolde Liven, but hyse dayes were fulde, That he ne moucte no more live, For gold ne silver ne for no gyve. Hwan he that wiste, rathe he sende After prestes, fer an hende -</p>	
360	<p>Chanounes gode and monkes bothe, Him for to wisse and to rede, Him for to hoslen an for to shrive, Hwil his bodi were on live. Hwan he was hosled and shriven, His quiste maked and for him gyven, Hise knictes dede he alle site, For thoru hem he wolde wite Hwo micte yeme his children yunge Til that he kouthen speken wit tunge,</p>	
370	<p>Speken and gangen, on horse riden, Knictes and sweynes by here siden. He spoken theroffe and chosen sone A riche man that under mone, Was the trewest, that he wende - Godard, the kinges owne frende - And seyden he moucthe hem best loke Yif that he hem undertoke, Til hise sone mouthe bere Helm on heved and leden ut here,</p>	
380	<p>In his hand a spere stark,</p>	

¹⁴ *Chanounes gode*: A canon was “a priest of a cathedral church or a member of a particular religious community” (TEAMS). Here they are regular clergy of enough authority to give confession to the king.

¹⁵ *He moucthe hem best loke*: Who is speaking here is not clear, as the pronouns do not indicate. Likely the king is addressing Godard, referring back to the clause beginning on 372. But in 382, “He [the king] believed what he said,” although this may refer to Godard’s implied response.

<p>390</p> <p>400</p> <p>410</p> <p>420</p> <p>430</p>	<p>And king been maked of Denemark. He wel trowede that he seyde, And on Godard handes leyde; And seyde, "Here biteche I thee Mine children alle thre, Al Denemark and al mi fe, Til that mi sone of helde be, But that ich wille that thou swere On auter and on messe gere, On the belles that men ringes, On messe bok the prest on singes, That thou mine children shalt wel yeme, That hire kin be ful wel queme, Til mi sone mowe ben knicth. Thanne biteche him tho his richth: Denemark and that ther til longes - Casteles and tunes, wodes and wonges."' Godard stirt up and swor al that The king him bad, and sithen sat Bi the knictes that ther ware, That wepen alle swithe sare For the king that deide sone. Jesu Crist, that makede mone On the mirke nith to shine, Wite his soule fro helle pine; And leve that it mote wone In heveneriche with Godes Sone! Hwan Birkabeyn was leyd in grave, The erl dede sone take the knave, Havelok, that was the eir, Swanborow, his sister, Helfled, the tother, And in the castel dede he hem do, Ther non ne michte hem comen to Of here kyn, ther thei sperd were. Ther he greten ofte sore Bothe for hunger and for kold, Or he weren thre winter hold. Feblelike he gaf hem clothes; He ne yaf a note of hise othes - He hem clothede rith ne fedde, Ne hem ne dede richelike bebedde. Thanne Godard was sikerlike Under God the moste swike That evre in erthe shaped was. Withuten on, the wike Judas. Have he the malisun today Of alle that evre speken may - Of patriark and of pope, And of prest with loken kope, Of monekes and hermites bothe, And of the leve Holi Rode That God himselve ran on blode! Crist warie him with His mouth! Waried wrthe he of north and suth,</p>	<p>And be made king of Denemark. The king believed what Godard said And laid hands on him And said, "I here entrust to you Each of my three children, All Denmark, and all my properties, Until my son is of age. But I want you to swear On the altar and the church vestments, On the bells that men ring, And on the hymnal from which the priests sing, That you will protect my children well, So that their family will be satisfied, Until my son can be a knight. Then endow him with his right: Denmark and all that belongs to it, Castles, towns, woods, and fields."' Godard rose and swore everything That the king asked him, and afterward sat With the knights who were there, Who were all weeping very bitterly For the king, who soon died. May Jesus Christ, who makes the moon Shine on the darkest night, Protect his soul from Hell's pains, And grant that it may dwell In Heaven with God's Son! When Birkabeyn was laid in his grave, The earl immediately took the boy, Havelock, who was the heir, Swanboro, his sister, and Hefled, the other, And he had them put in the castle, Where none might come to them From their relatives; there they were kept. They cried there miserably, Both from hunger and the cold, Before they were even three years old. He gave them clothes grudgingly; He didn't care a nut about his oaths! He didn't clothe or feed them properly, Or provide them with a royal bedroom. In that time Godard was surely The worst traitor under God Who was ever created on earth, Except for one, the wicked Judas. May he have the curse today Of all who might ever pronounce them, Of patriarchs and popes, And of priests with buttoned cloaks, Of both monks and hermits, And by the beloved Holy Cross That God Himself bled upon. May Christ condemn him with His mouth! May he be reviled from north to south,</p>
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<p>440</p> <p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>Offe alle men that speken kunne, Of Crist that made mone and sunne! Thanne he havede of al the lond Al the folk tilled intil his hond, And alle haveden sworn him oth, Riche and poure, lef and loth, That he sholden hise wille fremen And that he schulde him nouth greme, He thouthe a ful strong trechery, A trayson and a felony, Of the children for to make - The devel of helle him sone take! Hwan that was thouth, onon he ferde To the tour ther he woren sperde, Ther he greten for hunger and cold. The knave, that was sumdel bold, Kam him ageyn, on knes him sette, And Godard ful feyre he ther grette. And Godard seyde, "Wat is yw? Hwi grete ye and goulen now?" "For us hungreth swithe sore" - Seyden he, "we wolden more: We ne have to hete, ne we ne have Her inne neyther knith ne knave That yeveth us drinke ne no mete, Halvendel that we moun ete - Wo is us that we weren born! Weilawe! nis it no korn That men micte maken of bred? Us hungreth - we aren ney ded!" Godard herde here wa, Ther-offe yaf he nouth a stra, But tok the maydnes bothe samen, Al so it were up on hiis gamen, Al so he wolde with hem leyke That weren for hunger grene and bleike. Of bothen he karf on two here throtes, And sithen hem al to grotes. Ther was sorwe, wo-so it sawe, Hwan the children by the wawe Leyen and sprawleden in the blod. Havelok it saw and therbi stod - Ful sori was that sely knave. Mikel dred he mouthe have, For at hise herte he saw a knif For to reven him hise lyf. But the knave, that litel was, He knelede bifor that Judas, And seyde, "Louerd, mercy now! Manrede, louerd, bidde you: Al Denemark I wile you yeve, To that forward thu late me live. Here hi wile on boke swere That nevremore ne shal I bere</p>	<p>By all men who can speak, By Christ, who made the moon and sun. For after then he had all the land, And all the folk, tilled into his hand, And all had to swear him oaths, Rich and poor, fair and foul, That they would perform his will, And that they would not oppose him. He worked up a villainous treachery, A treason and a felony, To carry out on the children. May the devil soon take him to Hell! When that was planned, he went on To the tower where they were kept, Where they wept for hunger and cold. The boy, who had more courage, Came to him and set himself on his knees, And greeted Godard courteously. Godard said, "What's the matter with you? Why are you all bawling and yowling?" "Because we are bitterly hungry," he said. "We need more to eat. We have no heat, nor do we have Either a knight or a servant in here Who gives us half the amount of food Or drink that we could eat. Woe is us that we were born! Alas! Is there not even grain That someone could make bread from? We are hungry and we are nearly dead!" Godard heard their plea, And did not care a straw about it, But lifted up both of the girls together, Who were green and pale from hunger, As if it were a game, As if he were playing with them. He slashed both of their throats in two, And then cut them to pieces. There was sorrow in whoever saw it When the children lay by the wall, Sprawled in the blood. Havelock saw it and stood there. The innocent boy was full of grief. He must have been frozen in terror, For he saw a knife pointed at his heart To rob him of his life. But the boy, who was so small, Kneeled before that Judas, And said, "Lord, have mercy now! Lord, I offer you homage. I will give you all of Denmark, On the promise that you let me live. I will swear on the Bible right here That I will never bear against you</p>
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490	<p>Ayen thee, louerd, sheld ne spere, Ne other wepne that may you dere. Louerd, have merci of me! Today I wile fro Denemark fle, Ne neveremore comen agheyn! Sweren I wole that Bircabein Nevere yete me ne gat.” Hwan the devel herde that, Sumdel bigan him for to rewe; Withdrow the knif, that was lewe Of the seli children blod.</p>	<p>Shield or spear, Lord, Nor any other weapon that might harm you. Lord, have mercy on me! Today I will flee from Denmark And never come back again. I will swear that Birkabeyn Never fathered me.” When the devil Godard heard that, He felt a slight twinge of guilt. He drew back the knife, which was warm From the innocent children’s blood.</p>
500	<p>Ther was miracle fair and god That he the knave nouth ne slou, But for rewnesse him witdrow - Of Avelok rewede him ful sore, And thoucte he wolde that he ded wore, But on that he nouth wit his hend Ne drepe him nouth, that fule fend! Thoucte he als he him bi stod, Starinde als he were wod, “Yif I late him lives go,</p>	<p>It was a miracle, fair and bright, That he did not slay the boy, But out of pity he held back. He felt strong regret for Havelock, And though he wished that he were dead,¹⁶ Godard not could bring himself To kill him with his own hand, the foul fiend! Godard thought as he stood by him, Staring out as if he were crazy, “If I let him go alive,</p>
510	<p>He micte me wirchen michel wo - Grith ne get I neveremo; He may me waiten for to slo. And if he were brouct of live, And mine children wolden thrive, Louerdinges after me Of al Denemark micten he be. God it wite, he shal ben ded - Wile I taken non other red! I shal do casten him in the she,</p>	<p>He might cause me great trouble. I will never have peace, For he may bide his time to kill me. And if his life were taken away, And my children were to thrive, After my time they might be Lords of all Denmark! God knows, he shall be killed. I will take no other course! I will have him thrown into the sea, And there I’ll have him drowned, With a solid anchor about his neck, So that he can’t float in the water.”¹⁷</p>
520	<p>Ther I wile that he drench be, Abouten his hals an anker god, Thad he ne flete in the flod.” Ther anon he dede sende After a fishere that he wende That wolde al his wille do, And sone anon he seyde him to: “Grim, thou wost thou art my thral; Wilde don my wille al That I wile bidden thee?</p>	<p>From there he immediately sent for A fisherman that he believed Would do all his will, And he said to him at once, “Grim, you know you are my servant; Will you do all my will That I order you to? Tomorrow I will free you And give you property, and make you rich, Provided that you take this child And bring him with you tonight.</p>
530	<p>Tomorwen shal maken thee fre, And aucte thee yeven and riche make, Withthan thou wilt this child take And leden him with thee tonicht,</p>	

¹⁶ *And thoucte he wolde that he ded wore*: A difficult line. *Thoucte* is ‘thought’ (see 507) and probably not ‘though’ (ME *thagh, though*). Yet translating the entire sentence is difficult otherwise, unless Godard is so tormented at the moment that he wishes he were dead himself.

¹⁷ Garbaty notes that Godard, like the pirates in *King Horn*, rationalizes that putting Havelock in the water removes his moral responsibility, as fate will be to blame if he dies. Godard still wants to give fate “a heavy helping hand” with an anchor (Garbaty, note to 519-22).

540	<p>Than thou sest the monelith, Into the se and don him therinne. Al wile I taken on me the sinne.” Grim tok the child and bond him faste, Hwil the bondes michte laste, That weren of ful strong line. Tho was Havelok in ful strong pine - Wiste he nevere her wat was wo! Jhesu Crist, that makede go The halte and the doumbe speken, Havelok, thee of Godard wreke! Hwan Grim him havede faste bounden, And sithen in an eld cloth wnden, He thriste in his muth wel faste A kevel of clutes ful unwraste, That he mouthe speke ne fnaste,</p>	<p>When you see the moonlight, Go into the sea and throw him in it. I will take on myself all the sin.” Grim took the boy and tied him up tightly, While the bonds might last, Which were made of strong rope. Then Havelock was in great pain; He never knew before what torment was! May Jesus Christ, who makes the lame walk And the dumb speak, Wreak revenge on Godard for Havelock!¹⁸ When Grim had tied him up fast, And then bound him in an old cloth, He tightly shoved in his mouth A gag of filthy rags, So that he could not speak or snort out Wherever he might carry or lead him.</p>
550	<p>Hwere he wolde him bere or lede. Hwan he havede don that dede, Hwat the swike him havede he yede That he schulde him forth lede And him drinchen in the se - That forwarde makeden he - In a poke, ful and blac, Sone he caste him on his bac, Ant bar him hom to hise cleve, And bitaucte him Dame Leve</p>	<p>When he had done that deed And obeyed the traitor’s orders, That he should take him out And soak him in the sea In a bag, big and black, Which was the agreement they made, He immediately threw him on his back And took him home to his hut. Grim entrusted him to his wife Leve, And said, “Watch this boy¹⁹ As if you were saving my life! I will drown him in the sea. Because of him we will be made free, And have plenty of gold and other goods; My lord has promised me this.”</p>
560	<p>And seyde, “Wite thou this knave, Al so thou wit mi lif save! I shal dreinchen him in the se; For him shole we ben maked fre, Gold haven ynow and other fe: That havet mi louerd bihoten me.” Hwan Dame Leve herde that, Up she stirte and nouth ne sat, And caste the knave so harde adoun That he crakede ther his croune</p>	<p>She did not sit but jumped up, And dropped the boy down so hard That he banged his head Against a great rock laying there.²⁰ Then Havelock might have been heard saying “Alas that I was ever a king’s son! If only he had fathered a vulture or eagle, A lion or wolf, a she-wolf or bear, Or some other beast to harm Godard back!”²¹</p>
570	<p>Ageyn a gret ston ther it lay. Tho Havelok michte sei, “Weilawei, That evere was I kinges bern - That him ne havede grip or ern, Leoun or wlf, wlvine or bere, Or other best that wolde him dere!”</p>	

¹⁸ Significantly, the poet does not condemn Grim, who is ostensibly “only acting under orders.” For an alternative interpretation of Grim which sees him as *too* enthusiastic in seeking advancement, see Maldwyn Mills, “Havelok and the Brutal Fisherman,” *Medium Aevum* 36 (1967): 219-30.

¹⁹ *Knave*: In early ME this simply meant ‘boy.’ Although the word had servile connotations, there was no pejorative nuance yet as there is later when Grim calls himself and Leve *cherles* in remorseful panic (621).

²⁰ *Ageyn a gret ston*: Among other uses, rocks were heated in ovens and used to keep beds warm at night. Alison scolds Absolon from her bedside window, “Go forth thy wey, or I wol caste a ston” (CTI.3712), perhaps reflecting the same practice.

580	<p>So lay that child to middel nieth, That Grim bad Leve bringen lict, For to don on his clothes: “Ne thenkestu nowt of mine othes That ich have mi louerd sworn? Ne wile I nouth be forloren. I shal beren him to the se - Thou wost that hoves me - And I shal drenchen him therinne; Ris up swithe an go thu binne, And blow the fir and lith a kandel.” Als she schulde hise clothes handel On for to don and blawe the fir, She saw therinne a lith ful shir,</p>	<p>So the child lay there until midnight, When Grim asked Leve to bring a light In order to put on his clothes: “Don’t you think anything of my oaths That I have sworn to my lord?²² I will not be ruined! I will take him to the sea— You know that’s what I have to do— And I will drown him there in the water. Get up quickly now and go in, And stoke the fire and light a candle!” But as she was about to handle his clothes To put them on him and kindle the fire, She saw inside a shining light,</p>
590	<p>Al so brith so it were day, Aboute the knave ther he lay. Of hise mouth it stod a stem Als it were a sunnebem; Al so lith was it therinne So ther brenden cerges inne. “Jesu Crist!” wat Dame Leve, “Hwat is that lith in ure cleve? Ris up, Grim, and loke wat it menes! Hwat is the lith, as thou wenes?”</p>	<p>As bright as if it were day, Around the boy where he lay. From his mouth a gleam stood out As if it were a sunbeam. It was as light inside the hut As if candles were burning there. “Jesus Christ!” exclaimed Dame Leve, “What is that light in our hut? Get up, Grim, and see what it means! What do you think the light is?”</p>
600	<p>He stirten bothe up to the knave For man shal god wille have, Unkeveleden him and swithe unbounden, And sone anon him funden, Als he tirveden of his serk, On hise rith shuldre a kynmerk, A swithe brith, a swithe fair. “Goddot!” quath Grim, “this ure eir, That shal louerd of Denemark! He shal ben king, strong and stark;</p>	<p>They both hurried up to the boy, For people are naturally good-willed, Ungagged him, and quickly untied him, And then immediately found on him, As they pulled off the boy’s shirt, A royal birthmark on his right shoulder, A mark so bright and so fair. Grim said, “God knows, this is our heir Who will be lord of Denmark! He will be king, strong and mighty, And he will have in his hand All of Denmark and England! He will bring Godard great grief; He will have him hanged or flayed alive, Or he will have him buried alive. He will get no mercy from him.” Grim said this and cried bitterly, And then fell at Havelock’s feet And said, “My lord, have mercy On me and Leve, that is me bi!</p>
610	<p>He shal haven in his hand Al Denemark and Engeland. He shal do Godard ful wo; He shal him hangen or quik flo, Or he shal him al quic grave. Of him shal he no merci have.” Thus seide Grim and sore gret, And sone fel him to the fet, And seide, “Louerd, have mercy Of me and Leve, that is me bi! Louerd, we aren bothe thine - Thine cherles, thine hine. Louerd, we sholen thee wel fede</p>	<p>Lord, we are both yours— Your peasants, your servants. Lord, we will raise you well</p>

²¹ This is again a surmised taken from context, as the pronouns in early ME do not make it clear who Havelock is talking about.

²² Presumably Leve’s conscience bothers her and Grim needs to argue with her to justify his actions. The sentiment dovetails with line 601 and helps humanize the couple.

	<p>Til that thu cone riden on stede, Til that thu cone ful wel bere Helm on heved, sheld and spere. He ne shall nevere wite, sikerlike, Godard, that fule swike. Thoru other man, louerd, than thoru thee Shal I nevere freman be.</p>	<p>Until you know how to ride a steed, Until you know well how to bear A helmet on your head with shield and spear. Godard, that foul traitor, Will never know, for sure. I will never be a free man, Lord, Except through you. You, my lord, will release me, For I will protect and watch over you. Through you I will have freedom.” Then Havelock was a happy lad. He sat up and asked for bread, And said, “I am nearly dead, What with hunger, what with the ropes That you laid on my hands, And at last because of the gag That was stuck fast in my mouth. With all that I was so tightly pressed That I was nearly strangled!” Leve said, “God knows, I’m just pleased That you can eat. I will fetch you Bread and cheese, butter and milk, And meat pies and desserts. We’ll soon feed you well with these things, My lord, in your great need. It’s true what people say and swear; ‘No one can harm whom God wishes to help.’”²³ When she had brought some food, At once Havelock began to eat Ravenously, and was very pleased; He could not hide his hunger. He ate a loaf, I know, and more, For he was half-starved. For three days before then, I guess, He had eaten nothing—that was clear to see! When he had eaten and was content, Grim made him a comfortable bed, Took his clothes off, and tucked him in, And said, “Sleep, son, in great peace. Sleep fast and do not be afraid of anything. You have been brought from sorrow to joy.” Soon it was the light of day. Grim made his way To the wicked traitor Godard, Who was the steward of Denmark, And said, “My lord, I have done What you ordered me to do with the boy. He is drowned in the water, With a firm anchor around his neck.</p>
630	<p>Thou shalt me, louerd, fre maken, For I shal yemen thee and waken - Thoru thee wile I fredom have.” Tho was Haveloc a blithe knave! He sat him up and cravede bred, And seide, “Ich am ney ded, Hwat for hunger, wat for bondes That thu leidest on min hondes, And for kevel at the laste, That in my mouth was thrist faste.</p>	
640	<p>I was ther with so harde prangled That I was ther with ney strangled!” “Wel is me that thou mayth hete! Goddoth!” quath Leve, “I shal thee fete Bred an chese, butere and milk, Pastees and flaunes - al with swilk Shole we sone thee wel fede, Louerd, in this mikel nede. Soth it is that men seyt and swereth: ‘Ther God wile helpen, nouth ne dereth.’”</p>	
650	<p>Thanne sho havevede brouth the mete, Haveloc anon bigan to ete Grundlike, and was ful blithe. Couthe he nouth his hunger mithe. A lof he het, I woth, and more, For him hungrede swithe sore. Thre dayes ther biforn, I wene, Et he no mete - that was wel sene! Hwan he havevede eten and was fed, Grim dede maken a ful fayr bed,</p>	
660	<p>Unclothehe him and dede him therinne, And seyde, “Slep, sone, with muchel winne! Slep wel faste and dred thee nouth - Fro sorwe to joie art thu brouth.” Sone so it was lith of day, Grim it undertok the wey To the wicke traitour Godard That was of Denemark a stiward And saide, “Louerd, don ich have That thou me bede of the knave:</p>	
670	<p>He is drenched in the flod, Abouten his hals an anker god -</p>	

²³ *Ther God wile helpen, nouth ne dereth*: Apparently proverbial. Compare Thomas A. Kempis’ *Imitation of Christ* (c. 1418), Book 2, *Humility*: “The malice of man cannot harm one whom God wishes to help.”

<p>680</p> <p>690</p> <p>700</p> <p>710</p> <p>720</p>	<p>He is witerlike ded. Eteth he nevremore bred: He lith drenched in the se. Yif me gold and other fe, That I mowe riche be, And with thi chartre make fre; For thu ful wel bihetet me Thanne I last spak with thee.” Godard stod and lokede on him Thoruthlike, with eyne grim, And seyde, “Wiltu ben erl? Go hom swithe, fule drit-cherl; Go hethen and be everemore Thral and cherl als thou er wore - Shaltu have non other mede; For litel I do thee lede To the galwes, so God me rede! For thou haves don a wicke dede. Thou mait stonden her to longe, Bute thou swithe hethen gongel!” Grim thoucte to late that he ran Fro that traytour, that wicke man, And thoucte, “Wat shal me to rede? Wite he him on live he wile bethe Heye hangen on galwe tre. Betere us is of londe to fle, And berwen bothen ure lives, And mine children and mine wives.” Grim solde sone al his corn, Shep with wolle, neth with horn, Hors and swin, geet with berd, The gees, the hennes of the yerd - Al he solde that outh douthe, That he evre selle moucte; And al he to the peni drou. Hise ship he greythede wel inow; He dede it tere an ful wel pike That it ne doutede sond ne krike; Therinne dide a ful god mast, Stronge kables and ful fast, Ores gode an ful god seyl - Therinne wantede nouth a nayl, That evere he sholde therinne do. Hwan he havedet greythed so, Havelok the yunge he dede therinne, Him and his wif, hise sones thrinne, And hise two doutres that faire wore. And sone dede he leyn in an ore, And drou him to the heye see, There he mith altherbeste fle. Fro londe woren he bote a mile, Ne were it nevere but ane hwile</p>	<p>He is surely dead. He will never eat any more bread! He lies drowned in the sea. Give me gold and other goods So that I may be rich, And make me free with your signature. You promised me these things in full When I last spoke with you.” Godard stood and looked at him Thoroughly with stern eyes And said, “So you want to be an earl? Get home quick, foul dirt-serf! Get out of here and be forever A slave and peasant as you were before! You will get no other reward. So help me God, it would take little For me to send you to the gallows. You have done a wicked thing. You stay here too long for your own good Unless you get out of here fast!” Grim thought, too late, as he ran From that traitor, that wicked man And pondered, “What will I do? If he knows he’s alive, both of us will be Hanged high on the gallows tree. It would be better for us to flee the land And save both of our lives, And my children’s and my wife’s.” Soon after Grim sold all of his grain, Sheep with wool, cattle with horns, Horses and pigs, goats with beards, The geese, and the hens of the yard. He sold all that could be sold, Everything that had value, And he converted it all to money. He outfitted his ship well enough. He gave it tar and a full coat of pitch So that it would never fear inlet or creek. He installed a fine mast in it, Fastened firmly with strong cables, Good oars, and a rugged sail. Nothing inside lacked even a nail That he should have put into it. When he had equipped it so, He put young Havelock in it, Himself and his wife, his three sons, And his two daughters, who were pretty girls. And then he laid in the oars And drew them out to the high sea Where he might best flee. He was only a mile from land, And it was no more than a short while</p>
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730	<p>That it ne bigan a wind to rise Out of the north men calleth "bise," And drof hem intil Engelond, That al was sithen in his hond, His, that Havelok was the name; But or he havede michel shame, Michel sorwe and michel tene, And yete he gat it al bidene; Als ye shulen now forthward lere, Yf that ye wilen therto here.</p>	<p>When a breeze which men call The North Wind began to rise²⁴ And drove them on to England, Which would later all be in one hand, And that man's name would be Havelock. But before then he would endure Much shame, sorrow, and hardship. And yet he got it all completely, As you will all soon learn If you wish to hear about it.</p>
740	<p>In Humber Grim bigan to lende, In Lindeseye, rith at the north ende. Ther sat his ship upon the sond; But Grim it drou up to the lond; And there he made a litel cote To him and to hise flote. Bigan he there for to erthe, A litel hus to maken of erthe, So that he wel thore were Of here herboru herborwed there. And for that Grim that place aute, The stede of Grim the name laute, So that Grimesbi it calleth alle That theroffe speken alle; And so shulen men callen it ay, Bitwene this and Domesday.</p>	<p>Grim came to land in the Humber, In Lindsay, right at the north end.²⁵ There his fishing boat sat on the sand. But Grim drew it up onto the land, And built a little cottage there For him and his company. He began to live and work there, In a little house made of earth, So that in their harbor there They were well-sheltered. And because Grim owned that place, It took the name of Grim's stead, So that everyone calls it Grimsby²⁶ Who speaks about the town. And so men will always call it Between now and Judgment Day.</p>
750	<p>Grim was fishere swithe god, And mikel couthe on the flod - Mani god fish therinne he tok, Bothe with neth and with hok. He tok the sturgiun and the qual, And the turbut and lax withal; He tok the sele and the hwel - He spedde ofte swithe wel. Keling he tok and tumberel, Hering and the makerel,</p>	<p>Grim was a skillful fisherman And knew the waters well. He took plenty of good fish in, Both with a net and with a hook. He took sturgeons and whales, And turbot and salmon as well. He caught seals and eels, And was often very successful. He took cod and porpoise, Herring and mackerel,</p>
760	<p>The butte, the schulle, the thornebake.</p>	<p>Flounder, plaice, and skate.²⁷</p>

²⁴ *Bise*: TEAMS notes that this Old French loanword for 'North Wind' is common in French literature but does not appear in any other English romance.

²⁵ The poet knows his geography. The Humber River moves into an inlet northwest of Grimsby. Present-day East Lindsey is slightly further south, near Louth. This would have been a trip southwest from Denmark of upwards of 6-700 km, a long voyage for a peasant fishing boat. A fast Viking longship traveling at 14 knots might have completed the trip in two days. Similarly, Grimsby to Lincoln (774) is a good day's walk at 55 km.

²⁶ "Grim's By," reflecting the Old Danish word for *village*, still traditionally claims its origins from the story of Grim. Grimsby's medieval seal had images of Grim, Havelock, and Goldeboru, though findings suggest that a small number of Romans occupied the area near Cartergate centuries earlier.

²⁷ Like lists of royalty in medieval romance, the fish here also seem to be ranked from highest to lowest. Sturgeon were a delicacy (as well as whales, curiously) whereas flounder and plaice were a staple now usually found in fish and chip dishes. Also see Skeat's note on fish as well as TEAMS' note referencing

770	<p>Gode paniers dede he make, On til him and other thrinne Til hise sones to beren fishe inne, Up o londe to selle and fonge - Forbar he neyther tun ne gronge That he ne to yede with his ware. Kam he nevere hom hand-bare, That he ne broucte bred and sowel In his shirte or in his cowel, In his poke benes and korn - Hise swink he havede he nowt forlorn. And hwan he took the grete lamprey, Ful wel he couthe the rithe wei To Lincolne, the gode boru; Ofte he yede it thoru and thoru, Til he havede wol wel sold And therfore the penies told. Thanne he com thenne he were blithe, For hom he brouthe fele sithe</p>	<p>He made fine bread baskets, One for him and another three For his sons to carry fish in To sell and collect money for upland. He missed neither town nor farm Wherever he went with his wares. He never came home empty-handed Without bringing bread and sauce In his shirt or in his hood, And beans and grain in his bag. He never wasted his efforts. And when he caught a great lamprey,²⁸ He knew the road very well To Lincoln, the fine town. He often crossed it through and through, Until he sold everything as he wished²⁹ And had counted his pennies for it. When he returned from there he was glad, For many times he brought home</p>
780	<p>Wastels, simenels with the horn, His pokes fulle of mele and korn, Netes flesh, shepes and swines; And hemp to maken of gode lines, And stronge ropes to hise netes, In the se weren he ofte setes. Thusgate Grim him fayre ledde: Him and his genge wel he fedde Wel twelf winter other more. Havelok was war that Grim swank sore</p>	<p>Cakes and horn-shaped breads, With his bags full of flour and grain, Ox-meat, lamb, and pork, And hemp to make fishing lines, And strong rope for his nets Where he set them in the sea. Thus Grim lived comfortably, And he fed himself and his household well For a good twelve winters or more. Havelock knew that Grim worked hard For his dinner while he lay at home.</p>
790	<p>For his mete, and he lay at hom - Thouthe, "Ich am now no grom! Ich am wel waxen and wel may eten More than evere Grim may geten. Ich ete more, bi God on live, Than Grim an hise children five! It ne may nouth ben thus longe. Goddot! I wile with hem gange For to leren sum god to gete.</p>	<p>He thought, "I am no longer a boy. I am fully grown and can eat More than Grim could ever get. I eat more, by the living God, Than Grim and his five children. God knows, it can't go on like this. I will go with them To learn some useful skill, And I will labor for my dinner.</p>
800	<p>Swinken ich wolde for my mete - It is no shame for to swinken! The man that may wel eten and drinken Thar nouth ne have but on swink long -</p>	<p>It is no shame to work! It is a foul thing for a man who eats And drinks his fill who has not</p>

Luizza, who believes the fish symbolize an economy where goods and money have more value than "chivalric honor." Roy Michael Liuzza, "Representation and Readership in the ME *Havelok*," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994): 510.

²⁸ Lampreys are parasitic eels and are now seen as pests, but in the ancient and medieval world they were expensive dainties. Henry I is recorded by contemporary historians as dying from eating too many lampreys in rich sauces.

²⁹ *Til he havede wol wel sold*: The MS suggests that Grim is selling wool (*wol*), which is never mentioned. Other editors read *ful* or *al* instead of *wol*, which makes more contextual sense.

	<p>To ligger at hom it is ful strong. God yelde him, ther I ne may, That haveth me fed to this day! Gladlike I wile the paniers bere - Ich woth ne shal it me nouth dere, They ther be inne a birthene gret Al so hevi als a neth.</p>	<p>Worked hard for it to lie at home. God reward him more than I can For having fed me to this day! I will gladly carry the breadbaskets. I know it won't do me any harm, Even if they are a great burden, As heavy as an ox.</p>
810	<p>Shal ich nevere lengere dwelle - Tomorwen shal ich forth pelle.” On the morwen, hwan it was day, He stirt up sone and nouth ne lay, And cast a panier on his bac, With fish giveled als a stac. Al so michel he bar him one, So he foure, bi mine mone! Wel he it bar and solde it wel; The silver he brouthe hom ilk del,</p>	<p>I will no longer linger here. Tomorrow I will hustle forth!” In the morning when it was day He got up at once and did not lie down, And he threw a basket on his back With fish heaped up like a stack. He carried as much by himself As four men, by my word. He carried it firmly and sold it well, And he brought home every bit of silver, All that he got for it.</p>
820	<p>Al that he therfore tok - Withheld he nouth a ferthinges nok. So yede he forth ilke day That he nevere at home lay - So wolde he his mester lere. Bifel it so a strong dere Bigan to rise of korn of bred, That Grim ne couthe no god red, Hw he sholde his meiné fede; Of Havelok havede he michel drede,</p>	<p>He did not hold back a penny's edge.³⁰ He went out this way each day And was so eager to learn his trade That he never idled at home again. But it so happened that a bad harvest Brought a shortage of grain for bread, So that Grim could find no good solution To how he should feed his household. He was very anxious about Havelock, For he was strong and could eat More than every mouth there could get. Nor could Grim catch on the sea Either cod or skate, Nor any other fish that would serve To feed his family.</p>
830	<p>For he was strong and wel mouthe ete More thanne evere mouthe be gete; Ne he ne mouthe on the se take Neyther lenge ne thornbake, Ne non other fish that douthe His meyné feden with he mouthe. Of Havelok he havede kare, Hwilgat that he micthe fare. Of his children was him nouth; On Havelok was al hise thouth,</p>	<p>He was very worried about Havelock And how he might fare. He did not think of his other children; All of his thoughts were on Havelock, And he said, “Havelock, dear son, I fear that we must all die from hunger, For this famine is so bad And our food is long gone. It would be better if you go on Than to stay here for long. You might leave here too late. You know very well the right way To Lincoln, the fine town, For you have been there often enough. As for me, my efforts aren't worth a bean.</p>
840	<p>And seyde, “Havelok, dere sone, I wene that we deye mone For hunger, this dere is so strong, And hure mete is uten long. Betere is that thou henne gonge Than thou here dwelle longe - Hethen thou mayt gangen to late; Thou canst ful wel the ricthe gate To Lincolne, the gode boru - Thou havest it gon ful ofte thoru.</p>	
850	<p>Of me ne is me nouth a slo.</p>	

³⁰ *A ferthinges nok*: A farthing was a quarter of a penny and the smallest coin. TEAMS explains that the idiom both meant ‘to the last penny’ and referred to the illegal practice of clipping the edges of coins to sell the silver as bullion. For this reason most modern coins have raised edges.

<p>860</p>	<p>Betere is that thu thider go, For ther is mani god man inne; Ther thou mayt thi mete winne. But wo is me thou art so naked, Of mi seyl I wolde thee were maked A cloth thou mithest inne gongen, Sone, no cold that thu ne fonge.” He tok the sheres of the nayl And made him a covel of the sayl, And Havelok dide it sone on. Havede he neyther hosen ne shon, Ne none kines other wede: To Lincolne barfot he yede. Hwan he cam ther, he was ful wil - Ne havede he no frend to gangen til. Two dayes ther fastinde he yede, That non for his werk wolde him fede. The thridde day herde he calle: “Bermen, bermen, hider forth alle!”</p>	<p>It’s better that you go there, For there are many good men in town And you might be able to earn your dinner there. But woe is me! You are so poorly dressed, I would rather take my sail and make Some clothing you can go in, son, So that you need not face the cold.” He took the scissors off the nail, And made him a cloak from the sail, And then put it on Havelock. He had neither hose nor shoes, Nor any other kind of clothing. He walked barefoot to Lincoln. When he arrived there, he was at a loss. He had no friend to go to. For two days he wandered there fasting, For no one would feed him for his work. The third day he heard a call, “Porters, porters, come here, all!”</p>
<p>870</p>	<p>Poure that on fote yede Sprongen forth so sparke on glede, Havelok shof dun nyne or ten Rith amidewarde the fen, And stirte forth to the kok, Ther the erles mete he tok That he bouthe at the brigge: The bermen let he alle ligge, And bar the mete to the castel, And gat him there a ferthing wastel.</p>	<p>The poor who went on foot Sprang forth like sparks from coals. Havelock shoved aside nine or ten, Right into the muddy swamp, And started forward to the cook. There he took charge of the earl’s food Which he was given at the bridge. He left the other porters lying And delivered the food to the castle, Where he was given a penny cake.³¹</p>
<p>880</p>	<p>Thet other day kepte he ok Swithe yerne the erles kok, Til that he say him on the brigge, And bi him many fishes ligge. The herles mete havede he bouth Of Cornwalie and kalde oft: “Bermen, bermen, hider swithe!” Havelok it herde and was ful blithe That he herde “bermen” calle. Alle made he hem dun falle</p>	<p>The next day again he eagerly kept A lookout for the earl’s cook, Until he saw him on the bridge Where many fish lay beside him. He had bought the earl’s provisions From Cornwall, and continually called, “Porters, porters, come quickly!” Havelock heard it and was glad That he heard ‘porters’ called. He made everyone fall down Who walked or stood in his way, A good sixteen strong lads.</p>
<p>890</p>	<p>That in his gate yeden and stode - Wel sixtene laddes gode. Als he lep the kok til, He shof hem alle upon an hyl - Astirte til him with his rippe And bigan the fish to kippe. He bar up wel a carte lode Of segges, laxes, of playces brode, Of grete laumprees and of eles. Sparede he neyther tos ne heles</p>	<p>He did not spare heel or toe As he leaped up to the cook, He shoved them down the hillside, Hurrying to him with his basket, And began to scoop up the fish. He bore up a good cartload Of squid, salmon, and broad flatfish, Of great lampreys, and of eels.</p>

³¹ *Ferthing wastel*: A loaf of bread baked from the finest white flour, the same that Chaucer’s prioress extravagantly feeds her dogs with. During a food shortage it is a considerable treat.

900	Til that he to the castel cam, That men fro him his birthene nam. Than men haveden holpen him doun With the birthene of his croun, The kok stod and on him low, And thoute him stalworthe man ynow, And seyde, "Wiltu ben wit me? Gladlike wile ich feden thee: Wel is set the mete thu etes, And the hire that thu getes!"	Until he came to the castle, Where men took his burden from him. When men had helped take down The load off his shoulders, The cook stood and smiled on him And decided he was a sturdy enough man And said, "Will you stay with me? I will be glad to keep you. The food you eat is well earned, As well as the wages you get!"
910	"Goddot!" quoth he, "leve sire, Bidde ich you non other hire, But yeveth me inow to ete - Fir and water I wile you fete, The fir blowe and ful wele maken; Stickes kan ich breken and kraken, And kindlen ful wel a fyr, And maken it to brennen shir. Ful wel kan ich cleven shides, Eles to turven of here hides;	Havelock said, "God knows, dear sir, I will ask you for no other pay But that you give me enough to eat. I will fetch you firewood and water, Raise the fire, and make it blaze. I can break and crack sticks, And kindle a fire expertly, And make it burn brightly. I know well how to split kindling And how to skin eels from their hides. I can wash dishes well, And do all that you ever want."
920	Ful wel kan ich dishes swilen, And don al that ye evere wilen." Quoth the kok, "Wile I no more! Go thu yunder and sit thore, And I shal yeve the ful fair bred, And made the broys in the led. Sit now doun and et ful yerne - Datheit hwo the mete werne!" Havelok sette him dun anon Al so stille als a ston,	The cook said, "I can't ask for more! Go over there and sit, And I will bring you some good bread, And make you soup in the kettle. Sit down now and eat your fill. Damn whoever begrudges you food!" Havelock sat down at once, As still as a stone, Until he had fully eaten. Havelock had done well then! When he had eaten enough, He came to the well, drew up the water, And filled a large tub there. He asked no one to go with him, But he carried it in between his hands, All by himself, to the kitchen. He asked no one to fetch water for him, Nor to bring provisions from the bridge.
930	Til he havede ful wel eten; Tho havede Havelok fayre geten. Hwan he havede eten inow, He kam to the wele, water up drow, And filde ther a michel so - Bad he non ageyn him go, But bitwen his hondes he bar it in, Al him one, to the kichin. Bad he non him water to fett, Ne fro brigge to bere the mete.	He bore turf for fuel, and grass for kindling. ³² He carried wood from the bridge; All that they might ever need, He hauled and he cut. He would never have any more rest Than if he were a beast. Of all men he was the most modest, Always laughing and friendly in speech. He was forever glad and pleasant;
940	He bar the turves, he bar the star, The wode fro the brigge he bar, Al that evere shulden he nytte, Al he drow and al he citte - Wolde he nevere haven rest More than he were a best. Of alle men was he mest meke, Lauhwinde ay and blithe of speke; Evere he was glad and blithe -	

³² *He bar the turves, he bar the star*: TEAMS explains that *turves* were cuts of turf or peat moss which were dried and then burned for fuel. *Star* was wild grass (possibly genus *hypoxis* or *aletris*), used for kindling.

950	<p>His sorwe he couthe ful wel mithe. It ne was non so litel knave For to leyken ne for to plawe, That he ne wolde with him pleye. The children that yeden in the weie Of him he deden al here wille, And with him leykeden here fille. Him loveden alle, stille and bolde, Knictes, children, yunge and holde - Alle him loveden that him sowen, Bothen heye men and lowe.</p>	<p>He could fully hide his sorrows.³³ There was no boy so little Who wanted to sport or have fun That he would not play with him. For all the children who came his way, He did everything they wanted, And played with them to their fill. He was loved by all, meek and bold, Knights, children, young, and old. All took to him who saw him, Both high and low men.</p>
960	<p>Of him ful wide the word sprong, Hw he was mikel, hw he was strong, Hw fayr man God him havede maked, But on that he was almost naked: For he ne havede nouth to shride But a kovel ful unride, That was ful and swithe wicke; Was it nouth worth a fir-sticke. The cok bigan of him to rewe And bouthe him clothes al spannewe:</p>	<p>Word spread far and wide of him, How he was great, how he was strong, How handsome a man God had made him, Except that he was almost naked. For he had nothing to wear Except a rough cloak, Which was so dirty and foul That it was not worth a stick of firewood. The cook began to feel sorry for him And brought him brand new clothes. He bought him both hose and shoes, And soon made him put them on. When he was clothed, hosed, and in shoes There was no one so handsome under God Who was ever yet on earth, No one that any mother ever bore. There was never a man who ruled A kingdom who looked so much Like a king or emperor As he appeared when he was clothed.</p>
970	<p>He bouthe him bothe hosen and shon, And sone dide him dones on. Hwan he was clothed, osed, and shod, Was non so fayr under God, That evere yete in erthe were, Non that evere moder bere; It was nevere man that yemede In kinneriche that so wel semede King or cayser for to be, Than he was shrid, so semede he;</p>	<p>For when they were all together In Lincoln at the games, And the earl's men were all there, Havelock was taller by a head Than the greatest who were there. In wrestling no man grappled him Whom he didn't soon throw down. Havelock stood over them like a mast. As high as he was, as long as he was, He was just as hardy and strong. In England he had no equal in strength Among whoever came near him. As much as he was strong, he was gentle. Though other men often mistreated him, He never insulted them Or laid a hand on them in malice. His body was pure of maidens;</p>
980	<p>For thanne he weren alle samen At Lincolne at the gamen, And the erles men woren al thore, Than was Havelok bi the shuldren more Than the meste that ther kam: In armes him noman nam That he doune sone ne caste. Havelok stod over hem als a mast; Als he was heie, als he was long, He was bothe stark and strong -</p>	<p>In England he had no equal in strength Among whoever came near him. As much as he was strong, he was gentle. Though other men often mistreated him, He never insulted them Or laid a hand on them in malice. His body was pure of maidens;</p>
990	<p>In Engelond non hise per Of strengthe that evere kam him ner. Als he was strong, so was he softe; They a man him misdede ofte, Neveremore he him misseyde, Ne hond on him with yvele leyde. Of bodi was he mayden clene;</p>	<p>Of strengthe that evere kam him ner. Als he was strong, so was he softe; They a man him misdede ofte, Neveremore he him misseyde, Ne hond on him with yvele leyde. Of bodi was he mayden clene;</p>

³³ *His sorwe he couthe ful wel mithe*: Medieval England was not yet the time of the “stiff upper lip,” and so the comment that “he could hide his feelings well” is odd. Presumably the poet is both praising Havelock for not burdening others with his tragic past and reminding the audience that he knows his true heritage.

1000	<p>Nevere yete in game, ne in grene, With hire ne wolde he leyke ne lye, No more than it were a strie. In that time al Hengelond Th'eryl Godrich havede in his hond, And he gart komen into the tun Mani erl and mani barun, And alle that lives were In Englund thanne wer there, That they haveden after sent To ben ther at the parlement. With hem com mani chambioun, Mani with ladde, blac and brown,</p>	<p>Never in fun or in lust would he Flirt or lie with a loose woman,³⁴ No more than if she were an old witch. In that time Earl Godrich Had all of England in his hand, And he ordered into the town Many earls and many barons, And all who were alive In England then were there, For they had been sent for To be present at the parliament.³⁵</p>
1010	<p>And fel it so that yungemen, Wel abouten nine or ten, Bigunnen the for to layke. Thider komen bothe stronge and wayke, Thider komen lesse and more That in the boru thanne weren thore - Chaupniouns and starke laddes, Bondemen with here gaddes, Als he comen fro the plow. There was sembling inow;</p>	<p>With them came many champions, Many with servants of all sorts,³⁶ And so it happened that young men, Well around nine or ten, Began to play sports there. Both the strong and weak came there. Both the lesser and greater came Who were there in the town then: Heroes and rugged lads, And bondsmen with their cattle prods Who had just come from the plow. The assembly was large enough, For there was no stable boy Who did not come to see the games, Even if he should have been on duty. Before their feet they laid a tree, Where the strong lads, a good number, Shot-put with a giant stone. The stone was solid and huge as well, And as heavy as an ox.</p>
1020	<p>For it ne was non horse-knave, Tho thei sholden in honde have, That he ne kam thider, the leyk to se. Biforn here fet thanne lay a tre, And pulten with a mikel ston The starke laddes, ful god won. The ston was mikel and ek gret, And al so hevi so a neth; Grundstalwyrthe man he sholde be That mouthe liften it to his kne;</p>	<p>It would have to be a very hardy man Who might lift it to his knees. There was neither cleric nor priest Who might bring it to his chest. With it the athletes shot-put, Those who had come with the barons. Whoever there who could throw it Further than an inch or more, Whether he was young or old,</p>
1030	<p>Was ther neyther clerik ne prest, That mithe liften it to his brest. Therwit putten the chaupniouns That thider comen with the barouns. Hwo so mithe putten thore Biforn another an inch or more, Wore he yung, wore he hold,</p>	<p>Whether he was young or old,</p>

³⁴ *With hire ne wolde he leyke ne lye*: The *hire* is not clear and may simply be the *mayden* (996). TEAMS suggests that the *hire* is a 'woman for hire,' or at least a promiscuous woman who would frequent men's summer games. Some editors read 'whore,' but there is no consensus that *hire* had this meaning or pronunciation in early ME.

³⁵ Skeat remarks that a parliament was held in Lincoln in 1300 (note to 1006). Skeat's line numbering slightly differs from that of TEAMS. The poet mentions a summoned assembly in 1002-7 and the *barouns* (1033) whom the athletes accompany, but otherwise ignores any political deliberations. The point is surely that Godrich's cynical 'parliament' is also no more than a display of games.

³⁶ *Blac and brown*: "Every type of ordinary person." See the note to *Amis and Amiloun* (2474) and *Athelston* (291).

1040	<p>He was for a kempel told. Al so the stoden and ofte streden, The chaumpiouns and ek the ladden, And he maden mikel strout Abouten the altherbeste but, Havelok stod and lokede thertil, And of puttingge he was ful wil, For nevere yete ne saw he or Putten the stone or thanne thor. Hise mayster bad him gon therto - Als he couthe therwith do. Tho hise mayster it him bad, He was of him sore adrad.</p>	<p>Was considered a hero. And so they stood and watched intently, The athletes and the lads as well, And they made a heated argument About who had made the greatest shot. Havelock stood and looked at it But he knew nothing about putting, For he had never seen Or thrown the stone before then. His master told him to go try As he was best able to do. Though his master asked him, He was sorely doubtful of himself.</p>
1050	<p>Therto he stirte sone anon, And kipte up that hevi ston That he sholde putten withe; He putte at the firste sithe, Over alle that ther wore Twelve fote and sumdel more. The chaumpiouns that put sowen; Shuldreden he ilc other and lowen. Wolden he nomore to putting gange, But seyde, “Thee dwellen her to longe!”</p>	<p>With that, he got up quickly And plucked up that heavy stone Which he was supposed to put. On the first try he threw it Farther than anyone who was there, Twelve feet and somewhat more. When the champions saw that shot, They jostled each other and laughed. They would not put any more, only saying “‘We’ve hung around here too long!’”³⁷</p>
1060	<p>This selkouth mithe nouth ben hyd: Ful sone it was ful loude kid Of Havelok, hw he warp the ston Over the laddes everilkon, Hw he was fayr, hw he was long, Hw he was with, hw he was strong; Thoruth England yede the speche, Hw he was strong and ek meke; In the castel, up in the halle, The knithes speken therof alle,</p>	<p>This marvel could not be hidden for long. Very soon the news was loudly told About Havelock, how he threw the stone Farther than each of the lads; How he was handsome, how he was tall, How he was manly, how he was strong. Throughout England the news spread, How he was mighty and gentle as well. In the castle, up in the hall, The knights talked about it all</p>
1070	<p>So that Godrich it herde wel: The speken of Havelok, everi del - Hw he was strong man and hey, Hw he was strong, and ek fri, And thouthte Godrich, “Thoru this knave Shal ich Engelond al have, And mi sone after me; For so I wile that it be. The King Athelwald me dide swere Upon al the messe gere</p>	<p>So that Godrich heard it well. They spoke of Havelock, every detail— How he was a strong man, and high, How he was strong and generous too, And Godrich thought, “Through this peasant I will have all England For myself and for my son after, For it’s my wish to have it happen. King Athelwald made me swear Upon all the mass finery</p>
1080	<p>That I shude his douter yeve The hexte that mithe live, The beste, the fairest, the strangest ok - That gart he me sweren on the bok. Hwere mithe I finden ani so hey, So Havelok is, or so sley? Thou I southe hethen into Inde,</p>	<p>That I would give his daughter The <i>highest</i> that might live, The best, the fairest, and the strongest as well. He made me swear that on the Bible. Where could I find anyone so ‘high’ As Havelock is, or so able? As Havelock is, or so able? If I searched from here to India,</p>

³⁷ *Thee*: Some editors read *we* in the manuscript here, as there is some textual confusion between *þe* and *pe*.

	So fayr, so strong, ne mithe I finde. Havelok is that ilke knave That shal Goldeboru have!”	I would not find someone so fair, so mighty. Havelock is the very boy That Goldeboro will have!”
1090	This thouthe with trechery, With traysoun, and wit felony; For he wende that Havelok wore Sum cherles sone and no more; Ne schulde he haven of Engellond Onlepi foru in his hond With hire that was therof eyr, That bothe was god and swithe fair. He wende that Havelok wer a thral, Therthoru he wende haven al	He schemed this out with treachery, With treason, and with felony, For he surmised that Havelock was Some peasant’s son and no more. Nor would he get one furrow Of England into his hand With Godeboro, who was the rightful heir, Who was both good and fair, For he assumed that Havelock was a serf. For this reason he planned to keep all Of England, which was her right. He was worse than Satan, Who Jesus Christ locked in the earth. He deserves to be hanged on an oak! Soon after he sent for Goldeboro, Who was both beautiful and courteous, And had her brought to Lincoln. He had bells for her rung alongside, And made great celebration over her, But nonetheless he was full of deceit. He said that he would give her The fairest man that might live. She answered at once and said, By Christ and by Saint John, That she would wed no man, Nor would any man bring her to bed Unless he were a king or king’s heir, No matter how fair he was. Godrich the earl was furious That she had sworn such an vow And said, “Do you think you will be Queen and lady over me? You will have a beggar. You will not have any other king! You will marry my cook’s servant. You will not have any other lord! Damn whoever who gives you someone else While I am alive! Tomorrow you will be married And bedded together, in spite of you!” Goldeboro cried and was in distress. She would have died if she had her will. In the morning, when day had sprung And the early bells at the church were rung, That Judas, who was worse than Satan, Sent for Havelock and said, “Mister, would you like a wife?” “No,” cried Havelock, “not by my life! What could I do with a wife? I cannot give her food, clothes, or shoes. Where would I bring a woman?”
1100	In Engelond, that hire rith was. He was werse than Sathanas That Jhesu Crist in erthe stoc. Hanged worthe he on an hok! After Goldeboru sone he sende, That was bothe fayr and hende, And dide hire to Lincolne bringe. Belles dede he ageyn hire ringen, And joie he made hire swithe mikel; But netheless he was ful swikel.	
1110	He saide that he sholde hire yeve The fayreste man that mithe live. She answerede and saide anon, By Crist and bi Seint Johan, That hire sholde noman wedde Ne noman bringen hire to bedde But he were king or kinges eyr, Were he nevere man so fayr. Godrich the erl was swithe wroth That she swor swilk an oth, And saide, “Whether thou wilt be Quen and levedi over me? Thou shalt haven a gadeling - Ne shalt thou haven non other king! Thee shal spusen mi cokes knave - Ne shalt thou non other louered have. Datheit that thee other yeve Everemore hwil I live! Tomorwe ye sholen ben weddeth, And maugre thin togidere beddeth.	
1120	Goldeboru gret and yaf hire ille; She wolde ben ded bi hire wille. On the morwen hwan day was sprungen And day-belle at kirke rungen, After Havelok sente that Judas That werse was thanne Sathanas, And saide, “Maister, wilte wif?” “Nay,” quoth Havelok, “bi my lif! Hwat sholde ich with wif do? I ne may hire fede ne clothe ne sho.	
1130	Wider sholde ich wimman bringe?	
1140		

<p>1150</p> <p>1160</p> <p>1170</p> <p>1180</p>	<p>I ne have none kines thinge - I ne have hws, I ne have cote, Ne I ne have stikke, I ne have sprote, I ne have neyther bred ne sowel, Ne cloth but of an hold whit covel. This clothes that ich onne have Aren the kokes and ich his knave!” Godrich stirt up and on him dong, With dintes swithe hard and strong, And seyde, “But thou hire take That I wole yeven thee to make, I shal hangen thee ful heye, Or I shal thristen uth thin heie.” Havelok was one and was odrat, And grauntede him al that he bad. Tho sende he after hire sone, The fayrest wymman under mone, And seyde til hire, fals and slike, That wicke thrall that foule swike: “But thu this man understonde, I shall flemen thee of londe; Or thou shal to the galwes renne, And ther thou shalt in a fir brenne.” Sho was adrad for he so thrette, And durste nouth the spusing lette; But they hire likede swithe ille, Sho thouthe it was Godes wille - God that makes to growen the korn, Formede hire wimman to be born. Hwan he havede don him, for drede, That he sholde hire spusen and fede, And that she sholde til him holde, Ther weren penies thicke tolde Mikel plenté, upon the bok - He ys hire yaf and she is tok. He weren spused fayre and well, The messe he dede, everi del That fel to spusing, an god clek - The erchebishop uth of Yerk, That kam to the parlement, Als God him havede thider sent.</p>	<p>I have nothing for a home. I have no house, I have no cottage, I have no sticks, I have no twigs for a fire, I have neither bread nor sauce,³⁸ No clothing except an old white cloak. These clothes that I have on Are the cook’s, and I am his servant.” Godrich jumped up and struck him With hard and strong blows And said, “Unless you take Who I give you as a mate, I will hang you very high, Or I will gouge out your eyes!” Havelock was alone and was afraid, And agreed to all that he ordered. Then Godrich sent for Goldeboru at once, The fairest woman under the moon, And said to her, false and slick, That wicked oaf, that foul traitor: “Unless you accept this man, I will banish you from the land, Or you will be rushed to the gallows, And there you will burn in a fire.” She was terrified, for he threatened her so, And she dared not obstruct the marriage. Though she was very unhappy, She thought it was God’s will, God, who makes the grain grow And who created her to be born a woman. When he had compelled them by fear That he should marry and keep her, And that she should hold to him, There were thick piles of pennies counted, A great plenty, upon the mass book. He gave her tokens and she accepted his.³⁹ They were wedded fair and clear. The mass was performed, every part Related to marriage, by a good cleric— The archbishop of York, Who came to the assembly As God had sent him there.</p>
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³⁸ *Bred ne sowel*: Literally, bread and sauce or anything eaten with bread, but the pairing could have the sense of ‘bread and butter,’ meaning that Havelock has no goods to make a household with.

³⁹ *He ys hire yaf and she is tok*: This opaque line has numerous explanations. Skeat posits that *he* is Godard, who has given Goldeboru the ‘thick pile of pennies’ to ship her off (note to 1174). Garbaty suggests it is a holdover of the Anglo-Saxon *morgengifu*, a present made by the husband to the bride the next morning, which could be made early as a sign of trust, as in the OE *Apollonius of Tyre* (Garbaty’s note to 1173-4). TEAMS gives French & Hale’s explanation that the money is partly the clerk’s payment and partly the bride’s dowry (118). The *ys* may simply be Havelock’s public vows of promise. The Wife of Bath is married at the “chirche dore” (CT III.6), and medieval weddings were community events, normally appended to the church service (see line 1183).

1190	<p>Hwan he weren togidere in Godes lawe, That the folc ful wel it sawe, He ne wisten what he mouthen, Ne he ne wisten what hem douthe, Ther to dwellen, or thenne to gonge. Ther ne wolden he dwellen longe, For he wisten and ful wel sawe That Godrich hem hatede - the devel him hawe!</p>	<p>When they were joined under God's law, So that the people saw it fully, Havelock did not know what to do, Nor did he know where to turn for help, Where to live, or where to go. They could not stay there long, For he understood and saw clearly That Godrich hated them –the Devil take him!</p>
1200	<p>And if he dwelleden ther outh - That fel Havelok ful wel on thouth - Men sholde don his leman shame, Or elles bringen in wicke blame, That were him levere to ben ded. Forthi he token another red: That thei sholden thenne fle Til Grim and til hise sone thre - Ther wenden he altherbest to spede, Hem forto clothe and for to fede.</p>	<p>And if they stayed there unprotected, Havelock worried about foul play. Men might shame his beloved, Or else disgrace her reputation.⁴⁰ To him it would be better to be dead. For this reason he took another course, That they should flee from there To Grim and his three sons. He thought it best to hurry there In order to clothe and feed themselves.</p>
1210	<p>The lond he token under fote - Ne wisten he non other bote - And helden ay the rith sti Til he komen to Grimesby. Thanne he komen there thanne was Grim ded - Of him ne haveden he no red. But hise children alle fyve, Alle weren yet on live, That ful fayre ayen hem neme Hwan he wisten that he keme, And maden joie swithe mikel - Ne weren he nevere ayen hem fikel. On knes ful fayre he hem setten And Havelok swithe fayre gretten, And seyden, “Welkome, louered dere! And welkome be thi fayre fere! Blessed be that ilke thrawe That thou hire toke in Godes lawe! Wel is hus we sen thee on live.</p>	<p>They took to the land on foot, For he knew no other solution, And they kept the right route Until they came to Grimsby. When they arrived Grim was dead. Havelock had had no word about him. But of his five children, All were still alive And took them in very courteously When they learned that he had come, And they made a great celebration. They were never fickle to them! They set themselves on their knees And greeted Havelock elegantly, And said, “Welcome, dear lord! And welcome to your fair companion! Blessed be that very moment When you took her in God's law! It is good for us to see you alive.</p>
1220	<p>Thou mithe us bothe selle and yeve; Thou mayt us bothe yeve and selle, With that thou wilt here dwelle. We haven, louerd, alle gode - Hors, and neth, and ship on flode, Gold and silver and michel auchte, That Grim ure fader us bitauchte. Gold and silver and other fe Bad he us bitaken thee. We haven sheep, we haven swin;</p>	<p>We are yours to sell or give away. You may both give us or trade us, So long as you will stay here. We have, lord, every good thing: Horses and oxen, and a ship on the sea, Gold and silver, and many things That Grim our father left to us. He told us to pass on to you Gold and silver and all other goods. We have sheep, we have pigs;</p>

⁴⁰ Garbaty explains that Havelock is perhaps worried about Godrich exercising the *jus primae noctis*, the lord's legal right to spend the first night with a vassal's bride (note to 1192). Despite little historical evidence that the practice ever actually existed in Europe, it is a recurringly attractive theme in literature from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to *The Marriage of Figaro*.

1230	<p>Bileve her, louerd, and al be thin! Tho shalt ben louerd, thou shalt ben syre, And we sholen serven thee and hire; And hure sistres sholen do Al that evere biddes sho: He sholen hire clothes washen and wringen, And to hondes water bringen; He sholen bedden hire and thee, For levedi wile we that she be.”</p>	<p>Remain here, lord, and all will be yours. You will be lord, you will be sire, And we will serve you and her. And our sisters will do All that she ever bids. They will wash and dry her clothes, And bring water to her hands. They will make a bed for you and her, If that is our lady’s will.”</p>
1240	<p>Hwan he this joie haveden maked, Sithen stikes broken and kraked, And the fir brouth on brenne; Ne was ther spared gos ne henne, Ne the hende ne the drake: Mete he deden plenté make; Ne wantede there no god mete, Wyn and ale deden he fete, And hem made glade and blithe; Wesseyl ledden he fele sithe.</p>	<p>When they had begun the celebration, Kindling was cracked and split, And the fire was stoked into flames. There was no goose or hen spared, Neither duck nor drake. They prepared plenty of meat And did not lack for any good food. They fetched wine and ale, And made the couple glad and at ease, And drank to their health many times.⁴¹</p>
1250	<p>On the nith als Goldeboru lay, Sory and sorwful was she ay, For she wende she were biswike, That she were yeven unkyndelike. O nith saw she therinne a lith, A swithe fayr, a swithe bryth - Al so brith, all so shir So it were a blase of fir. She lokede noth and ek south, And saw it comen ut of his mouth That lay bi hire in the bed.</p>	<p>Yet during the night as Goldeboru lay in bed, She continually felt sorry and sad, For she thought she had been mistreated, That she was married out of her kind. But one night she saw in there a light, So fair, and so clear— As bright, as shining, As if it were a blaze of fire. She looked north and south as well And saw it coming out of his mouth As he lay by her in the bed.</p>
1260	<p>No ferlike thou she were adred! Thouthe she, “What may this bimene? He beth heyman yet, als I wene: He beth heyman er he be ded!” On hise shuldre, of gold red She saw a swithe noble croiz; Of an angel she herde a voyz: ”Goldeboru, lat thi sorwe be! For Havelok, that haveth spuset thee, He, kinges sone and kinges eyr, That bikenneth that croiz so fayr</p>	<p>It is no wonder that she was afraid! She thought, “What does this mean? He will be a nobleman yet, I believe. He will be a nobleman before he is dead!” On his shoulder, in red gold, She saw a majestic cross. From an angel she heard a voice: “Goldeboru, let your sorrows pass! For Havelock, who has married you, Is a king’s son and a king’s heir. That is the meaning of his fair cross.</p>
1270	<p>It bikenneth more - that he shal Denemark haven and Englon d al. He shal ben king strong and stark, Of Engelon d and Denemark - That shal thu wit thin eyne seen, And tho shalt quen and levedi ben!” Thanne she havede herd the stevene</p>	<p>It means more: that he shall Have Denmark and all England. He will be a king, strong and bold, Of England and Denmark. You will see this with your eyes, And you will be a queen and lady!” When she had heard the voice</p>

⁴¹ *Wesseyl*: ‘Wassail’ derives from Old Norse *ves heill* and perhaps OE *wes þu hal*, both meaning ‘Be healthy.’ Although the Romans placed bits of toast into wine to flavor it or mellow the acidity of cheap wines, ‘toast’ was not used in this sense until early Modern English.

1280	<p>Of the angel uth of hevene, She was so fele sithes blithe That she ne mithe hire joie mythe, But Havelok sone anon she kiste, And he slep and nouth ne wiste Hwat that aungel havede seyde. Of his slep anon he brayd, And seide, "Lemman, slespes thou? A selkuth drem dremede me now - Herkne now what me haveth met. Me thouthe I was in Denemark set, But on on the moste hil That evere yete cam I til.</p>	<p>Of the angel from Heaven, She was glad so many times over That she could not contain her joy, But at once kissed Havelock, Who slept and knew nothing Of what the angel had said. In a while he started out of his sleep And said, "Dear, are you asleep? I just dreamed an amazing dream; Listen now to what happened. It seemed as though I was in Denmark, But on one of the highest hills That I ever came to yet.</p>
1290	<p>It was so hey that I wel mouthe Al the werd se, als me thouthe. Als I sat upon that lowe I bigan Denemark for to awe, The borwes and the castles stronge; And mine armes weren so longe That I fadmede al at ones, Denemark with mine longe bones; And thanne I wolde mine armes drawe Til me and hom for to have,</p>	<p>It was so high that it seemed to me I could see all the world. As I sat upon that summit, I began to embrace Denmark, The towns and the strong castles, And my arms were so long That I held everything in Denmark At once with my long limbs! And then I drew my arms back Toward myself and to lift up Everyone who ever lived in Denmark, Holding them fast within my arms. And all the strong castles Began to fall to their knees, And the keys fell at my feet.</p>
1300	<p>Al that evere in Denemark liveden On mine armes faste clyveden; And the stronge castles alle On knes bigunnen for to falle - The keyes fellen at mine fet. Another drem dremede me ek: That ich fley over the salte se Til Engeland, and al with me That evere was in Denemark lyves But bondemen and here wives;</p>	<p>I dreamed another dream too, That I flew over the salty sea to England, And everyone came with me Who was alive in Denmark, Except for bondsmen and their wives. And when I came to England I enclosed it all in my hand, And Goldeborow, I gaf thee. Deus! lemman, what may this be?" Sho answerede and seyde sone: "Jesu Crist, that made mone, Thine dremes turne to joye ⁴²</p>
1310	<p>And that ich com til Engelond - Al closede it intil min hond, And, Goldeborow, I gaf thee. Deus! lemman, what may this be?" Sho answerede and seyde sone: "Jesu Crist, that made mone, Thine dremes turne to joye ⁴² That wite thu that sittes in trone! Ne non strong, king ne caysere So thou shalt be, fo thou shalt bere</p>	<p>My God! Dear, what does this mean?" She answered and soon explained, "Jesus Christ, who made the moon, Will turn your dreams to joy. ⁴² He who sits on the throne will lead you. There are none so mighty, king or emperor, As you will be, for you will wear A crown in England yet. Denmark shall kneel at your feet, And you will, dear, win in full All the castles that are in it. I know it as well as if I had seen it.</p>
1320	<p>In Engelond corune yet. Denemark shal knele to thi fet; Alle the castles that aren therinne Shaltou, lemman, ful wel winne. I woth so wel so ich it sowe,</p>	<p>A crown in England yet. Denmark shall kneel at your feet, And you will, dear, win in full All the castles that are in it. I know it as well as if I had seen it.</p>

⁴² A few lines are missing or defective here, as there is no rhyme for *joye* or *trone*. The referent in 1317 is likely Christ.

1330	<p>To thee shole comen heye and lowe, And alle that in Denemark wone - Em and brother, fader and sone, Erl and baroun, dreng and thayn, Knightes and burgeys and sweyn - And mad king heyelike and wel. Denemark shal be thin evere ilc del - Have thou nouth theroffe douthe, Nouth the worth of one nouth; Theroffe withinne the firste yer Shalt thou ben king of evere il del. But do now als I wile rathe: Nim in wit lithe to Denemark bathe, And do thou nouth on frest this fare - Lith and selthe felawes are.</p>	<p>High and low shall come to you, And all who live in Denmark: Uncle and brother, father and son, Earl and baron, vassal and retainer, Knights and townspeople and servants,⁴³ And you will be made king with great honor. Denmark will be yours, every bit. Do not have any doubt about it, Not the value of a nut! For within one year You will be ruler of every part. But now do as I will advise you: Let's both go to Denmark together And don't put off this task. Ambition and success go together!</p>
1340	<p>For shal ich nevere blithe be Til I with eyen Denemark se, For ich woth that al the lond Shalt thou haven in thin hond. Prey Grimes sones alle thre, That he wenden forth with the; I wot he wilen the nouth werne - With the wende shulen he yerne, For he loven thee hertelike.</p>	<p>For I will never be at peace Until I see Denmark with my own eyes, Because I know that all the land Will be yours in your hand. Insist to all three of Grim's sons That they journey forth with you; I know they will not refuse. They will go eagerly with the wind, For they love you with all their hearts. You can tell that they are quick to act, Wherever in the world they might be. Have them prepare the ship quickly, And see that you don't delay. Procrastinating often brings harm.”</p>
1350	<p>Hwore-so he o worde aren; There ship thou do hem swithe yaren, And loke that thou dwelle nouth - Dwelling haveth ofte scathe wrouth.” Hwan Havelok herde that she radde, Sone it was day, sone he him cladde, And sone to the kirke yede Or he dide any other dede, And bifer the Rode bigan falle, “Croiz” and “Crist” bi to kalle,</p>	<p>When Havelock had heard what she counseled, Soon it was day, soon he dressed himself, And soon he went to the church Before he did any other thing. He fell before the Cross and began to Call upon Cross and Christ, And said, “Lord, who rules all, Wind and water, woods and fields, For the sake of Your holy kindness, Have mercy on me now, Lord! And avenge me yet on my foe Whom I saw slaying my sisters With a knife, before my own eyes, And then would have taken my life, For he ordered Grim To drown me in the sea. He holds my land with great wrong, With great injustice, and with great harm, For I never wronged him in any way</p>
1360	<p>And seyde, “Louerd, that all weldes - Wind and water, wodes and feldes - For the holy milce of you, Have merci of me, Louerd, now! And wreke me yet on mi fo That ich saw biforn min eyne slo Mine sistres with a knif, And sithen wolde me mi lyf Have reft, for in the se Bad he Grim have drenched me.</p>	<p>When Havelock had heard what she counseled, Soon it was day, soon he dressed himself, And soon he went to the church Before he did any other thing. He fell before the Cross and began to Call upon Cross and Christ, And said, “Lord, who rules all, Wind and water, woods and fields, For the sake of Your holy kindness, Have mercy on me now, Lord! And avenge me yet on my foe Whom I saw slaying my sisters With a knife, before my own eyes, And then would have taken my life, For he ordered Grim To drown me in the sea. He holds my land with great wrong, With great injustice, and with great harm, For I never wronged him in any way</p>
1370	<p>He hath mi lond with mikel unrith, With michel wrong, with mikel plith, For I ne misdede him nevere nouth,</p>	<p>He holds my land with great wrong, With great injustice, and with great harm, For I never wronged him in any way</p>

⁴³ *Burgeys*: A burges could be a town magistrate, but often simply meant an urban citizen with a trade. As a member of the nascent middle class the word also led to PDE *bourgeois* (from Old French *borjois*, ‘town-dweller’).

1380	<p>And haved me to sorwe brouth. He haveth me do mi mete to thigge, And ofte in sorwe and pine ligge. Louerd, have merci of me, And late me wel passe the se - Though ihc have theroffe douthe and kare, Withuten stormes overfare, That I ne drenched therine Ne forfaren for no sinne, And bringe me wel to the lond That Godard haldes in his hond, That is mi rith, everi del - Jesu Crist, thou wost it wel!" Thanne he havede his bede seyde, His offrende on the auter leyde, His leve at Jhesu Crist he tok, And at his swete moder ok,</p>	<p>And he has brought me to sorrow! He drove me to beg for my food And to lie in constant sorrow and pain. Lord, have mercy on me, And though I have fears and worries, Let me cross the sea safely And pass over without storms So that I will not be drowned in the water, Nor shipwrecked because of any sin, And bring me sound to the land That Godard grips in his hand, Which is my right, every bit. Jesus Christ, You know it well!" When he had said his prayer And laid his offering on the altar, He took his leave of Jesus Christ And His sweet mother Mary also, And of the Cross that he lay before.</p>
1390	<p>Sithen yede sore grotinde awey. Hwan he com hom, he wore yare, Grimes sones, for to fare Into the se, fishes to gete, That Havelok mithe wel of ete. But Avelok thoughte al another: First he kalde the heldeste brother, Roberd the Rede, bi his name, Wiliam Wenduth and Huwe Raven, Grimes sones alle thre -</p>	<p>Then he went away, weeping bitterly. When he came home they were ready, All of Grim's sons, to set out Into the sea to get fish So that Havelock might eat well. But Havelock had something else in mind. First he called the eldest brother, Robert the Red, by his name, And then William Wende and Hugh Raven, All three of Grim's sons, And said, "Listen now to me all!"</p>
1400	<p>And seyde, "Lithes now alle to me; Louerdinges, ich wile you shewe A thing of me that ye wel knewe. Mi fader was king of Denshe lond - Denemark was al in his hond The day that he was quik and ded. But thanne havede he wicke red, That he me and Denemark al And mine sistres bitawte a thral;</p>	<p>Lordings, I will recount to you Something about me you know well. My father was king of Danish lands. All of Denmark was in his hand The day that he was alive and dead. But then he followed wicked counsel, So that I and all of Denmark And my sisters were entrusted to a servant.</p>
1410	<p>A develes lime he hus bitawhte, And al his lond and al hise auther, For I saw that fule fend Mine sistres slo with hise hend: First he shar a two here throtes, And sithen hem al to grotos, And sithen bad in the se Grim, youre fader, drenchen me. Deplike dede he him swere On bok that he sholde me bere</p>	<p>He trusted an instrument of the devil with us And all his land and all that he owned, For I saw that foul fiend Slay my sisters with his hand! First he cut their throats in two, And then hacked them into bits, And then ordered Grim, your father, To drown me in the sea. He had him solemnly swear On the Bible that he would take me Into the water and sink me in it, And he would take on himself the sin.</p>
1420	<p>Unto the se and drenchen ine, And wolde taken on him the sinne. But Grim was wis and swithe hende - Wolde he nouth his soule shende; Lever was him to be forsworen Than drenchen me and ben forlorn. But sone bigan he forto fle</p>	<p>He would rather be falsely sworn Than drown me and be damned himself. At once he prepared to flee</p>

1430	<p>Fro Denemark for to berthen me. For yif ich havede ther ben funden, Havede he ben slayn or harde bunden, And heye ben hanged on a tre - Havede go for him gold ne fe. Forthi fro Denemark hider he fledde, And me ful fayre and ful wel fedde, So that unto this day Have ich ben fed and fostred ay. But now ich am up to that helde Cumen that ich may wepne welde, And I may grete dintes yeve, Shal I nevere hwil ich lyve</p>	<p>From Denmark in order to protect me, For if I had been found there, He would have been slain or tightly bound, And hanged high on a tree! Neither gold nor money would have helped him. For this he fled away from Denmark And he kept me well and kindly, So that unto this day I have always felt protected and fathered. But now I have come to the age Where I may wield weapons, And I may give great strokes. I will never be glad While I am alive until I see Denmark! I ask you that you will go with me And I will make you rich men. Each of you will have ten castles, And the land that belongs to it, Boroughs, towns, fields, and villages!"</p>
1440	<p>Ben glad til that ich Denemark se! I preie you that ye wende with me, And ich may mak you riche men; Ilk of you shal have castles ten, And the lond that thor til longes -</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>[Havelock and his stepbrothers sell their possessions and fit out their fishing boat to sail to Denmark. There they buy horses and carts and disguise themselves as merchants. Havelock meets a Danish earl, Ubbe, a friend of the late king who opposes Godard's tyranny. Havelock offers him an expensive gold ring as a gift to gain permission to trade there.⁴⁴]</p> <p>.....</p>
1445	<p>Borwes, tunes, wodes, and wonges.</p> <p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>
1625	<p>“With swilk als ich byen shal. Ther of biseche you now leve Wile ich speke with non other reve But with thee, that justise are, That I mithe seken mi ware</p>	<p>Havelock said, “I will trade such things as this, And so I ask your permission now. I will deal with no lower official But you, as you are a justice, So that I might search for my wares⁴⁵</p>
1630	<p>In gode borwes up and down, And faren ich wile fro tun to tun.” A gold ring drow he forth anon - An hundred pund was worth the ston -</p>	<p>In good boroughs up and down, As I travel from town to town.” He then drew out a gold ring— The stone was worth a hundred pounds—⁴⁶</p>

⁴⁴ One entire leaf is missing from the MS here of probably 180 lines. As earlier versions of the narrative are substantially different, only a speculative summary of the action is possible.

⁴⁵ *I mithe seken mi ware*: Havelock perhaps intends a double meaning here, for merchants usually sell wares and he is really ‘seeking’ his lost heritage (Garbaty, note to 1450).

⁴⁶ *An hundred pund*: Like the gold cups Amis and Amiloun exchange, this extravagance for a fisherman’s family is outlandish. According to the UK National Archives website, £100 in 1300 is roughly US\$77,000 in modern money. Hodges gives a laborer’s yearly wage as £2 in 1300. Kenneth Hodges, “Medieval Sourcebook: Medieval Prices,” Fordham University Center for Medieval Studies, accessed 20 June 2010 at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/medievalprices.html#WAGES>

	<p>And yaf it Ubbe for to spede. He was ful wis that first yaf mede; And so was Havelok ful wis here: He solde his gold ring ful dere - Was nevere non so dere sold Fro chapmen, neyther yung ne old.</p>	<p>And gave it to Ubbe for good luck. He is a wise man who gives a gift first, And so Havelock was shrewd here.⁴⁷ He gave his gold ring very dearly; There was never anything so precious given By a merchant, neither young nor old.</p>
1640	<p>That sholen ye forthward ful wel heren, Yif that ye wile the storie heren. Hwan Ubbe havede the gold ring, Havede he yovenet for no thing, Nouth for the borw evere ilk del. Havelok bihel he swithe wel, Hw he was wel of bones maked, Brod in the sholdres, ful wel schaped, Thicke in the brest, of bodi long - He semede wel to ben wel strong.</p>	<p>That you will hear more about, If you wish to listen to the story. When Ubbe had the gold ring, He wouldn't have given it up for anything, Not for every part of the county. He looked over Havelock well, How he was powerfully built, Broad in the shoulders, well-shaped, With a thick chest and a tall body; He appeared to be very strong.</p>
1650	<p>“Deus!” hwat Ubbe, “Qui ne were he knith? I woth that he is swithe with! Betere semede him to bere Helm on heved, sheld and spere, Thanne to beye and selle ware - Allas, that he shal therwith fare! Goddot! Wile he trowe me, Chaffare shal he late be.” Netheles he seyde sone: “Havelok, have thi bone!</p>	<p>“God!” marveled Ubbe, “Why isn't he a knight? I can tell that he is very manly! It would be more fitting for him to wear A helmet on his head with a shield and spear, Rather than buying and selling wares. A shame that he should succeed at that! God knows if he trusted my advice He would let go of trading.” Nevertheless, he soon replied, “Havelock, you have your request, And I strongly advise you</p>
1660	<p>And I ful wel rede thee That thou come and ete with me Today, thou and thi fayre wif That thou lovest al so thi lif. And have thou of hire no drede - Shal hire no man shame bede. Bi the fey that I owe to thee, Ther of shal I me self borw be.” Havelok herde that he bad, And thow was he ful sore drad</p>	<p>That you come and dine with me Today, you and your lovely wife That you love as much as your life. And have no fear for her. No man will attempt to shame her. By the faith that I owe to you, I will myself be your guarantor.”⁴⁸ Havelock heard what Ubbe offered, Though he was sorely afraid To eat with him because of his wife, For he would have rather had his life Taken away than see her name ruined Or have her experience any shame.</p>
1670	<p>With him to ete, for hise wif; For him wore levere that his lif Him wore reft, than she in blame Felle or lauthe ani shame. Hwanne he havede his wille yat, The stede that he onne sat Smot Ubbe with spures faste, And forth away, but at the laste,</p>	<p>When Havelock had given his consent, Ubbe urged the steed that he sat on With taut spurs and he departed. But at the last moment,</p>

⁴⁷ Far from censuring Havelock's bribery of an official, the poet praises his shrewdness. Smithers explains that “a soi-disant merchant might get himself, as an alien, exemption from the payment of local tolls” through such candid palm-greasing. G.V. Smithers, ed., *Havelock* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), xlvi.

⁴⁸ Why Havelock needs repeated guarantees of protection is not clear, although it emphasizes both Goldeboru's vulnerable beauty and nobility and Denmark's general lawlessness under Godard. Skeat claims that Ubbe was a close friend of Birkabeyn based on other traditions (note to 1444), and if Ubbe recognizes his lost son, Havelock is taking a dangerous gamble by trusting him.

1680	<p>Or he fro him ferde, Seyde he, that his folk herde: “Loke that ye comen bethe, For ich it wile and ich it rede.” Havelok ne durste, the he were adrad, Nouth withsitten that Ubbe bad. His wif he dide with him lede - Unto the heye curt he yede. Roberd hire ledde, that was red, That havede tholed for hire the ded Or ani havede hire misseyd, Or hand with ivele onne leyd.</p>	<p>Before he had traveled far He called so that Havelock’s family heard, “See that you both come, For it’s both my desire and my advice!” Though he was anxious, Havelock did not Dare oppose what Ubbe asked. He had his wife follow with him, And they went into the high court. Robert led her, who was well-advised And would have suffered death for her Before anyone shamed her Or laid a hand on her in evil.</p>
1690	<p>Willam Wendut was that other That hire ledde, Roberdes brother, That was with at alle nedes. Wel is him that god man fedes! Than he weren comen to the halle, Biforen Ubbe and hise men alle, Ubbe stirte hem ageyn, And mani a knith and mani a sweyn, Hem for to se and for to shewe.</p>	<p>William Wendut, Robert’s brother, Was the other who accompanied her, Who was bold in all times of need. Fortunate is he who keeps good men! When they had come to the hall Before Ubbe and all his men, Ubbe went up to them, Along with many a knight and servant, In order to see and to inspect them.</p>
1700	<p>Tho stod Havelok als a lowe Aboven that ther inne wore, Rith al bi the heved more Thanne ani that ther inne stod. Tho was Ubbe blithe of mod That he saw him so fayr and hende; Fro him ne mithe his herte wende, Ne fro him, ne fro his wif - He lovede hem sone so his lif. Weren non in Denemark that him thouthe</p>	<p>Havelock stood like a hill then Above those who were present, A good head above Any others who stood inside there. Then Ubbe was in a glad mood When he saw him so handsome and noble. He could not turn his heart away, Not from him, nor from his wife; He loved him as much as his life. There was no one in Denmark he thought He might have loved more.</p>
1710	<p>More he lovede Havelok one Than al Denemark, bi mine wone. Loke now, hw God helpen kan O mani wise wif and man! Hwan it was comen time to ete, Hise wif dede Ubbe sone in fete, And til hire seyde al on gamen, “Dame, thou and Havelok shulen ete samen, And Goldeboru shal ete wit me, That is so fayr so flour on tre.</p>	<p>He had more affection for Havelock alone Than for all Denmark, by my word. See now how God can help Many a prudent woman and man! When the time to eat had come, Ubbe fetched his own wife inside, And said to her in joking, “My lady, you and Havelock will eat together, And I will dine with Goldeboru, Who is as beautiful as a flower on a tree.</p>
1720	<p>In al Denemark is wimman non So fayr so sche, by Seint Johan.” Thanne were set and bord leyd, And the beneysun was seyde, Biforn hem com the beste mete That king or cayser wolde ete: Kranes, swannes, veneysun,</p>	<p>In all of Denmark there’s no woman As pretty as her, by Saint John!” When the table was laid and set, And the blessing was said, Before them came the best dinner That a king or emperor could eat— Cranes, swans, venison,</p>

1730	<p>Lax, lampreys, and god sturgun, Pymment to drinke and god claré, Win hwit and red, ful god plenté - Was ther inne no page so lite That evere wolde ale bite. Of the mete forto telle Ne of the win bidde I nout dwelle; That is the storie for to lenge - It wolde anuye this fayre genge. But hwan he haveden the kilthing deyled And fele sithe haveden wosseyled, With gode drinkes seten longe, And it was time for to gonge,</p>	<p>Salmon, lamprey, and fine sturgeon, Spiced wine, and wine with honey,⁴⁹ And white and red wine in plenty. There was no page there so low That he had to bite down ale once.⁵⁰ But as for the food served, Or the wine offerred, I won't dwell on it; That will make the story far too long And it would annoy this fine gathering. But when they had shared every thing,⁵¹ And had made toasts many times, Sitting a long time with fine drinks, It was time for each man</p>
1740	<p>Ilk man to ther he cam fro, Thouthe Ubbe, "If I late hem go, Thus one foure, withuten mo, So mote ich brouke finger or to, For this wimman bes mikel wo! For hire shal men hire louerd slo." He tok sone knithes ten, And wel sixti other men Wit gode bowes and with gleives, And sende hem unto the greyves,</p>	<p>To go back where he came from. Ubbe thought, "If I let these four go On their own, with no more, As sure as I have fingers and toes This woman will cause great trouble! For her, men will slay her lords." At once he gathered ten knights, And a good sixty other men With strong bows and with spears, And sent them to the watchman's place</p>
1750	<p>The beste man of al the toun, That was named Bernard Brun - And bad him als he lovede his lif, Havelok wel yemen and his wif, And wel do wayten al the nith Til the other day that it were lith. Bernard was trewe and swithe with, In al the borw ne was no knith That betere couthe on stede riden, Helm on heved ne swerd bi side.</p>	<p>With the best man of all the town, Who was named Bernard Brown. And he ordered him, as he loved his life, To guard Havelock and his wife well, And to keep watch all the night Until the next day when it was light. Bernard was loyal and powerfully strong. In all the area there was no knight Who could better ride a steed, Helmet on head, with a sword by his side.</p>
1760	<p>Havelok he gladlike understod With mikel love and herte god, And dide greythe a super riche Al so he was no with chinche To his bihove everil del, That he mithe supe swithe wel. Al so he seten and sholde soupe, So comes a ladde in a joupe, And with him sixti other stronge</p>	<p>He gladly took charge of Havelock With great love and kind heart, And prepared a lavish supper, As he was in no way stingy In taking care of Havelock's every need So that they might dine finely. As they were sitting and eating, Along came a youth in an outlaw's jacket, And with him sixty others strong,⁵²</p>

⁴⁹ *Pymment*: See the note to *Bevis of Hampton*, 2126. TEAMS explains that medieval *claré*, spiced wine with honey, is not modern *claret*, red wine.

⁵⁰ Swanton comments that Havelock's rise in status matches his diet. Curiously, ale is here treated as unworthy of the earl's court, whereas the narrator begins by asking for a cup of it (14). Michael Swanton, *English Literature Before Chaucer* (New York: Longman Group, 1987), 202.

⁵¹ *Kilthing*: TEAMS defines this word as 'tippling,' but it is not in the MED and even Skeat gives up on a definition. Some editors have *ilk þing*, 'each thing,' which makes more sense as the next line deals with drinking toasts.

1770	With swerdes drawn and knives longe, Ilkan in hande a ful god gleive, And seyde, "Undo, Bernard the greyve! Undo swithe and lat us in, Or thu art ded, bi Seint Austin!" Bernard stirt up, that was ful big, And caste a brinie upon his rig, And grop an ax that was ful god - Lep to the dore so he wore wod, And seyde, "Hwat are ye, that ar ther-oute, That thus biginnen for to stroute?"	With swords drawn and long knives, Each one with a firm lance in hand. And he said, "Open up, watchman Bernard! Open up quick and let us in, Or by Saint Augustine, you're dead!" Bernard, who was very big, started up And threw a coat of mail on his back And grabbed a good, strong ax. He leaped to the door as if he were mad, And shouted, "Who are you Who are out there making such a noise? Get out of here fast, dirty thieves! By the Lord who men believe in, If I have to throw the door open, Some of you I will drop dead, And the rest I will throw In fetters and bind up tightly!" "What did you say?" said one lad. "Do you think that we're afraid? We will go through this door Before long, you oaf, in spite of you!" At once he gripped a giant stone And let it fly with great force Against the door, breaking it apart. Havelock saw that, and ran up And soon drew out the door bar, Which was huge and rough enough, And flung the door open wide And said, "Here I stand waiting now! Come to me fast! Damn any of you who runs away!" "No!" said one. "You will pay for that!" And he began to run toward Havelock, And drew out his sword in his hand, Thinking to slay him there. And with him came two others Who would have ended his life. Havelock lifted up the door bar, And with one blow he killed all three. There were none of them whose brains Did not lie there under the stars. The fourth one that he met next He greeted with the bar against his head, So that he made the right eye
1780	Goth henne swithe, fule theves, For, bi the Louerd that man on leves, Shol ich casten the dore open, Summe of you shal ich drepen, And the othre shal ich kesten In feteres and ful faste festen! "Hwat have ye seid?" quoth a ladde, "Wenestu that we ben adradde? We shole at this dore gonge Maugre thin, carl, or outh longe."	
1790	He gripen sone a bulder ston And let it fleye, ful god won, Agen the dore, that it to-rof. Avelok it saw, and thider drof And the barre sone ut drow, That was unride and gret ynow, And caste the dore open wide And seide, "Her shal I now abide! Comes swithe unto me - Datheynt hwo you henne fle!"	
1800	"No," quodh on, "that shaltou coupe;" And bigan til him to loupe, In his hond his swerd ut drawe, Havelok he wende thore have slawe, And with him comen other two That him wolde of live have do. Havelok lifte up the dore tre And at a dint he slow hem thre. Was non of hem that hise hernes Ne lay ther ute ageyn the sternes.	
1810	The ferthe that he sithen mette Wit the barre so he him grette Bifor the heved that the rith eye	

⁵² The number of attackers in the English version is pumped up considerably from six to sixty to emphasize Havelock's valor. Additionally, in the French *Lai d'Aueloc* Havelock's assailants are motivated by lust for his wife, but here they are murderous thieves. The scene has puzzled scholars as evidently they are the same sixty men that Ubbe sends to protect Havelock (1747), though the poet gives no suggestion that Ubbe is complicit. They may also simply be different people, as sixty was often used to mean an indefinite number. Susie I. Tucker, "'Sixty' as an Indefinite Number in Middle English," *Review of English Studies* 25:98 (1949): 152-153. See also the notes to lines 1929 and 2045.

1820	<p>Ut of the hole made he fleye, And sithe clapte him on the crune So that he stan ded fel thor dune. The fifte that he overtok Gaf he a ful sor dint ok, Bitween the sholdres ther he stod, That he spen his herte blod.</p>	<p>Fly out of the socket, And then clapped him on the head So that he fell down stone dead. The fifth that he overtook He gave a painful blow as well, Between the shoulders where he stood, So that his heart's blood was spent.</p>
1830	<p>The sixte wende for to fle, And he clapte him with the tre Rith in the fule necke so That he smot hise necke on to. Thanne the sixe weren doun feld, The seventh brayd ut his swerd And wolde Havelok riht in the eye; And Havelok let the barre fleye And smot him sone agheyn the brest, That havede he nevere schrifte of prest</p>	<p>The sixth turned to run away, And he slapped him with the bar Right on the full shoulder, So that he broke his neck in two. When the sixth was brought down, The seventh whipped out his sword, Wanting to strike Havelock right in the eye, And Havelock sent the bar flying And hit him at once against the chest. He had no time for a priest's rites, For he was dead in less time Than men might run a mile.</p>
1840	<p>For he was ded on lesse hwile Than men mouthe renne a mile. Alle the othere weren ful kene; A red they taken hem bitwene That he sholde him bihalve, And brisen so that wit no salve Ne sholde him helen leche non. They drowen ut swerdes, ful god won, And shoten on him so don on bere Dogges that wolden him to-tere, Thanne men doth the bere beyte. The laddes were kaske and teyte And umbiyeden him ilkon. Sum smot with tre and sum wit ston, Summe putten with gleyve in bac and side And yeven wundes longe and wide In twenti stedes and wel mo, Fro the croune til the to. Hwan he saw that, he was wod And was it ferlik hw he stod!</p>	<p>All the others were very determined. They made a plan among themselves That they would surround him And batter him, so that no salve Of a doctor's would heal him. They drew out swords, a large number, And rushed on him just like dogs That intend to tear apart a bear When men watch bear-baiting.⁵³ The thugs were keen and quick, And each one surrounded him. Some struck with branches and some with stones. Some put knives in his back and sides And inflicted wounds long and wide In twenty places and many more, From the head to the toe. When Havelock saw that, he was made mad, And it was a miracle how he stood!</p>
1850	<p>For the blod ran of his sides So water that fro the welle glides. But thanne bigan he for to mowe With the barre, and let hem shewe Hw he couthe sore smite; For was ther non, long ne lite, That he mouthe overtake, That he ne garte his croune krake, So that on a litel stund,</p>	<p>For the blood ran down his sides Like water flowing from the well. But then he began to mow them down With the bar, and to show them How he could strike painfully. For there were none, tall or short, That he might overtake Who did not have their heads cracked, So that within a little while</p>

⁵³ *Bere beyte*: Bear baiting was a savagely violent 'sport' in which a bear would be chained to a stake and trained dogs would be set on. Bets would be taken and dogs would be replaced as they were mauled until the bear succumbed (Garbaty, note to 1659-61). Henry VIII was not surprisingly a fan and the games were popular until their prohibition in 1835. Cockfighting, a similar blood-sport, still enjoys popularity in parts of the world. See also line 2330.

1860	<p>Felde he twenti to the grund. Tho bigan gret dine to rise, For the laddes on ilke wise Him asayleden with grete dintes, Fro fer he sto[n]den him with flintes, And gleyves schoten him fro ferne, For drepen him he wolden yerne; But dursten he newhen him nomore Thanne he bor or leun wore. Huwe Raven that dine herde, And thowthe wel that men misferde</p>	<p>He dropped twenty to the ground. Then a great din began to rise, For the lads attacked him In every way with great blows. From a distance they stood and flung Flintstones and knives at him, For they were eager to kill him, But they dared not get any nearer him Than if he were a boar or a lion. Hugh Raven heard that clamor And knew full well that men were Acting wrongly against his lord for his wife.</p>
1870	<p>With his louerd for his wif And grop an ore and a long knif, And thider drof al so an hert, And cham ther on a litel stert And saw how the laddes wode Havelok his louerd umbistode, And beten on him so doth the smith With the hamer on the stith. “Allas!” hwat Hwe, “that I was boren! That evere et ich bred of koren!</p>	<p>He grabbed an oar and a long knife, And rushed out like a stag deer And arrived there in a short moment, And saw how the crazed outlaws Surrounded his lord Havelock And beat on him like the smith Does with the hammer on the anvil. “Alas,” cried Hugh, “that I was ever born And ever ate bread from grain, To see this sorrow here!</p>
1880	<p>That ich here this sorwe se! Roberd! Willam! Hware ar ye? Gripeth ether unker a god tre And late we nouth these doges fle Til ure louerd wreke be. Cometh swithe, and folwes me: Ich have in honde a ful god ore - Datheit wo ne smite sore!” “Ya! leve, ya!” quod Roberd sone, “We haven ful god lith of the mone.”</p>	<p>Robert, William, where are you? Both of you, grab a good club And we will not let these dogs escape Until our lord is avenged! Come quickly, and follow me. I have a good strong oar in my hand; Damn anyone who isn’t hit hard!” “Here! Brother, here!” said Robert quickly, “We have a good light from the moon.”</p>
1890	<p>Roberd grop a staf strong and gret, That mouthe ful wel bere a net, And Willam Wendut grop a tre Mikel grettere than his the, And Bernard held his ax ful faste I seye was he nouth the laste! And lopen forth so he weren wode To the laddes ther he stode, And yaf hem wundes swithe grete; Ther mithe men wel se boyes bete,</p>	<p>Robert seized a staff, strong and huge, Which might well have carried a cow, And William Wendut grabbed a club Much thicker than his own thigh, And Bernard held his ax firmly. I say he wasn’t the last out! And they leaped forth, as if they were berserk, Toward the attackers where they stood, And gave them harsh wounds. There one could see the thieves beaten, And the ribs in their sides broken, And Havelock avenged on them well.</p>
1900	<p>And ribbes in here sides breke And Havelok on hem wel wreke. He broken armes, he broken knes, He broken shankes, he broken thes. He didde the blod there renne dune To the fet rith fro the crune, For was ther spared heved non. He leyden on hevedes ful god won, And made croune breke and crake Of the broune and of the blake.</p>	<p>They broke arms, they broke knees, They broke legs, they broke thighs; They made the blood run down Right from their foreheads to their feet, For not one head was spared. They laid on a great number of men, And made skulls break and crack On every kind of fighter.</p>
1910	<p>He maden here backes al so bloute Als here wombes and made hem rowte Als he weren kradelbarnes -</p>	<p>They beat their backs as soft As their insides and made them roar Like they were babies in cradles,</p>

	<p>So dos the child that moder tharnes. Datheite the recke! For he it servede. Hwat dide he thore? Weren he werewed. So longe haveden he but and bet With neves under hernes set That of tho sixti men and on Ne wente ther away lives non.</p>	<p>Like the child that loses its mother. Damn whoever cares! They deserved it! What business had they there? They were mauled! They battered and beat them, With fists set on their brains, For so long that of the sixty-one men, None went their way alive.</p>
1920	<p>On the morwen, hwan it was day, Ilc on other wirwed lay Als it were dogges that weren hinged; And summe leye in dikes slenget, And summe in gripes bi the her Drawen ware and laten ther. Sket cam tiding intil Ubbe That Havelok havede with a clubbe Of hise slawen sixti and on Sergaunz, the beste that mihten gon.</p>	<p>In the morning, when it was day Each lay mangled on the other As if they were dogs that were hanged. And some lay slung in ditches, And some in trenches, Dragged by their hair and left there. The news came fast to Ubbe That Havelock had, with a club, Slain sixty-one of his retinue— Sergeants, the best that might serve.⁵⁴</p>
1930	<p>“Deus,” quoth Ubbe, “Hwat may this be? Betere is I nime miself and se That this baret on hwat is wold Thanne I sende yunge or old; For yif I sende him unto, I wene men sholde him shame do, And that ne wolde ich for no thing. I love him wel, bi Heveneking - Me wore levere I wore lame Thanne men dide him ani shame</p>	<p>“My God,” said Ubbe, “what is this about? It would be better to go myself, and see What this trouble is about, Than to send someone, young or old. For if I send him to Havelock, I expect men would take revenge, And I would not have that for anything. I love him well, by Heaven’s king! I would rather be crippled Than have men do him any shame, Or seize or lay hands on him rudely, Or speak abuse to him.”</p>
1940	<p>Or tok or onne handes leyde Unormelike or shame seyde.” He lep up on a stede lith, And with him mani a noble knith, And ferde forth unto the tun, And dide calle Bernard Brun Ut of his hus wan he ther cam; And Bernard sone ageyn nam, Al to-tused and al to-torn, Ner al so naked so he was born</p>	<p>He leaped upon a nimble horse, Along with many a noble knight, And journeyed forth into the town. He called Bernard Brown Out of his house when he came there, And Bernard soon appeared. He was all cut up and torn to pieces, Nearly as naked as when he was born, And all bruised on the back and thighs. Ubbe said, “Bernard, what’s wrong with you? Who has hurt you so foully, To be ripped apart and almost naked?”</p>
1950	<p>And al to-brised, bac and the. Quoth Ubbe, “Bernard, hwat is thee? Hwo haves thee thus ille maked, Thus to-riven and al mad naked?” “Louerd, merci,” quot he sone, “Tonicht, al so ros the mone, Comen her mo than sixti theves With lokene copes and wide sleeves, Me for to robben and to pine, And for to drepe me and mine.</p>	<p>“Mercy, my lord!” he answered at once. “Last night, as the moon rose, More than sixty thieves showed up here, With fastened cloaks and wide sleeves, To rob and torment me, And to slay me and my family!</p>
1960	<p>Mi dore he broken up ful sket,</p>	<p>They broke apart my door in a rush,</p>

⁵⁴ *Sergaunz*: In medieval usage a *sergeant* was any armed attendant or officer with a protective or guarding function. The line again suggests that the outlaws who attack Bernard Brun and Ubbe’s retinue are the same men.

	<p>And wolde me binden hond and fet. Wan the godemen that sawe, Havelok and he that bi the wowe Leye, he stirten up sone onon And summe grop tre and sum grop ston And drive hem ut, thei he weren crus, So dogges ut of milne-hous. Havelok grop the dore-tre, And a dint he slow hem thre.</p>	<p>And would have bound me hand and foot. When those gentlemen saw that, Havelock, and those lying by the wall, They got up right away, And some grabbed trees, and some took stones, And though they were fierce, they drove them out Like dogs out of a mill-house. Havelock gripped the door bar, And with one blow he killed three of them.</p>
1970	<p>He is the beste man at nede That everemar shal ride stede - Als helpe God, bi mine wone A thousand men his he worth one! Yif he ne were, ich were now ded - So have ich don mi soule red! But it is of him mikel sinne: He maden him swilke woundes thrinne That of the altherleste wounde Were a stede brouht to grunde.</p>	<p>He is the best man in need Who will ever ride a steed! So help me God, by my word, He is worth a thousand men! If not for him I would be dead now, As sure as I trust my own soul. But as for him, it is a great sin. They gave him three wounds so harsh That the very least of them Would bring a horse to the ground.</p>
1980	<p>He haves a wunde in the side With a gleyve ful unride; And he haves on thoru his arum Ther of is full mikel harum; And he haves on thoru his the - The unrideste that men may se. And othe wundes haves he stronge, Mo than twenti, swithe longe. But sithen he havede lauth the sor Of the wundes, was nevere bor</p>	<p>He has an ugly gash in his side From a lance, And he has a wound through the arm Which has caused him great harm, And he has one through his thigh, The most horrible that men might see. And he has other serious injuries, More than twenty, just as severe. But after he felt the pain of the wounds, There was never a wild boar That fought as he fought then!</p>
1990	<p>That so fauth, so he fauth thanne! Was non that havede the hernepanne So hard that he ne dede al to-cruhsse And al to-shivere and al to-frusshe. He folwede hem so hund dos hare - Datheynt on he wolde spare, That ne made hem everilkon Ligge stille so doth the ston. And ther nis he nouth to frie For other sholde he make hem lye</p>	<p>There was none who heaved on skulls So hard as he completely crushed, Shattered, and smashed them. To Hell with anyone he might spare! He chased them like a hound does a hare, So that he made each one of them Lie still like a stone. And there is nothing to blame him for, For they either had to lie dead by his hand Or they would have slain him, Or totally hacked or ripped him apart!</p>
2000	<p>Ded, or thei him havede slawen, Or al to-hewen or al to-drawen. “Louerd, havi nomore plith Of that ich was grethed tonith. Thus wolde the theves me have reft; But, God thank, he havenet sure keft! But it is of him mikel scathe - I woth that he bes ded ful rathe.” Quoth Ubbe, “Bernard, seyst thou soth?” “Ya, sire, that I ne leye o tooth!</p>	<p>My lord, I have no more trouble From what threatened me last night. The thieves would have robbed me, But, thank God, they surely paid for it! But it is a great pity about Havelock. I believe that he will soon be dead.” Ubbe said, “Bernard, is this the truth?” “Yes, sire, I do not make false oaths!”⁵⁵</p>

⁵⁵ *That I ne leye o tooth*: Word division in the MS is unclear. TEAMS suggests the idiom ‘I do not lie through my teeth,’ but this spelling of *tooth* is not in the MED. Skeat has *that ine lepe oth* but the phrase makes no sense. Some give *leye othe*, ‘lie’ + ‘oath,’ which seems to work here.

2010	<p>Yif I, louerd, a word leye, Tomorwen do me hengen heye.” The burgeys that ther bi stode thore Grundlike and grete othes swore, Litle and mikle, yunge and holde, That was soth that Bernard tolde - Soth was that he wolden him bynde, And trusse al that he mithen fynde Of hise in arke or in kiste That he mouthe in seckes thriste.</p>	<p>If I lie one word, my lord, Tomorrow have me hanged high!” The townspeople who stood nearby, Low and great, young and old, Swore great and solemn oaths That it was true what Bernard said. It was true that they wanted to tie him up And carry off all they might find of his In coffers or in chests That they would jam into sacks.</p>
2020	<p>“Louerd, he haveden al away born His thing, and himself al to-torn, But als God self barw him wel, That he ne tinte no catel. Hwo mithe so mani stonde ageyn Bi nither-tale, knith or swein? He weren bi tale sixti and ten - Starke laddes, stalworthi men, And on the mayster of hem alle, That was the name Griffin Galle.</p>	<p>“My lord, they would have taken All he had, with himself torn apart, But God Himself has preserved him well So that he has not lost any goods. Who could stand against so many men In the night-time, knight or peasant? They were seventy in count, Strong men, rugged men, And one was the master of them all, Who had the name Griffin Galle. Who could stand against so many, Except this man from faraway lands, Who has killed them with a door bar? May he have great joy! May God give him wealth to wield, Both in town and in the fields as well. The food he eats is well spent!”</p>
2030	<p>Hwo mouthe ageyn so mani stonde, But als this man of ferne londe Haveth hem slawen with a tre? Mikel joie have he! God yeve him mikel god to welde, Bothe in tun and ek in felde: Wel is set the mete he etes.” Quoth Ubbe, “Doth him swithe fete, That I mouthe his woundes se, If that he mouthen holed be;</p>	<p>Ubbe said, “Have him brought quickly, So that I may see his wounds, If he may be healed. For if he might still recover, And walk firm on his feet, I myself will dub him a knight Because of his bravery. And if any are alive, those foul thieves Who come from Cain and Eve’s kin,⁵⁶ They will hang by the neck! Curse whoever cares about their death, Since they ran about at night To tie up both townsmen and knights. I have no love for outlaws; I don’t give a berry about them!”</p>
2040	<p>For if he mouthe covere yet And gangen wel upon hise fet, Miself shal dubben him to knith, Forthi that he is so with. And yif he livede, tho foule theves, That weren of Kaym kin and Eves, He sholden hange bi the necke - Of here ded datheit wo recke, Hwan he yeden thus on nithes Tobinde bothe burgmen and knithes!</p>	<p>They will hang by the neck! Curse whoever cares about their death, Since they ran about at night To tie up both townsmen and knights. I have no love for outlaws; I don’t give a berry about them!” Havelock was brought before Ubbe, Who had great concern for him And much sorrow in his heart For his wounds, which were so painful. But when his injuries were examined</p>
2050	<p>For bynderes love ich neveremo - Of hem ne yeve ich nouht a slo.” Havelok was bifore Ubbe browth, That havede for him ful mikel thouth And mikel sorwe in his herte For hise wundes, that we so smerte. But hwan his wundes weren shewed,</p>	<p>But when his injuries were examined</p>

⁵⁶ The descendants of Cain were considered evil, just as Grendel is in *Beowulf* (108). Eve was viewed with similar opprobrium, as she was seen as responsible for the fall of man into sin. The antifeminist literature that Janekyn reads and which vexes the Wife of Bath has a typical excoriation of Eve: “that for hir wikkednesse / was al mankynde broght to wrecchednesse” (*CT* III.715-16).

2060	<p>And a leche havede knawed That he hem mouthe ful wel hele, Wel make him gange and ful wel mele, And wel a palefrey bistride, And wel upon a stede ride, Tho let Ubbe al his care And al his sorwe over fare, And seyde, "Cum now forth with me, And Goldeboru, thi wif, with thee, And thine serjaunz alle thre, For now wile I youre warant be: Wile I non of here frend</p>	<p>And a doctor had determined That he would be able to heal them, To make him walk and talk with vigor, And sit on a saddle-horse And then ride a steed confidently, Then Ubbe let his worries go And his sorrow passed away. He said, "Come back with me now, With Goldeboro, your wife, And your men-at-arms, all three. For I will be your guarantor now.</p>
2070	<p>Moucte wayte thee to slo Also thou gange to and fro. I shal lene thee a bowr That is up in the heye tour, Til thou mowe ful wel go And wel ben hol of al thi wo. It ne shal nothing ben bitwene Thi bowr and min, al so I wene, But a fayr firrene wowe - Speke I loude or spek I lowe,</p>	<p>I want none of the friends Of those you killed with your hand To be able to wait for you in ambush As you go to and fro. I will lend you a chamber Which is up in the high tower Until you can get around And be fully healed from all your woes. There will be nothing between Your room and mine, I know, But a fine fir-wood wall. If I speak loudly or speak quietly, You will hear me well.</p>
2080	<p>Thou shalt ful wel heren me, And than thou wilt thou shalt me se. A rof shal hile us bothe o nith, That none of mine, clerk ne knith, No sholen thi wif no shame bede No more than min, so God me rede!" He dide unto the borw bringe Sone anon, al with joinge, His wif and his sergaunz thre, The beste men that mouthe be.</p>	<p>And whenever you want, you will see me. A roof will cover us both at night, So that none of mine, priest or knight, Will try to cause shame to your wife Any more than mine, so God help me!" He had Havelock brought into the chamber Soon after, with his wife and his Three officers, the best men That might be, all rejoicing.</p>
2090	<p>The first nith he lay ther inne, Hise wif and his serganz thrinne, Aboute the middel of the nith Wok Ubbe and saw a mikel lith In the bowr thar Havelok lay Al so brith so it were day.</p>	<p>The first night that he lay in there, With his wife and three brothers in arms, About the middle of the night Ubbe woke up and saw a great light From the room where Havelock lay, As bright as if it were day.</p>
2100	<p>"Deus!" quoth Ubbe, "Hwat may this be? Betere is I go miself and se Hwether he sitten now and wesseylen, Or ani sotshipe to deyle, This tid nithes also foles; Than birthe men casten hem in poles Or in a grip, or in the fen - Now ne sitten none but wicke men, Glotuns, revres, or wicke theves, Bi Crist that alle folk onne leves!" He stod and totede in at a bord Her he spak anilepi word And saw hem slepen faste ilkon And lye stille so the ston;</p>	<p>"Good lord!" said Ubbe, "What is this? I had better go myself and see Whether he is up now and drinking toasts, Or taking part in some debauchery Like fools do this time of night. Men ought to throw them in pools, Or in a ditch, or in the muddy swamp. No one is up now but wicked men, Gluttons, criminals, or foul thieves, By Christ who all people believe in!" He stood up and peered through a board Before he spoke another word, And saw each one of them fast asleep And lying as still as a stone.</p>
2110	<p>And saw al that mikel lith</p>	<p>He saw all that great light</p>

	<p>Fro Havelok cam that was so brith. Of his mouth it com il del - That was he war ful swithe wel. “Deus,” quoth he, “Hwat may this mene!” He calde bothe arwe men and kene, Knithes and serganz swithe sleie, Mo than an hundred, withuten leye, And bad hem alle comen and se Hwat that selcuth mithe be.</p>	<p>Coming from Havelock, which was so bright. Every bit of it came out of his mouth; He could see that clearly. “My God,” he said, “what can this mean?” He called for men, both timid and bold, His wisest knights and officers, More than a hundred, without a lie, And he ordered them all to come and see What that marvel might be.</p>
2120	<p>Als the knithes were comen alle, Ther Havelok lay ut of the halle, So stod ut of his mouth a glem, Rith al swilk so the sunne-bem, That al so lith was thare, bi hevene, So ther brenden serges sevene And an hundred serges ok That durste I sweren on a book! He slegen faste, alle five, So he weren brouth of live;</p>	<p>As the knights were all arriving, There Havelock lay outside the hall. Out of his mouth streamed a gleam, Exactly like a sunbeam. The light there, by Heaven, Was as if seven tapers were burning And a hundred more candles with it. I would dare to swear it on a Bible! They were fast asleep, all five, As if they had departed from life, And Havelock lay on his left side, With his shining bride in his arms. He lay naked down to the chest;⁵⁷ So fair a two were never created To lie together in a bed.</p>
2130	<p>And Havelok lay on his lift side, In his armes his brithe bride: Bi the pappes he leyen naked - So faire two weren nevere maked In a bed to lyen samen. The knithes thouth of hem god gamen, Hem for to shewe and loken to. Rith al so he stoden alle so, And his bac was toward hem wend, So weren he war of a croiz ful gent</p>	<p>The knights thought it was good fun To look at them and examine them. But just as they all stood there And his back shifted toward them, They were aware of a majestic cross On his right shoulder, so clear, Brighter than gold against the light, That they realized, high and low, It was a royal mark that they saw. It sparkede and shone brightly Just as a good carbuncle stone does, So that men can pick out a penny By its light, it was so brilliant. Then they beheld him closely, So that they finally understood That he was the son of Birkabeyn, The man who was their king, who used To govern and protect them well Against foreign armies: “For there has never been a brother In all Denmark so lich another, So this man, that is so fayr,</p>
2140	<p>On his right shuldre swithe brith, Brithter than gold ageyn the lith, So that he wiste, heye and lowe, That it was kunrik that he sawe. It sparkede and ful brith shon So doth the gode charbuncle ston That men see mouthe se by the lith A peni chesen, so was it brith. Thanne bihelden he him faste, So that he knewen at the laste</p>	<p>On his right shoulder, so clear, Brighter than gold against the light, That they realized, high and low, It was a royal mark that they saw. It sparkled and shone brightly Just as a good carbuncle stone does, So that men can pick out a penny By its light, it was so brilliant. Then they beheld him closely, So that they finally understood That he was the son of Birkabeyn, The man who was their king, who used To govern and protect them well Against foreign armies: “For there has never been a brother In all Denmark so like another As this man, who is so noble,</p>
2150	<p>That he was Birkabeynes sone, That was here king, that was hem wone Wel to yeme and wel were Ageynes uten-laddes here - “For it was nevere yet a brother In al Denemark so lich another, So this man, that is so fayr,</p>	<p>As this man, who is so noble,</p>

⁵⁷ Skeat cites George Ellis’ *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1811), who asserts that the medieval custom was to sleep naked. The emir in *Floris & Blancheflor* describes Floris as a naked boy in Blancheflor’s bed (1411). However, it is unlikely that the poet’s statement that Havelock went *ful naked* (6, 854) means total nudity. More likely, in the heat of summer Havelock and Goldeboru are wearing minimal bedclothing.

<p>2160</p>	<p>Als Birkabeyn; he is hise eyr." He fellen sone at hise fet. Was non of hem that he ne gret - Of joye he weren alle so fawen So he him haveden of erthe drawen. Hise fet he kisten an hundred sythes - The tos, the nayles, and the lithes - So that he bigan to wakne And wit hem ful sore to blakne, For he wende he wolden him slo, Or elles binde him and do wo. Quoth Ubbe, "Louerd, ne dred thee nowth, Me thinks that I se thi thouth.</p>	<p>Is like Birkabeyn. He is his heir." At once they fell at his feet; There were none who did not hail him. They were all as full of joy As if he had risen from the grave. They kissed his feet a hundred times, The toes, the nails, and the tips, So that he began to wake up. On seeing them he blanched painfully, For he thought they would slay him, Or else tie him up and do woe. Ubbe said, "My lord, have no fear! I think that I know your thoughts. Dear son, how fortunate I am To see you with my own eyes. Lord, I offer you homage; I fully ought to be your man. For you are born from Birkabeyn, Who had many knights and servants, And you, lord, shall have the same. Though you are still a young man, You will be king of all Denmark. There was never anyone so strong here. Tomorrow you will receive pledges From every type of man, From all who are in this town, Both from earl and from baron, And from vassal and retainer, And from knight and bondsman. And so you will be made a knight With gladness, for you are so valiant."</p>
<p>2170</p>	<p>Dere sone, wel is me That I thee with eyn se. Manred, louerd, bede I thee - Thi man auht I ful wel to be; For thu art comen of Birkabeyn, That havede mani knith and sweyn, And so shalt thou, louerd, have: Thou thou be yet a ful yung knave Thou shalt be King of al Denemark - Was ther inne never non so stark.</p>	<p>Ubbe said, "My lord, have no fear! I think that I know your thoughts. Dear son, how fortunate I am To see you with my own eyes. Lord, I offer you homage; I fully ought to be your man. For you are born from Birkabeyn, Who had many knights and servants, And you, lord, shall have the same. Though you are still a young man, You will be king of all Denmark. There was never anyone so strong here. Tomorrow you will receive pledges From every type of man, From all who are in this town, Both from earl and from baron, And from vassal and retainer, And from knight and bondsman. And so you will be made a knight With gladness, for you are so valiant."</p>
<p>2180</p>	<p>Tomorwen shaltu manrede take Of the brune and of the blake, Of alle that aren in this tun, Bothe of erl and of barun, And of dreng and of thayn And of knith and of sweyn. And so shaltu ben mad knith Wit blisse, for thou art so with." Tho was Havelok swithe blithe, And thankede God ful fele sithe.</p>	<p>Then Havelock was very pleased, And thanked God many times. In the morning, when it was light, And the gloom of the night was gone, Ubbe had a young messenger Leap on a steed, and go to summon Earls, barons, retainers, vassals, Priests, knights, townspeople, and peasants, That they should come quickly Before him soon, each of them, As much as they loved their lives And their children and their wives. No one dared ignore his command, So that all came at once To find out what the justice wanted. Ubbe soon rose And said, "Listen to me, All together, bound and free! I will relate to you a matter here That you all know clearly. You know well that all this land Was in Birkabeyn's hand</p>
<p>2190</p>	<p>On the morwen, wan it was lith, And gon was thisternesse of the nith, Ubbe dide upon a stede A ladde lepe, and thider bede Erles, barouns, drenges, theynes, Klerkes, knithes, burgeys, sweynes, That he sholden comen anon Biforen him sone everilkon, Al so he loven here lives And here children and here wives.</p>	<p>Ubbe had a young messenger Leap on a steed, and go to summon Earls, barons, retainers, vassals, Priests, knights, townspeople, and peasants, That they should come quickly Before him soon, each of them, As much as they loved their lives And their children and their wives. No one dared ignore his command, So that all came at once To find out what the justice wanted. Ubbe soon rose And said, "Listen to me, All together, bound and free! I will relate to you a matter here That you all know clearly. You know well that all this land Was in Birkabeyn's hand</p>
<p>2200</p>	<p>His bode ne durste he non atsitte That he ne neme for to wite, Sone hwat wolde the justise; And bigan anon to rise And seyde sone, "Lithes me, Alle samen, theu and fre, A thing ich wile you here shauwe That ye alle ful wel knawe. Ye witen wel that al this lond Was in Birkabeynes hond</p>	<p>Ubbe soon rose And said, "Listen to me, All together, bound and free! I will relate to you a matter here That you all know clearly. You know well that all this land Was in Birkabeyn's hand The day that he was alive and dead,</p>
<p>2210</p>	<p>The day that he was quic and ded,</p>	<p>The day that he was alive and dead,</p>

	<p>And how that he, bi youre red Bitauhte hise children thre Godard to yeme, and al his fe. Havelok his sone he him tauhte And hise two douhters and al his auhte. Alle herden ye him swere On bok and on messe gere That he shulde yemen hem wel, Withuten lac, withuten tel.</p>	<p>And how he, by your counsel, Entrusted his three children, and all His property, to Godard to steward. He committed his son Havelock to him, And his two daughters and his holdings. All of you heard him swear On the Bible and on the mass garments That he would protect them well, Without fault, without reproach.</p>
2220	<p>He let his oth all overgo - Evere wurthe him yvel and wo! For the maydnes here lif Refte he bothen with a knif, And him shulde ok have slawen - The knif was at his herte drawn. But God him wolde wel have save: He havede rewnesse of the knave So that he with his hend Ne drop him nouth, that sori fend!</p>	<p>He forget all about his oath! He deserves evil and woe forever! For he deprived both of the maidens Of their lives with a knife, And he would have killed the boy also. The knife was drawn at his heart, But God wished to save him. Godard felt regret for the boy So that he could not kill him With his own hand, that miserable fiend!</p>
2230	<p>But sone dide he a fishere Swithe grete othes swere, That he sholde drenchen him In the se, that was ful brim. Hwan Grim saw that he was so fayr, And wiste he was the rith eir, Fro Denemark ful sone he fledde Intil Englund and ther him fedde Mani winter that til this day Haves he ben fed and fostred ay.</p>	<p>But he soon after forced a fisherman To swear solemn oaths That he would drown him In the sea that was so wild. When Grim saw that he was so fair, And realized he was the rightful heir, They quickly fled from Denmark Into England and kept him there. Many years until this day He has been fed and brought up well.</p>
2240	<p>Lokes hware he stondes her! In al this werd ne haves he per - Non so fayr, ne non so long, Ne non so mikel, ne non so strong. In this middelerd nis no knith Half so strong ne half so with. Bes of him ful glad and blithe, And cometh alle hider swithe, Manrede youre louerd for to make, Bothe brune and the blake -</p>	<p>Look where he stands here! In all this world he has no peer, None so handsome, none so tall, Nor any so great, nor none so strong. On this earth there is no knight Half so mighty, nor half so valiant. Be joyful and glad because of him, And come forward quickly To pledge loyalty to your lord, Every rank of person.</p>
2250	<p>I shal miself do first the gamen And ye sithen alle samen.” O knes ful fayre he him sette - Mouthe nothing him ther fro lette, And bicam is man rith thare, That alle sawen that there ware. After him stirt up laddes ten And bicomem hise men,</p>	<p>I shall first do the honors myself, And you will all follow together after.” Ubbe set himself courteously on his knees; Nothing might prevent him from it. And he became Havelock’s man right there, So that all who were there saw it.⁵⁸ After him ten lads started up And became his men,</p>

⁵⁸ Strohm notes that the swearing of fealty between vassal and lord, *manrede*, was becoming an increasingly practical and contractual matter by the fourteenth century, but in romance there is still the older Germanic ideal of a sacred and emotional bond of loyalty expressed in a public rite. Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1989), 14.

2260	<p>And sithen everilk a baroun That evere weren in al that toun, And sithen drenges, and sithen thaynes And sithen knithes, and sithen sweynes; So that, or that day was gon, In al the tun ne was nouth on That it ne was his man bicomem - Manrede of alle havede he nomen.</p>	<p>And after then each baron Who was ever in that town, And then servants, and then vassals, And then knights, and then peasants, So that before the day was gone, In all the town there was no one Who had not become his man. They had all taken oaths of loyalty.</p>
2270	<p>Hwan he havede of hem alle Manrede taken in the halle, Grundlike dide he hem swere That he sholden him god feyth bere Ageynes alle that worn on live; Ther-yen ne wolde never on strive, That he ne maden sone that oth - Riche and poure, lef and loth.</p>	<p>When he had accepted homage From all of them in the hall, He had them solemnly swear That they would act in good faith Toward all who were alive for him. No one would ever strive against him Who made that oath, Rich or poor, fair or foul.</p>
2280	<p>Hwan that was made, sone he sende Ubbe writes fer and hende, After alle that castel yemede, Burwes, tunes, sibbe an fremde That thider sholden comen swithe Til him and heren tithandes blithe That he hem alle schulde telle. Of hem ne wolde nevere on dwelle, That he ne come sone plattinde; Hwo hors ne havede, com gangande. So that withinne a fourtenith In al Denemark ne was no knith, Ne conestable, ne shireve, That com of Adam and of Eve, That he ne com biforn sire Ubbe - He dredden him so thef doth clubbe.</p>	<p>When that was done, at once he sent Ubbe's summons far and wide To all who ruled a castle, City, or town, friend or stranger, That they should come to him quickly And hear the good news That he would tell them. Of them, not a one delayed So that he did not come hurrying. Whoever had no horse came on foot, So that within a fortnight In all of Denmark, there was no knight, Constable, or sheriff⁵⁹ Who came from Adam and Eve Who did not appear before Sir Ubbe; They feared him as the thief does the club.</p>
2290	<p>Hwan he have den alle the king gret And he weren alle dun-set, Tho seyde Ubbe, "Lokes here Ure louerd swithe dere, That shal ben king of al the lond And have us alle under hond, For he is Birkabeynes sone, The king that was umbe stonde wone Us for to yemen and wel were With sharp swerd and longe spere.</p>	<p>When they had all greeted the king And they were all seated, Then Ubbe said, "Behold Our lord so dear, Who will be king of all the land And have us all in his hand! For he is Birkabeyn's son, The king who once used To rule and protect us well With a sharp sword and long spear.</p>
2300	<p>Lokes now, hw he is fayr: Sikerlike he is hise eyr. Falles alle to his fet - Bicomem hise men ful sket." He weren for Ubbe swithe adrad And dide sone al that he bad.</p>	<p>Look now, how noble he is; Surely he is his heir! Everyone fall to his feet in haste And become his man." They were so in awe of Ubbe That they did all he ordered at once,</p>

⁵⁹ *Ne conestable, ne shireve*: Like *sergeant*, these are terms predating modern police forces. A constable or marshall (*mareschal*) was an officer of the stables. A sheriff was a *shire-reeve*, the lord's representative in maintaining order in the countryside, such as Gamelyn's brother.

2310	<p>And yet he deden sumdel more: O bok ful grundlike he swore That he sholde with him halde, Bothe ageynes stille and bolde That evere wolde his bodi dere. That dide he hem o boke swere. Hwan he havede manrede and oth Taken of lef and of loth, Ubbe dubbede him to knith With a swerd ful swithe brith, And the folk of al the lond Bitauhte him al in his hond, The cunnriche everil del And made him king heylke and wel.</p>	<p>And yet they did something more: They gravely swore on the scriptures That they would stand with him Against both timid and bold, Against whoever wished to harm his body. He had them swear it on the Bible. When he had taken homage and oaths From fair and foul, Ubbe dubbed him a knight With a sword shining bright, And the people of all the land Entrusted everything into his hand, Every part of the kingdom, And made him king, fully and majestically.</p>
2320	<p>Hwan he was king, ther mouthe men se The moste joye that mouhte be - Buttinge with sharpe speres, Skirming with talevaces that men beres, Wrastling with laddes, putting of ston, Harping and piping, ful god won, Leyk of mine, of hasard ok, Romanz reding on the bok. Ther mouthe men here the gestes singe, The glewmen on the tabour dinge.</p>	<p>When he was king, men might see The greatest joy that could be. There was jousting with sharp spears, Fencing with shields that men bear, Wrestling with the lads, shot-putting, Harping and piping, an abundant amount, Games of backgammon and dice as well, And readings from books of romances. There men could hear tales sung, With minstrels beating on a drum.</p>
2330	<p>Ther mouthe men se the boles beyte, And the bores, with hundes teyte. Tho mouhte men se everil glew; Ther mouthe men se hw grim grew - Was nevere yete joye more In al this werd than tho was thore. Ther was so mikel yeft of clothes That, thou I swore you grete othes, I ne wore nouth ther of trod. That may I ful wel swere, bi God!</p>	<p>Men could see bulls baited, And the boars with lively dogs. Men could see every kind of sport And enjoy the growing excitement.⁶⁰ There was never more joy In all this world than there was there. There were so many gifts of clothes⁶¹ That even if I swore you great oaths It would never be believed. That I may swear in full, by God!</p>
2340	<p>There was swithe gode metes And of wyn that men fer fetes, Rith al so mik and gret plenté So it were water of the se. The feste fourti dawes sat - So riche was nevere non so that. The king made Roberd there knith, That was ful strong and ful with, And Willam Wendut hec, his brother, And Huwe Raven, that was that other,</p>	<p>There were costly foods and wines That men bring from distant lands, Just as much and in such abundance As if it were water from the sea. The feast lasted forty days; There was never one so lavish as that. The king made Robert a knight there, Who was strong and valiant, And William Wendut as well, his brother, And Hugh Raven, who was the other.</p>
2350	<p>And made hem barouns alle thre,</p>	<p>He made all three of them barons,</p>

⁶⁰ *Ther mouthe men se hw grim grew*: Skeat asserts in his note to 2320 that this is early evidence of secular theatre, as the celebrants are reenacting the life of Havelock's stepfather, Grim. More likely the poet means ME *grim*, in this context 'excitement or action.'

⁶¹ *So mikel yeft of clothes*: Lavish presents of clothing were common in wealthy households during holidays and celebrations. Chaucer and Philippa received many such gifts as recorded in royal account books of the period (Garbaty, note to 2157-59).

2360	<p>And yaf hem lond and other fe, So mikel that ilker twenti knihtes Havede of genge, dayes and nithes. Hwan that feste was al don, A thusand knihtes ful wel o bon Withheld the king with him to lede, That ilkan havede ful god stede, Helm and sheld, and brinie brith, And al the wepne that fel to knith.</p>	<p>And gave them land and other properties, So much that each had in his retinue Twenty knights by day and night. When the feast was all over, A thousand knights, fully equipped, Escorted the king with him leading them. Each had a strong steed, Helmet and shield, and bright mailcoat, And all the weapons fitting for knights.</p>
2370	<p>With hem ek five thusand gode Sergaunz that weren to fyht wode Withheld he al of his genge - Wile I namore the storie lenge. Yet hwan he havede of al the lond The casteles alle in his hond, And conestables don therinne, He swor he ne sholde never blinne Til that he were of Godard wreken, That ich have of ofte speken.</p>	<p>With them were also five thousand Good men, raring to fight, Who filled out his company. I will not make the story any longer. And yet when he had, from all the land, All the castles in his command, And had placed officers in them, He swore he would never rest Until he had revenge on Godard, Whom I have spoken often enough about.</p>
2380	<p>Half hundred knithes dede he calle, And hise fif thusand sergaunz alle, And dide sweren on the bok Sone, and on the auter ok, That he ne sholde nevere blinne, Ne for love ne for sinne, Til that he haveden Godard funde And brouth biforn him faste bunde. Thanne he haveden swor this oth, Ne leten he nouth, for lef ne loth,</p>	<p>He summoned half a hundred knights, And all his five thousand strongmen, And had them swear at once On the Bible and on the altar as well, That they would never give up, Neither for love nor for sin, Until they had found Godard And brought him before him bound fast. When they had sworn this oath, They would not be delayed for love or hate, So that they went forth in a rush To where Godard was, on the path Where he went hunting, With a retinue that was large and proud.</p>
2390	<p>That he foren swithe rathe Ther he was, unto the pathe Ther he yet on hunting for, With mikel genge and swithe stor. Robert, that was of all the ferd Mayster, girt was wit a swerd, And sat upon a ful god stede, That under him rith wolde wede. He was the firste that with Godard Spak, and seyde, "Hede, cavenard! Wat dos thu here at this pathe? Cum to the king swithe and rathe! That sendes he thee word and bedes, That thu thenke what thou him dedes Whan thu reftes with a knif Hise sistres here lif And sithen bede thou in the se Drenchen him - that herde he! He is to thee swithe grim; Cum nu swithe unto him</p>	<p>Robert, who was master of the militia, Was equipped with a sword And sat upon a mighty steed That would gallop mightily under him. He was the first to speak to Godard, And shouted, "Stop right there, rogue! What are you doing on this path? Come to the king quickly in haste! He sends you word and commands You to think on what you did to him When you took the lives of His sisters with a knife And then ordered him to be drowned In the sea—he heard all about that! He is very displeased with you. Now come to him immediately, The sovereign of this kingdom, You foul man, you wicked traitor! And he will give you your reward, By Christ who bled on the Cross!"</p>
2400	<p>That king is of this kunerike, Thou fule man, thou wicke swike! And he shal yelde thee thy mede, Bi Crist that wolde on Rode blede!" Hwan Godard herde that he ther thrette,</p>	<p>When Godard heard what he threatened,</p>

	<p>With the neve he Robert sette Biforn the teth a dint ful strong. And Robert kipt ut a knif long And smot him thoru the rith arum - Ther of was ful litel harum!</p>	<p>With his fist he struck Robert In the teeth with a good strong blow, And Robert pulled out a long knife And stuck him through the right arm. There was little harm done in that!</p>
2410	<p>Hwan his folk that saw and herde, Hwou Robert with here louerd ferde, He haveden him wel ner browt of live, Ne weren his two brethren and othre five Slowen of here laddes ten, Of Godardes altherbeste men. Hwan the othre sawen that, he fledden, And Godard swithe loude gredde: “Mine knithes, hwat do ye? Sule ye thusgate fro me fle?</p>	<p>When his company saw and heard How Robert had acted with their lord, They nearly would have taken his life If not for his two brothers and five others Who killed ten men Of Godard’s very best troops. When the others saw that, they fled, And Godard shouted loudly, “My knights, what are you doing? Will you abandon me this way? I have kept you and will still keep you! Help me now in this need And do not let my blood be spilled, Or let Havelock do his will with me! If you do so, you shame yourselves And bring yourselves into dishonor!” When they heard that, they came back, And killed a knight and a servant Of the king’s own men, And wounded about ten others.</p>
2420	<p>Ich have you fed and yet shal fede - Helpe me nw in this nede And late ye nouth mi bodi spille, Ne Havelok don of me hise wille! Yif ye it do, ye do you shame And bringeth youself in mikel blame!” Hwan he that herden, he wenten ageyn, And slowen a knit and a sweyn Of the kinges oune men, And woundeden abuten ten.</p>	<p>The king’s men, when they saw this, Rushed on them, high and low, And slaughtered every foot of them Except for Godard alone, whom they would flay Like the thief that men hang, Or a dog that men hurl into a ditch. They tied him up tightly While the bonds would last, So that he roared like a bull That was trapped in a pit With dogs biting and goading. The bonds were not light in weight. They held him so painfully tight That he began to cry for God’s mercy, That they would cut off his hands. They did not stop for that, Until he was bound hand and foot. Cursed be the man who would prevent it! They beat him like men do a bear And threw him on a mangy mare With his nose turned back into its behind.⁶² They led that foul traitor in this way</p>
2430	<p>The kinges men, hwan he that sawe, Scuten on hem, heye and lowe, And everilk fot of hem he slowe, But Godard one, that he flowe, So the thef men dos henge, Or hund men shole in dike slenge. He bunden him ful swithe faste, Hwil the bondes wolden laste, That he rorede als a bole That wore parred in an hole</p>	
2440	<p>With dogges forto bite and beite. Were the bondes nouth to leite - He bounden him so fele sore That he gan crien Godes ore, That he sholde of his hend plette; Wolden he nouht ther fore lette That he ne bounden hond and fet. Datheit that on that ther fore let! But dunten him so man doth bere And keste him on a scabbed mere,</p>	
2450	<p>Hise nese went unto the crice. So ledden he that ful swike</p>	

⁶² *Hise nese went unto the crice*: It was a special humiliation to have a knight ride on a mare or ass, usually facing backwards (Garbaty, note to 2298-99). Here the punishment is especially degrading with the criminal’s nose pressed near the animal’s anus. In the bawdy fabliau *Dame Sirith* the lady similarly fears this penalty if she is exposed as a procurer of prostitutes (247). See also *Havelock*, 2823.

	<p>Til he biforn Havelok was brouth, That he havede ful wo wrowht, Bothe with hungre and with cold Or he were twel winter old, And with mani hevi swink, With poure mete and feble drink, And swithe wikke clothes, For al hise manie grete othes.</p>	<p>Until he was brought before Havelock, To whom he had caused so much woe, Both with hunger and with cold Before he was twelve years old, And with much heavy labor, With poor food and little drink, And with ragged clothing, For all his many fine oaths.</p>
2460	<p>Nu beyes he his holde blame: Old sinne makes newe shame! Wan he was so shamelike Brouth biforn the king, the fule swike! The king dede Ubbe swithe calle Hise erles and hise barouns alle, Dreng and thein, burgeis and knith, And bad he sholden demen him rith, For he knew the swike dam; Everil del God was him gram!</p>	<p>Now he paid for his earlier crime; Old sin makes new shame! When the foul traitor was so Disgracefully brought before the king, The king had Ubbe quickly call His earls and all his barons, Vassal and retainer, citizen and knight, And ordered that they should judge him, For they knew the criminal well. God was angry with him in every way!</p>
2470	<p>He setten hem dun bi the wawe, Riche and pouere, heye and lowe, The helde men and ek the grom, And made ther the rithe dom And seyden unto the king anon, That stille sat so the ston: “We deme that he be al quic flawen And sithen to the galwes drawe At this foule mere tayl, Thoru his fet a ful strong nayl, And thore ben hinged wit two feteres And thare be writen thise leteres: ‘This is the swike that wende wel The king have reft the lond ilk del, And hise sistres with a knif Bothe refte here lif.’ This writ shal henge bi him thare. The dom is demd - seye we namore.” Hwan the dom was demd and give, And he was wit the prestes shrive, And it ne mouhte ben non other, Ne for fader ne for brother, But that he sholde tharne lif, Sket cam a ladde with a knif And bigan rith at the to For to ritte and for to flo; And he bigan tho for to rore</p>	<p>They seated themselves by the wall, Rich and poor, high and low, The old men and the young as well, And made their judgment there. Soon they said to the king, Who sat as still as a stone, “We order that he be flayed alive, And then taken to the gallows, Facing this foul mare’s tail, With a good strong nail through his feet, And be hanged there on two chains,⁶³ With these letters written there: ‘This is the traitor who fully intended To rob the king of every acre of land, And took the lives of both His sisters with a knife.’ This writ will hang by him there. The verdict is given. We have no more to say.” When the judgment was given and approved, And he received rites from the priests, There was no other course, Not for father nor for brother, But that he should lose his life. A lad came swiftly with a knife And began right at the toe To cut and to slice, As if it were a gown or dress,⁶⁴</p>
2480		
2490		

⁶³ Garbaty notes that because hanged criminals were left exposed as a public example, chains were preferred to rope as they would not deteriorate in bad weather (note to 2301).

⁶⁴ *So it were grim or gore*: Garbaty has *so it were gown or gore*, ‘gown or dress’ i.e. tailored by the knife. Though the executioners drive the mare over a rough field, presumably to inflict further agony, Godard is probably dead long before his ride to the gallows. Levine criticizes the poet for his rather prurient glee over

2500	<p>So it were grim or gore, That men mithe thethen a mile Here him rore, that fule file! The ladde ne let nowith forthi, They he criede, “Merci! Merci!” That ne flow him everil del With knif mad of grunden stel. Thei garte bringe the mere sone, Skabbed and ful ivele o bone, And bunden him rith at hire tayl With a rop of an old seyl And drowen him unto the galwes, Nouth bi the gate but over the falwes,</p>	<p>And Godard began to roar then So that men a mile away Might hear him yell, that foul wretch! The youth did not stop at all for that, Even though he cried, “Mercy! Mercy!”, To skin every bit of him With a knife made of ground steel. Soon they had the mare brought, Scabbed and sick to the bone, And bound him right to the tail With a rope from an old sail. They took him to the gallows, Not by the road but over the fields, And hanged him there by the neck. Damn whoever cares! He was false! When he was dead, that devil, All that was his was quickly seized Into the king’s hand, every bit, Lands and tenants and other goods. And the king immediately placed it Into Ubbe’s hand with a fine staff⁶⁵ And said, “I hereby invest you With all the land, and all the properties.” </p>
2510	<p>And henge him thore bi the hals - Datheit hwo recke: he was fals! Thanne he was ded, that Sathanas, Sket was seyed al that his was In the kinges hand ilk del - Lond and lith and other catel - And the king ful sone it yaf Ubbe in the hond, wit a fayr staf, And seyde, “Her ich sayse thee In al the lond, in al the fe.” </p>	<p>Havelock was a mighty king then,⁶⁶ And he reigned more than four years And amassed marvelous treasures. But Goldeboru urged him To journey back to England To conquer her heritage, For which her uncle had exiled And very unjustly disinherited her. The king told her he would do As she had asked him. He had his fleet prepared And sent for his men and his host. After praying, he put to sea And took the queen with him. Havelock had four hundred And eighty ships, full of men. They sailed and steered Until they arrived at Saltfleet.⁶⁷</p>
2519	<p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>
979	<p>Quant Haueloc est rois pussanz, Le regne tint plus de .iiii. anz; Merueillos tresor i auna. Argentille li commanda Qu’il passast en Engleterre Pur son heritage conquerre, Dont son oncle l’out engettée, [Et] A grant tort desheritée. Li rois li dist qu’il fera Ceo qu’ele li comandera. Sa nauie fet a-turner,</p>	<p>.....</p>
990	<p>Ses genz & ses ostz mander. En mier se met quant orré a, Et la reyne od lui mena. Quatre vinz & quatre cenz Out Haueloc, pleines de genz. Tant out nagé & siglé, Q’en Carleflure est ariué.</p>	<p>.....</p>

Godard’s suffering in this scene. Robert Levine, “Who Composed *Havelok* for Whom?”, *Yearbook of English Studies* 22 (1992): 96.

⁶⁵ *Wit a fayr staf*: Havelock likely gives Ubbe a staff of wood to symbolize his authority, as King Edgar gives Bevis (3509), although the poet might more prosaically mean a “staff” of retainers and supporters.

⁶⁶ Editors feel about twenty lines are missing from the English story explaining Havelock’s return to England, although it is not a MS defect. Skeat provides an extract from the *Lai d’Aueloc* of the likely omission (Skeat’s note to line 2530). In the French version Goldeboru’s name is Argentille.

998	Sur le hauene se herbergerent, Par le pais viande quierent.	They anchored near the harbor And looked for provisions on land.
2520	Tho swor Havelok he sholde make, Al for Grim, of monekes blake A priorie to serven in ay Jhesu Crist, til Domesday, For the god he havede him don Hwil he was pouere and ivel o bon. And ther of held he wel his oth, For he it made, God it woth, In the tun ther Grim was graven, That of Grim yet haves the name.	Then Havelock swore that He would establish a priory for Grim Of Benedictine monks to serve Jesus Christ forever, until Judgment Day, For the kindness he had shown him When he was poor and weak. And he would keep his promise in full, For he had it built, God knows, In the town where Grim was buried, Which still has his name. ⁶⁸
2530	Of Grim bidde ich namore spelle. But wan Godrich herde telle, Of Cornwayle that was erl, That fule traytour, that mixed cherl! That Havelok King was of Denemark, And ferde with him, strong and stark Comen Engelond withinne, Engelond al for to winne; And that she that was so fayr, That was of Engelond rith eir,	I have no more to say about Grim. But when Godrich, Who was earl of Cornwall— That foul traitor, that filthy slave— Heard that Havelock was king of Denmark, And that an army, strong and bold, Had come into England, To win all of England, And that the beautiful Goldeboro, Who was England's rightful heir, Had arrived at Grimsby, He was distraught and miserable And said, "What shall I do? God knows, I will have them both executed! I will have them hanged high, As sure as I see with my right eye, Unless they flee my land! What, do they think they will disinherit me?"
2540	Was comen up at Grimesbi, He was ful sorful and sori, And seyde, "Hwat shal me to rathe? Goddoth, I shal do slon hem bathe! I shal don hengen hem ful heye So mote ich brouke my rith eie, But yif he of mi londe fle. Hwat! Wenden he deserite me?" He dide sone ferd ut bidde, That al that evere mouhte o stede	At once he ordered his army out, All who could ever ride a horse Or bear a helmet on their head, A mailcoat on their back, shield and spear, Or carry any other weapon, Battle-ax, scythe, halberd, or spear, Or dagger or a good long knife, So that if they loved life or limb, They should report to him, Bearing their finest weapons, To Lincoln, where he waited, On the seventeenth day of March, So that he might thank them properly.
2550	Ride or helm on heved bere, Brini on bac, and sheld and spere, Or ani other wepne bere, Hand-ax, sythe, gisarm, or spere, Or aunlaz and god long knif, That als he lovede leme or lif, That they sholden comen him to, With ful god wepne yboren, so To Lincolne, ther he lay, Of Marz the sevententhe day,	And if any were so headstrong That they did not come speedily,
2560	So that he couthe hem god thank; And yif that ani were so rank That he thanne ne come anon,	

⁶⁷ Carleflure is near Saltfleet, 30 km south of Grimsby. Charles W. Whistler, preface to *Havelock the Dane: A Legend of Old Grimsby and Lincoln* (T. Nelson and Sons, 1899).

⁶⁸ Skeat posits that this is either Wellow Abbey in Grimsby, established by Henry I in 1110, or the Grimsby Friary, founded around 1290 (note to line 2521). TEAMS asserts that the 'black monks' are Benedictine, but Skeat and Garbaty have Augustinians. See also Smithers' note, p.144.

2570	<p>He swor bi Crist and by Seint Johan, That he sholde maken him thral, And al his ofspring forth withal. The Englishe that herde that, Was non that evere his bode sat; For he him dredde swithe sore, So runcy spore, and mikle more.</p>	<p>He swore by Christ and by Saint John, That he would make him a slave, And all his offspring after the same.⁶⁹ Of the English who heard that, There were none who refused his orders, For they dreaded him so sorely Like the nag fears the spur, and much more. On the day that Godard set for them, They promptly came, fully equipped, To Lincoln with good warhorses And all the weapons that knights carry. When they had arrived, the earl was eager To face against Danish men, And he said, "Listen now, all together! I have not gathered you for fun and games, But for what I will tell you now:</p>
2580	<p>Lokes hware here at Grimesbi Hise uten laddes here comen, And haves nu the priorie numen - Al that evere mithen he finde, He brenne kirkes and prestes binde; He strangleth monkes and nunnes bothe - Wat wile ye, frend, her-offe rede? Yif he regne thusgate longe, He moun us alle overgange, He moun us alle quic henge or slo, Or thral maken and do ful wo</p>	<p>Look where, there at Grimsby, These foreigners have come, And have now seized the priory And all that they can find. They burn churches and tie up priests; They strangle both monks and nuns! What do you, friends, advise to be done? If they run free in this way for long, They may overcome us all. They may hang or slay us all alive, Or make us slaves and do us great woe, Or else rob us of our lives, Along with our children and our wives!</p>
2590	<p>Or elles reve us ure lives And ure children and ure wives. But dos nw als ich wile you lere, Als ye wile be with me dere. Nimes nu swithe forth and rathe And helps me and yuself bathe, And slos upo the dogges swithe. For shal I nevere more be blithe, Ne hoseled ben ne of prest shriven Til that he ben of londe driven.</p>	<p>But now do as I will instruct you, If you wish to be faithful to me. Let us go forth now, and in haste, And save both me and yourselves And strike at the dogs quickly! For I will never be at peace, Nor be confessed or absolved by a priest, Until they are driven from our land. Let's get going and make them flee, And everyone follow me closely!</p>
2600	<p>Nime we swithe and do hem fle And folwes alle faste me! For ich am he of al the ferd That first shal slo with drawn sword. Datheyt hwo ne stonde faste Bi me hwil hise armes laste!" "Ye! lef, ye!" quoth the erl Gunter; "Ya!" quoth the Erl of Cestre, Reyner. And so dide alle that ther stode</p>	<p>For in all the army, it is me Who will first kill with his sword drawn. Damn anyone who doesn't stand fast By me while his arms last!" "Yes, my dear lord, yes!" said Earl Gunter. "Yes!" said the earl of Chester, Reyner. And who stood there said the same,</p>

⁶⁹ Godard threatens to disinherit any knight if he will not fight, a "flagrant and unheard-of violation of custom and law" (68). Sheila Delaney, *Medieval Literary Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 68. Similarly, in lines 2585 Godard asks for advice rhetorically, ignoring any answer, and then lies about the Danes to stir up anger. The poet intends to highlight Havelock's good rule, as he defers to the counsel of others and thus needs no coercion to inspire loyalty.

2610	<p>And stirte forth so he were wode. Tho mouthe men se the brinies brihte On backes keste and lace rithe, The helmes heye on heved sette. To armes al so swithe plette That thei wore on a litel stunde Grethet als men mithe telle a pund, And lopen on stedes sone anon; And toward Grimesbi, ful god won, He foren softe bi the sti Til he come ney at Grimesbi.</p>	<p>And they rushed forth as if they were mad. Then men could see bright mailcoats Thrown on backs and laced firmly, And helmets set high on heads. All hurried so quickly to arms That they were ready in the time It takes to count out a pound. Straightaway they leaped on steeds, And towards Grimsby, with full force, They lumbered along the road Until they came near to Grimsby.</p>
2620	<p>Havelok, that havede spired wel Of here fare, everil del, With all his ferd cam hem ageyn. Forbar he nother knith ne sweyn: The firste knith that he ther mette With the swerd so he him grette, For his heved of he plette - Wolde he nouth for sinne lette. Roberd saw that dint so hende - Wolde he nevere thethen wende,</p>	<p>Havelock, who had inquired closely Into their movements, every detail, Came against them with all his forces. He spared neither knight nor peasant. The first knight that he met there He charged so hard with his sword That he sheared off his head. He did not hesitate to inflict harm. When Robert saw that skillful blow, He would not turn away Until he had slain another</p>
2630	<p>Til that he havede another slawen With the swerd he held ut drawen. Willam Wendut his swerd ut drow, And the thredde so sore he slow That he made upon the feld His lift arm fleye with the swerd. Huwe Raven ne forgat nouth The swerd he havede thider brouth. He kipte it up, and smot ful sore An erl that he saw priken thore</p>	<p>With the sword he held drawn out. William Wendut drew out his sword, And he struck a third so hard That he made his left arm fly off Onto the field with his sword. Hugh Raven did not forget to use The sword he had brought there. He swung it up, and struck hard On an earl that he saw spurring there Nobly upon a steed, Who galloped quickly toward him.</p>
2640	<p>Ful noblelike upon a stede, That with him wolde al quic wede. He smot him on the heved so That he the heved clef a two. And that bi the shudre blade The sharpe swerd let wade Thoru the brest unto the herte; The dint bigan ful sore to smerte, That the erl fel dun anon Al so ded so ani ston.</p>	<p>He struck him on the head so forcefully That he cleft the skull in two, And near the shoulder-blade He let the sharp sword pass Through the breast into the heart. The blow began to hurt so painfully That the earl fell down at once, As dead as any stone.</p>
2650	<p>Quoth Ubbe, "Nu dwelle ich to longe!" And let his stede sone gonge To Godrich, with a god spere, That he saw another bere; And smot Godrich and Godrich him, Hetelike with herte grim, So that he bothe felle dune To the erthe, first the croune. Thanne he woren fallen dun bothen, Grundlike here swerdes he ut drowen,</p>	<p>Ubbe said, "I hold back too long!", And immediately charged his horse Toward Godrich, with a good spear That he saw another bear, And the two struck at each other Hotly with fierce hearts, So that they both fell headfirst Down to the earth. When they were both fallen, They drew out their swords violently,</p>
2660	<p>That weren swithe sharp and gode, And fouhten so thei woren wode That the swot ran fro the crune</p>	<p>Which were so sharp and hard, And fought like they were berserk, So that the sweat and blood ran</p>

2670	<p>To the fet right there adune. Ther mouthe men se to knicthes bete Ayther on other dintes grete, So that with the altherleste dint Were al to-shivered a flint. So was bitwenen hem a fiht Fro the morwen ner to the niht, So that thei nouth ne blunne Til that to sette bigan the sunne. Tho yaf Godrich thorw the side Ubbe a wunde ful unrde, So that thorw that ilke wounde Havede ben brouth to grunde And his heved al of slawen, Yif God ne were and Huwe Raven, That drew him fro Godrich away And barw him so that ilke day.</p>	<p>From their heads down to their feet. There men could see two knights Beat on each other with great blows So that the least strike Would have shattered a stone to pieces. There was a fight between them From the morning nearly to night, So that they did not let up Until the sun began to set. Godrich had given Ubbe An ugly wound through the side, So that with that same injury He would have been brought to the earth And his head hacked off If God and Hugh Raven were not there, Who drew him away from Godrich And saved him that very day.</p>
2680	<p>But er he were fro Godrich drawen, Ther were a thousind knihtes slawen Bi bothe halve and mo ynowe, Ther the ferdes togidere slowe, Ther was swilk dreping of the folk That on the feld was nevere a polk That it ne stod of blod so ful That the strem ran intil the hul. Tho tarst bigan Godrich to go Upon the Danshe and faste to slo And forthrith, also leun fares That nevere kines best ne spares, Thanne his gon, for he garte alle The Denshe men biforn him falle. He felde browne, he felde blake, That he mouthe overtake. Was nevere non that mouhte thave Hise dintes, noyther knith ne knave, That he felde so dos the gres Biforn the sythe that ful sharp es.</p>	<p>But before he was taken from Godrich There were a thousand knights killed And more enough on both sides. Where the armies clashed together There was such slaughter of the warriors That on the field there was no puddle That was not so full of blood That the stream didn't run downhill. Then Godrich began to strike quickly⁷⁰ Upon the Danish again, killing swiftly And relentlessly, as a lion pounces Who spares no kind of prey And then is gone, for he made all The Danish men fall before him. He dropped every type of warrior, Any that he might overtake. There was no one who might survive His blows, neither knight nor serf, That he cut down like the grass Before a sharpened scythe.</p>
2690	<p>Hwan Havelok saw his folk so brittene And his ferd so swithe littene, He cam drivende upon a stede, And bigan til him to grede, And seyde, "Godrich, wat is thee, That thou fare thus with me And mine gode knihtes slos? Sikerlike, thou misgos! Thou wost ful wel, yif thu wilt wite, That Athelwold thee dide site</p>	<p>When Havelock saw his men so shaken And his forces so reduced, He came driving up on a steed And began to parley with him, And said, "Godrich, why do you do this That you act this way with me And slay my good knights? Surely, you do evil! You know full well, if you recall, That Athelwold had you swear</p>
2710	<p>On knes and sweren on messe bok, On caliz and on pateyn ok,</p>	<p>On your knees and on the missal, On chalice and sacramental cloth as well,</p>

⁷⁰ *Tarst*: The word is unrecorded in the MED, and Skeat believes it may be an error for *faste*. The poet compares Godard to a lightning strike.

2720	<p>That thou hise douhter sholdest yelde, Than she were wimman of elde, Engelond everil del. Godrich the erl, thou wost it wel! Do nu wel withuten fiht Yeld hire the lond, for that is rith. Wile ich forgive thee the lathe, Al mi dede and al mi wrathe, For I se thou art so with And of thi bodi so god knith.” “That ne wile ich neveremo,” Quoth erl Godrich, “for ich shal slo Thee, and hire forhenge heye. I shal thrist ut thy rith eye That thou lokes with on me, But thu swithe hethen fle!” He grop the swerd ut sone anon, And hew on Havelok ful god won,</p>	<p>That you would yield to his daughter, When she was a woman of age, Every bit of England. Earl Godrich, you know it well! Do it now without struggle. Give her the land, for it is her right. I will forgive you for your hate, For all my dead, and all my wrath, For I see you are valiant And in body a good knight.” “That I will never do,” Answered Earl Godrich, “for I will Slay you, and hang her high! I will thrust out your right eye That you look at me with, Unless you flee from here quickly!” He straightaway gripped his sword out, And cut down on Havelock forcefully,</p>
2730	<p>So that he clef his sheld on two. Hwan Havelok saw that shame do His bodi ther biforn his ferd, He drow ut sone his gode swerd, And smote him so upon the crune That Godrich fel to the erthe adune. But Godrich stirt up swithe sket - Lay ne nowth longe at hise fet - And smot him on the sholdre so That he dide thare undo</p>	<p>So that he split his shield in two. When Havelock saw that shame done To his own body in front of his host, At once he drew out his best sword And smashed him so hard upon the head That Godrich fell to the earth. But Godrich got up very quickly. He did not lay long at his feet, And struck Havelock on the shoulder So that he took off more</p>
2740	<p>Of his brinie ringes mo Than that ich kan tellen fro, And woundede him rith in the flesh, That tendre was and swithe nesh, So that the blod ran til his to. Tho was Havelok swithe wo, That he haveede of him drawen Blod and so sore him slawen. Hertelike til him he wente And Godrich ther fulike shente,</p>	<p>Of his mailcoat rings Than I can count, And wounded him right in the flesh, Which was so tender and soft, So that the blood ran down to his toe. Havelock was distressed then That Godrich had drawn blood From him and wounded him so sorely. With furious heart he went at him And brought great shame to Godrich there, For he heaved his sword up high And struck him so harshly That he made Godrich’s hand fly off. How could he dishonor him more? When Havelock had disgraced him, His hand cut off, and badly lame, He immediately seized him by the neck As a traitor—damn whoever cares!— And had him bound and fettered fast With strong chains, all of steel, And he sent him to the queen.</p>
2750	<p>For his swerd he hof up heye, And the hand he dide of fleye That he smot him with so sore - Hw mithe he don him shame more? Hwan he haveede him so shamed, His hand of plat and ivele lamed, He tok him sone bi the necke Als a traitour, datheit who recke! And dide him binde and fetere wel With gode feteres al of stel,</p>	<p>And struck him so harshly That he made Godrich’s hand fly off. How could he dishonor him more? When Havelock had disgraced him, His hand cut off, and badly lame, He immediately seized him by the neck As a traitor—damn whoever cares!— And had him bound and fettered fast With strong chains, all of steel, And he sent him to the queen. That lady had cause to be stern with him, And she ordered that he be guarded, But that no one should beat him Or abuse him, for he was a knight, Until other knights had rightfully judged him.</p>
2760	<p>And to the quen he sende him, That birde wel to him ben grim, And bad she sholde don him gete And that non ne sholde him bete, Ne shame do, for he was knith, Til knithes haveeden demd him rith.</p>	<p>And he sent him to the queen. That lady had cause to be stern with him, And she ordered that he be guarded, But that no one should beat him Or abuse him, for he was a knight, Until other knights had rightfully judged him.</p>

2770	<p>Than the Englishe men that sawe, That thei wisten, heye and lawe, That Goldeboru that was so fayr Was of Engeland rith eyr, And that the king hire have ded wedded, And havenen been samen bedded, He comen alle to crie "Merci," Unto the king at one cri, And beden him sone manrede and oth That he ne sholden, for lef ne loth, Neveremore ageyn him go, Ne ride, for wel ne for wo.</p>	<p>When the English men saw that, When they realized, high and low, That Goldeboro, who was so fair, Was the rightful heir of England, And that the king had married her, And they had bedded together, They all came to cry, "Mercy!" Unto the king with one voice. At once they offered him homage and vows That they would never, For love or hate, oppose him again, Or rebel, for better or for worse.</p>
2780	<p>The king ne wolde nouth forsake That he ne shulde of hem take Manrede that he beden and ok Hold othes sweren on the bok. But or bad he that thider were brouth The quen for hem swilk was his thouth For to se and forto shawe, Yif that he hire wolde knawe - Thoruth hem witen wolde he Yif that she aucte quen to be. Sixe erles weren sone yare After hire for to fare.</p>	<p>The king did not reject them So that he should not accept The homage that they offered, as well as Other oaths of loyalty sworn on the Bible. But before doing so he ordered the queen To be brought, for such were his thoughts To watch and to see If they would recognize her. Through them he would know If she ought to be queen. Six earls were soon ready To set out after her.</p>
2790	<p>He nomen onon and comen sone, And brouthen hire, that under mone In al the werd ne have ded per Of hendeleik, fer ne ner. Hwan she was come thider, alle The Englishe men bigunne falle O knes, and greten swithe sore, And seyden, "Levedi, Kristes ore And youres! We haven misdo mikel That we ayen you have be fikel, For Englund auhte for to ben Youres and we youre men.</p>	<p>They went at once and soon returned Bringing her, she who had no peer Under the moon in all the world In gentility, near or far. When she was coming near, All the English men began to fall On their knees and cried out bitterly And said, "Our lady, Christ's mercy And yours! We have done great evil To be disloyal to you, For England ought to be yours, And we your men.</p>
2800	<p>Is non of us, yung ne old, That he ne wot that Athelwold Was king of this kunerike And ye his eyr, and that the swike Haves it halden with mikel wronge - God leve him sone to hongel!" Quot Havelok, "Hwan that ye it wite, Nu wile ich that ye doune site; And after Godrich haves wrouht, That haves in sorwe himself brouth, Lokes that ye demen him rith, For dom ne spareth clerk ne knith, And sithen shal ich understonde Of you, after lawe of londe, Manrede and holde othes bothe, Yif ye it wilen and ek rothe." Anon ther dune he hem sette, For non the dom ne durste lette</p>	<p>There is none of us, young or old, Who does not know that Athelwold Was sovereign of this kingdom And you his heir, and that the traitor Has held it with great injustice. May God soon grant for him to hang!" Havelock said, "Since you understand, I would like you now to all sit down. And in regard to what Godrich has caused, Who has brought himself to calamity, See that you judge him rightly, For justice spares neither priest nor knight. And after then I will accept from you, Under the law of the land, Both your homage and oaths of loyalty, If you want it and recommend it as well." They seated themselves at once, For no one dared obstruct the verdict,</p>
2810	<p>For non the dom ne durste lette</p>	<p>For no one dared obstruct the verdict,</p>

2820	And demden him to binden faste Upon an asse swithe unwraste, Andelong, nouht overthwert, His nose went unto the stert And so to Lincolne lede, Shamelike in wicke wede, And, hwan he come unto the borw, Shamelike ben led ther thoru, Bi southe the borw unto a grene, That thare is yet, als I wene,	And they ordered the traitor bound tight Upon a filthy donkey, End to end, not across, His nose set toward the tail, And led to Lincoln in this manner, Shamefully in wretched rags; And, when he arrived in the borough, To be dishonorably paraded through, To south of the town onto a green field— Which is still there, as far as I know— And to be tied to a stake With a great fire set around him, And all to be burned to dust right there. And yet they ordered more, In order to warn other traitors: That his children should forever lose Their heritage of what was his For his outrageous crime. When the verdict was given and approved, The traitor was quickly laid on the donkey And he was led to that same green And burned to ashes right away. Then Goldeboro was at ease. She thanked God many times That the foul traitor who had intended To disgrace her body was burned, And she said, “Now is the time to take Homage from all kinds of people That I see riding and walking, Now that I am avenged on my foe.” Havelock had soon received pledges On the Bible from all the English, And had them swear solemn oaths That they would hold him in good faith Toward all who were alive And who were born of women. ⁷¹ When he had taken guarantees From the great and the lesser, With all at his will, he summoned The earl of Chester with all his men, ⁷² Who was a young knight without a wife, And said, “Sir Earl, by my life, If you will trust my counsel, I will deal with you fairly.
2830	And there be bunden til a stake, Abouten him ful gret fir make, And al to dust be brend rith there. And yet demden he ther more, Other swikes for to warne: That hise children sulde tharne Everemore that eritage That his was, for hise utrage. Hwan the dom was demd and seyd, Sket was the swike on the asse leyd,	
2840	And led him til that ilke grene And brend til asken al bidene. Tho was Goldeboru ful blithe - She thanked God fele sythe That the fule swike was brend That wende wel hire bodi have shend; And seyde, “Nu is time to take Manrede of brune and of blake, That ich se ride and go, Nu ich am wreke of mi fo.”	
2850	Havelok anon manrede tok Of alle Englishe on the bok And dide hem grete othes swere That he sholden him god feyth bere Ageyn hem alle that woren lives And that sholde ben born of wives. Thanne he haveden sikernesse Taken of more and of lesse, Al at hise wille, so dide he calle The Erl of Cestre and hise men alle,	
2860	That was yung knith withuten wif, And seyde, “Sire erl, bi mi lif, And thou wile mi conseyl tro, Ful wel shal ich with thee do;	

⁷¹ *And that sholde ben born of wives*: i.e. everyone. The expression seems to have been common, for the apparitions in *Macbeth* trick him by saying “none of woman born / shall harm Macbeth” (*Macbeth* IV.1.89-90), leading him into false confidence when Macduff turns out to be born by Caesarian. See also *Guy of Warwick*, 1288.

⁷² This seems to be the same Earl of Chester, Reyner, as the one who allies with Godrich earlier (2607), and apparently he has been rehabilitated. The reference might be meaningful, although there was no earl of Chester named Reyner, and Gunter is a generic name in the time period.

2870	<p>For ich shal yeve thee to wive The fairest thing that is o live. That is Gunnild of Grimesby, Grimes douter, bi Seint Davy, That me forth broute and wel fedde, And ut of Denemark with me fledde Me for to burwe fro mi ded. Sikerlike, thoru his red, Have ich lived into this day - Blissed worthe his soule ay! I rede that thu hire take And spuse and curteyse make, For she is fayr and she is fre, And al so hende so she may be. Ther tekene, she is wel with me; That shal ich ful wel shewe thee.</p>	<p>For I will give you as a wife The fairest thing that is alive, Gunnild of Grimsby, The daughter of Grim, by Saint David,⁷³ Who brought me up and kept me well, And fled with me out of Denmark To rescue me from death. Surely, through his good judgment I have lived to this day. May his soul be blessed forever! I advise that you take her And wed her, and do her courtesy, For she is beautiful and she is noble, And as gracious as she could be. I will prove it to you in full that I am well pleased with her by a token, For I will give you a promise That forevermore, while I live, For her sake you shall be dear to me. I would like all these people to witness that.” The earl did not refuse the king, And neither knight nor servant Said anything against the match, But they were wedded that same day. That marriage was made in a blessed moment, For there were never in any land Two who came together, clothed or naked, Who lived in the way That they did their whole lives. They had five sons together, All the best men in times of need Who might ride on any steed. When Gunnild was brought to Chester, Havelock, the good man, did not forget Bertram, who was the earl’s cook. He called him as well And said, “Friend, so God help me, You will have a rich reward For your guidance and your kind deeds That you did for me in my great need. For then I walked in my cloak And had neither bread nor sauce, Nor did I have any possessions. You fed and clothed me well. Take now the earldom of Cornwall, Every acre, without any doubt, And all the land that Godrich held, Both in town and field as well. And with that I want you to marry</p>
2880	<p>For ich wile give thee a give That everemore, hwil ich live, For hire shaltu be with me dere, That wile ich that this folc al here.” The erl ne wolde nouth ageyn The king be, for knith ne sweyn Ne of the spusing seyen nay, But spusede that ilke day. That spusinge was in god time maked, For it ne were nevere, clad ne naked,</p>	
2890	<p>In a thede samened two That cam togidere, livede so So they diden al here live: He geten samen sones five, That were the beste men at nede That mouthe riden on ani stede. Hwan Gunnild was to Cestre brouth, Havelok the gode ne forgat nouth Bertram, that was the erles kok, That he ne dide callen ok,</p>	
2900	<p>And seyde, “Frend, so God me rede, Nu shaltu have riche mede, For wissing and thi gode dede That tu me dides in ful gret nede. For thanne I yede in mi cuvel And ich ne havevede bred ne sowel. Ne I ne havevede no catel, Thou feddes and claddes me ful wel. Have nu forthi of Cornwayle The erldom ilk del, withuten fayle,</p>	
2910	<p>And al the lond that Godrich held, Bothe in towne and ek in feld; And ther-to wile ich that thu spuse,</p>	

⁷³ *Seint Davy*: Not King David of Israel, but David (c. 500-89) the patron saint of Wales. Associated with vegetarians and poets, he is possibly here only to fit the rhyme. *Gunhildr* is Old Norse in etymology.

<p>2920</p> <p>2930</p> <p>2940</p> <p>2950</p> <p>2960</p>	<p>And fayre bring hire until huse, Grimes douter, Levive the hende, For thider shal she with thee wende. Hire semes curteys for to be, For she is fayr so flour on tre; The hew is swilk in hire ler So the rose in roser, Hwan it is fayre sprad ut newe, Ageyn the sunne brith and lewe.” And girde him sone with the swerd Of the erldom, biforn his ferd, And with his hond he made him knith, And yaf him armes, for that was rith, And dide him there sone wedde Hire that was ful swete in bedde. After that he spused wore, Wolde the Erl nouth dwelle thore, But sone nam until his lond And seysed it al in his hond And livede ther inne, he and his wif, An hundred winter in god lif, And gaten mani children samen And liveden ay in blisse and gamen. Hwan the maidens were spused bothe, Havelok anon bigan ful rathe His Denshe men to feste wel Wit riche landes and catel, So that he weren alle riche, For he was large and nouth chiche. Ther after sone, with his here, For he to Lundone for to bere Corune, so that it sawe Henglishe ant Denshe, heye and lowe, Hwou he it bar with mikel pride, For his barnage that was unride. The feste of his coruning Lastede with gret joying Fourti dawes and sumdel mo. Tho bigunnen the Denshe to go Unto the king to aske leve; And he ne wolde hem nouth greve, For he saw that he woren yare Into Denemark for to fare; But gaf hem leve sone anon And bitauhte hem Seint Johan, And bad Ubbe, his justise, That he sholde on ilke wise Denemark yeme and gete so That no pleynte come him to. Hwan he wore parted alle samen, Havelok bilefte wit joye and gamen In Engeland and was ther-inne Sixti winter king with winne, And Goldeboru Quen, that I wene</p>	<p>Grim’s daughter, Levi the gracious, And bring her honorably to your house For she shall go with you there. It is her nature to be courteous, For she is as fair as the flower on the tree. The color in her face Is like the rose in a rosebush When it has newly blossomed out Toward the sun, bright and fresh.” And at once he fit him with the sword Of the earldom, in front of his army, And with his hand he made him a knight And gave him arms, for that was proper, And straightaway had him married To Levi, who was so sweet in bed. After they were married, The earl did not wish to dwell there, But soon made his way to his land And received it all into his hand, And lived there, him and his wife, For a hundred seasons in good health. They had many children together, And lived forever in ease and pleasure. When both of the maidens were married, Havelock immediately began To endow his Danish men well With rich lands and properties, So that they were all prosperous, For he was generous and not grudging. Soon after, he traveled with his army To London to wear the crown, So that all would see, English and Danish, high and low, How he wore it with regal pride Before his great baronage. The festival of his coronation Lasted with great rejoicing For forty days and somewhat more. Then the Danes began to go To the king to ask permission to leave. He did not want to aggrieve them, For he saw that they were anxious To journey home to Denmark, But gave them permission soon after And entrusted them to Saint John, And ordered Ubbe, his magistrate, That he should govern and guard Denmark in the same way, So that no complaint would come to him. When they had all departed together, Havelock stayed with joy and pleasure In England and was king there In peace for sixty years. And as for Queen Goldeboro, I know that</p>
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2970	<p>So mikel love was hem bitwene That al the werd spak of hem two; He lovede hir and she him so That neyther owe mithe be Fro other, ne no joye se But if he were togidere bothe. Nevere yete no weren he wrothe For here love was ay newe - Nevere yete wordes ne grewe Bitwene hem hwar of ne lathe Mithe rise ne no wrathe.</p>	<p>So much love was between them That all the world spoke of the two. He loved her and she loved him So that neither one could be separated From the other, nor have any happiness Unless they were together. They were never angry with each other, For their love was always new. Harsh words never grew between them That might lead to any hostility Or any wrath.</p>
2980	<p>He geten children hem bitwene Sones and doughtres rith fivetene, Hwar-of the sones were kinges alle, So wolde God it sholde bifalle, And the douhtres alle quenes: Him stondes wel that god child strenes! Nu have ye herd the gest al thoru Of Havelok and of Goldeboru - Hw he weren boren and hw fedde, And hwou he woren with wronge ledde In here youthe with trecherie, With tresoun, and with felounye;</p>	<p>They had many children together, Sons and daughters, fifteen in all, Of whom the sons were all kings If God should have it happen, And the daughters all queens. He stands well who has good children! Now you have heard the adventure through Of Havelock and Goldeboro, How they were born and how they fared, And how they were treated wrongly In their youth with treachery, With treason, and with felony;</p>
2990	<p>And hwou the swikes haveden tiht Reven hem that was here rith, And hwou he weren wreken wel, Have ich seyde you everil del. Forthi ich wolde biseken you That haven herd the rim nu, That ilke of you, with gode wille, Saye a Pater Noster stille For him that haveth the rym maked, And ther-fore fele nihtes waked,</p>	<p>And how the traitors intended To rob them of what was their right, And how they were well avenged. I have told you every bit. For that, I now ask of all of you Who have heard the story now, That each of you, in good faith, Will say the Lord's Prayer quietly For him who made this story And stayed awake many nights for it, That Jesus Christ would bring his soul Before His Father at his end.</p>
3000	<p>That Jesu Crist his soule bringe Biforn his Fader at his endinge.</p>	<p>That Jesus Christ would bring his soul Before His Father at his end.</p>
3002	<p>Amen</p>	<p>Amen.</p>

Class and the Anglo-Saxon World of *Havelock the Dane*

Chaucer's pilgrims are defined by their livelihoods,¹ and many are not even given names. The sort of work one did and its associated social class seems inseparable from personal identity during the English medieval period and in its literature. Charlemagne ordered that every subject "serve God faithfully in that order in which he is placed,"² and expectations of conduct based on rank seem axiomatic throughout middle and late medieval texts. Class still seems to be the normative concern for modern critics of literature. For the romance *Havelock the Dane*, dated to approximately 1285, much commentary deals with the social identity of the assumed audience of the story, and how Havelock acts as an exemplar for its agendas. Halverson sees the sentimentality of the poem as distinctly lower-class. Swanton reads the poem as a series of "improbable social advancements" forming a bourgeois fantasy in which hard work counts but "breeding will out."³ Crane sees a desire for legitimacy among the upper-middle class barony and a nostalgia for the more secure era of their Anglo-Norman forebears.⁴ Alternatively, Stuart posits royal patronage of the poem, suggesting that perhaps an unpopular Edward I wished to portray himself via Havelock as an ideal model of kingship.⁵

¹ Nicola Masciandaro, *The Voice of the Hammer: The Meaning of Work in Middle English Literature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 124.

² Quoted in David Herlihy, "Three Patterns of Social Mobility in Medieval History," in *Social Mobility and Modernization*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 19.

³ Michael Swanton, *English Literature Before Chaucer* (New York: Longman Group, 1987), 202, 195.

⁴ Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 9.

⁵ Christopher Stuart, "Havelok the Dane and Edward I in the 1290s," *Studies in Philology* 93:4 (1996): 349-364.

All of these critical lenses assume that the poem may be neatly fitted into a discrete class bracket, with at most the common sense concession that more than one group might have enjoyed reading or hearing such a work. Yet a narrow focus on class in *Havelock* results in locking it within a timeframe it does not belong to, all the more curious as early scholarship of the poem dealt largely with sources rather than actual textual criticism. I would like to offer an alternative interpretation of *Havelock* which sidesteps the issue of class by suggesting that the fictive ethos of the poem predates these late-medieval distinctions. The social values in the poem, the idealized virtues of the warrior-knight, and the nature of kingly authority all reflect a culturally Anglo-Saxon and Germanic rather than late medieval and Anglo-Norman world. This identification provides a new praxis of reading the poem that goes beyond the obsessive question of “is there a class in this text?”⁶

Part of this academic fixation with audience rank may be due to the relative lateness of English medieval romances, with most appearing less than a century before Chaucer. But *Havelock* is earlier and analogues of the story date back to Geoffrey Gaimar’s *Estorie des Engles* (1140) and the twelfth-century *Lai d’Havelok*, among numerous briefer citations. The story’s folktale roots may be considerably older. Grimsby’s town seal of 1201 depicts Havelock and Goldeboru on it. Skeat lists several Anglo-Danish kings as possible sources and even speculates a link to Hamlet,⁷ and another scholar notes that, just as Grim flees to England secretly, in the Old Norse sagas

⁶ Roy Michael Liuzza, “Representation and Readership in the ME *Havelok*,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 93 (1994): 519.

⁷ Walter Skeat, ed., *The Lay of Havelock the Dane* (Early English Text Society, Extra Series 4, 1868; Millwood, NY: Kraus Reprint, 1973).

the name *Grímnir* can mean *disguise*.⁸ Similarly, Odin keeps a raven named Huginn, echoed in Grim's son Hugh Raven. Critics have noticed similarities in style between *Havelock* and *Beowulf*: both are narrated by a minstrel, with the call to attention "herkneþ to me" (1) sounding much like "Hwaet!" Bradbury argues that the English *Havelock* was written independently of Gaimar and the *Lai* based on common oral tradition. Robert Mannyng, around 1300, reports his puzzlement over the popularity of the story in the Lincoln area, for "I fynd no man, þat has writen in story, how Hauelok þis lond wan."⁹ The minstrel narrator of the poem may be a fiction. But if so, "where did this convention come from?"¹⁰

Anglo-Saxon England, of course, had class divisions, with noblemen, freemen, and slaves. Ælfric's plowman complains that his work is hard "for þæm þe ic neom freo" ("because I am not free," 21).¹¹ Nevertheless, the class system of *Havelock* differs from late feudalism, for there is a curious absence of the middle barony in the poem and the courtly virtues they pretended to, or the urban world with which they were increasingly interacting. The physical stage of the knight is absent. Castles have functional purposes or exist as forlorn places of punishment, such as to imprison Goldeboru or Havelock and

⁸ Edmund Reiss, "Havelok the Dane and Norse Mythology," *Modern Languages Quarterly* 27 (1996): 115-24, quoted in *Four Romances of England*, ed. Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1999), 79.

⁹ Robert Mannyng of Brunne (Bourne, Lincolnshire), *Peter Langtoft's Chronicle*, ed. Thomas Hearne (Oxford, 1725), 1: 25-26, quoted in Nancy Mason Bradbury, "The Traditional Origins of *Havelock the Dane*," *Studies in Philology* 90:2 (1991): 119. Bradbury (128) also notes that the English *Havelock* does not have formulaic appeals to French authority such as in *Bevis* (888), "So hit is fonde in Frensche tale."

¹⁰ Bradbury, 127.

¹¹ Ælfric, "A Colloquy on the Occupations," Anonymous translation into Old English, tenth century, in *A Guide to Old English*, fifth ed., ed. Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 183.

his sisters. Feasts take place outdoors. Jewelry and swords have no magical properties to summon fairy-queens, but military or ordinary utility, such as when Havelock bribes Ubbe with an expensive ring in order to receive permission to trade in Denmark. Halverson believes that “*bourgeois* inevitably suggests an urban background,”¹² which assumes a simple binary of civic versus rural life. Even so, little takes place in cities in *Havelock*. Lincoln is barely a square kilometer in size in pre-Norman England,¹³ and most of the poem’s action there takes place outdoors, and often in mud. Havelock takes royal residence in London only at the story’s close, and the poet is otherwise unconcerned with city life.

Havelock explores universal concerns crossing class boundaries, and a primary one is food. The poem has a cook, but at times sounds like a cookbook. The types of fish that Grim and Havelock catch are listed in detail, as well as the “wastels, simenels with þe horn / hise pokes fulle of mele an korn / netes flesh, shepes, and swines” (“cakes, horn-shaped loaves, his bags full of flour, and beef, mutton, and pork,” 780-2). Hunger touched all ranks even if unequally. One Marxist critic objects that Havelock’s wage request for only enough to eat from the cook marks the poem as bourgeois, as it is admirable “only from the point of view of an employer.”¹⁴ But Lincoln is experiencing a near-famine, and receiving regular meals is good fortune for any class. It is not a time for Havelock to negotiate his retirement benefits. Much like the *Odyssey*, trials are

¹² John Halverson, “Havelok the Dane and Society,” *Chaucer Review*, Pennsylvania State University Press 6:2 (1971): 150.

¹³ William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell, ed., *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (New York: Leicester University Press, 2000), 230.

¹⁴ Sheila Delaney, *Medieval Literary Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1990), 69.

interspersed with feasting in the poem, and Havelock's rise in prosperity is indexed by his diet.¹⁵ He progresses from hunger to "bred an chese, butere and milk / pastees and flaunes" (644), to the cook's soup, up to cranes, swans, and venison: "þe beste mete / þat king or cayser wolde ete" (1545-6). Significantly, Havelock drinks the beverages of a Heorot and not a French court. With Ubbe he drinks *pymment* (1549), a mix of mead and grape juice, and the minstrel narrator is also evidently a man of the people who requests "ful god ale" (14) rather than wine.

Nicola Masciandaro, in *The Voice of the Hammer*, examines the origins of several Middle English words for *work*. The use of such words in *Havelock* similarly suggests an attitude to labor which has little commonality with later French or feudal values.

Masciandaro points out that all of the French loanwords for *work* in Middle English have negative connotations: *travail* has an etymological link to an instrument of torture,¹⁶ and *labor* similarly suggests fatigue or pain, with the modern submeaning of childbirth still retaining such a connection. Although St. Augustine writes that man was meant to work, there is clearly a medieval aristocratic contempt for labor, and even prohibitions against knights engaging in manual toil. At best there is regard for the creative artisan or craftsman, just as the speaker in *The Ruin* praises the *waldendwyrhtan*, or master-mason.¹⁷ In *Floris and Blancheflor* Dary sends Floris to the emir's tower to pose as a "god ginour" (701), a master craftsman and stonemason, with no suggestion that the occupation is a low or demeaning one for him.

¹⁵ Swanton, *English Literature*, 202.

¹⁶ Masciandaro, 14.

¹⁷ Masciandaro, 83.

In the French analogue to *Havelock*, Grim sends out Havelock not from need but to give him a “prince’s education.”¹⁸ The English poet will have none of this and places a near-famine in the story, underscoring the family’s desperate straits by having Grim dress Havelock in a ship’s sail (859). In the English text Havelock knows of his royalty, made unambiguous by the poet when Havelock offers *manrede* to Godard as a child,¹⁹ unlike the French versions where Grim’s daughter Kelloc later tells him. He nevertheless sets out proclaiming, “It is no shame for to swinken” (800). For Ælfric’s plowman, to *swince* is grunt labor of the lowest type, but Havelock knowingly shares in it. Everyone in the poem works in some way, through the cook to Ubbe to even Athelwold and Birkabeyn, who have some kingly employment dispensing justice. Godard, noticeably, is hunting when apprehended (2203), a form of leisure highly approved of for the medieval aristocrat but here an idle activity.

The sensibilities of Anglo-Norman England seems thinnest in the portrayal of women in *Havelock*, which is considerably more Germanic than Latinate in flavor. There is a hint of the courtly romance style in Goldeboru’s coerced marriage to what will turn out to be a “frog-prince,”²⁰ but unlike the over-elaborate recognition plot of *Floris and Blancheflour* with its blushing lovers, here the marriage is made out of necessity.²¹ Goldeboru’s utility for Godrich is closer to an Anglo-Saxon *fríþwebba*, peace-weaver. Love, when it later flowers, takes place within “the secure and fruitful relationship of

¹⁸ David Staines, “Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes,” *Speculum* 51 (1976): 605.

¹⁹ G.V. Smithers, ed., *Havelock* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), xxxvii.

²⁰ Swanton, *English Literature*, 195.

²¹ *Four Romances of England*, 76.

marriage”²² rather than covert adultery or a dramatic separation with its theatrical pining and sighing. Romances may obliquely indicate the hero’s vulnerability by projecting it onto the heroine.²³ Yet, despite Ubbe and Havelock’s fear for her safety, the would-be rapists in the French text are thieves in the English version, largely unconcerned with Goldeboru. Goldeboru is otherwise actualized and constantly beside Havelock to offer sound advice,²⁴ receiving the angelic visitor and directing her husband to return to Denmark to claim the throne. Havelock’s obedience to her *radde* (1354) is not chivalrous service but practical conduct. After winning England, as the country “rightly belongs to his wife, Havelock refuses to pass sentence on Godrich; he surrenders his victim to his wife for sentencing.”²⁵

The relatively egalitarian treatment of women extends beyond Havelock’s marital relationship. Anglo-Saxon women had standing in legal transactions, and Goldeboru is respected as the daughter of the legitimate king. The English soldiers who realize their error in fighting Havelock’s army plead to her “levedi, Kristes ore” (“Lady, Christ’s mercy,” 2798) before recognizing Havelock. The poet’s and the characters’ regard for Goldeboru is not based purely on her royalty, for other women in the story also play rather practical domestic roles as opposed to period themes of courtly seclusion behind curtains. Ubbe teases his wife while the table is being set that he wants to sit with Goldeboru at dinner because she is better looking (1716). In another realistic touch, Grim

²² Swanton, *English Literature*, 195

²³ Julie Nelson Couch, “The Vulnerable Hero: *Havelok* and the Revision of Romance,” *Chaucer Review* 42:3 (2008): 336.

²⁴ Swanton, *English Literature*, 203.

²⁵ Staines, 610.

seems to be at the tail-end of an argument with his wife over drowning Havelock when he rises at night, protesting, “ne thenkestu nowt of mine othes / that ich have mi louerd sworn?” (579-80). Havelock describes his stepsister Levi’s face to Bertram the cook as “so a rose in roser” (“like a rose in a rosebush,” 2919), but then we have the surprisingly earthy comment that Levi was a wife “ful swete in bedde” (2927).

The poet equally seems more interested in Havelock’s physical preeminence than his lineage. Havelock is “boþe stark and strong / in Engelond was non hise per / of strengþe þat euere kam him ner” (989-91). His rock-throwing prowess amazes the commoners as well as the gentry: “þe knithes speken þerof alle” (“the knights all spoke of him,” 1069). Godrich himself is either sarcastic or momentarily intimidated by Havelock’s size, addressing him as “maister” (1136) upon their meeting, whereas he previously calls Havelock a knave (1088). Later on, Havelock distinguishes himself for might in battle, healing from an impossible number of wounds inflicted by Ubbe’s outlaws, and then leading the charge in England and heaving a sword on to Godrich’s head (2555). Havelock earns his *lof* through physical combat and not solely through family titles, in the same way that Beowulf gains an audience with Hrothgar through his father Ecgtheow, but must still prove himself as a warrior, having previously been dismissed as an “æðeling unfrom,” a feeble prince (2188).

The choice of weaponry in the poem also echoes the Anglo-Saxon emphasis on individual strength. Havelock tends to use the weapons of a peasant. In a fight with the thieving rebels of Ubbe’s lawless realm, Havelock grabs only a “dore-tre” (1627), his brother Robert takes a staff, and William a tree (1713). These are the weapons of a *Tournament of Tottenham* combatant. Halverson notes that the French poet feels the

weapon is necessary but unsuitable for Havelock,²⁶ but the English text intimates no sense of inadequacy. Bernard takes the most sophisticated weapon, an axe. A recurring theme in *Beowulf* is swords breaking or being charmed into uselessness, requiring bare-handed fighting, and *Havelock* suggests an equally dismissive attitude toward the weapons of the knight. The attackers throw spears at Havelock “fro ferne” (“from a distance,” 1685), and there is the odor that such tactics are cowardly. To underscore their cravenness and Havelock’s heroism, far more rebels die in the English analogue than in the French.²⁷ Noticeably, the only time the poet describes the military preparation of knights, with “brinies brihte / on backes keste, and late rithe / þe helmes heye on heued sette” (“coats of mail cast on backs and fitted straight, high helmets set on heads,” 2431-33), it is for Godrich’s losing side.

The vocabulary of the warrior also indicates flux in the period of *Havelock*’s writing. Few of the Old English terms which relate to military rank or organization survive into Middle English. The *duguð* and the *fyrd* disappear, and new terms appear which previously had servile significations: *cniht* becomes *knight*, and *vassal*—Celtic for *boy* or *servant*—improves, as does *constable*, previously indicating someone who shoveled out the stable.²⁸ The semantic shifts precipitate from the Norman takeover and partly from differences between the courtly ideals of knighthood and the older Germanic model of the loyal warrior. Havelock uses a sword in battle with Godrich, but here an interesting irony appears: his Danes use a Germanic *ferd* formation (2443) fought on foot,

²⁶ Halverson, 149.

²⁷ Halverson, 149.

²⁸ Herlihy, in Rotberg, 32.

and the English under Godrich use Norman cavalry tactics.²⁹ Hugh Raven splits the head of an English earl mounted “noblelike upon a stede” (2461). This is odd considering that the poet repeatedly praises Havelock’s ability with horses (10, 1971). Gaimar does not mention cavalry in his version, but to have battle on foot in the English text seems anachronistic to the time of the poem’s composition, especially to *win* after the defeat of Harold’s foot soldiers at Hastings.

The general culture of *Havelock* seems suspiciously *Beowulfian* in its Germanic conception of warrior etiquette. In the scene where rebels attack the guardhouse in Denmark, Havelock’s brothers sleep on benches by the wall, like Beowulf’s men in Heorot. The formal exchange of insults between Bernard Brown and the thieves, “summe of you shal ich drepen / and the othre shal ich kesten / in feteres and ful faste festen” (1783-5), sounds like an Anglo-Saxon *flyting*. The rebels are themselves Grendel-like in being described by Ubbe as belonging to “Kaym kin and Eves” (“Cain and Eve’s kin,” 2046). Many of the dialogues in the poem are performative speech acts rather than conversation,³⁰ and the recurrence of declamatory openings such as “lithes now alle to me” (1401) suggest the heightened and monologic *maþelode*-speeches of the Anglo-Saxon epic heroes.

Ker says that the Germanic hero “sails his own ship.”³¹ The Anglo-Saxons use *earl* to refer to nearly any warrior displaying leadership,³² and *Havelock* seems equally

²⁹ Garbaty, 244.

³⁰ Anne Scott, “Language as Convention, Language as Sociolect in *Havelok the Dane*,” *Studies in Philology* 89:2 (1992): 150.

³¹ W.P. Ker, *Epic and Romance* (1908) (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), 168.

distant from the courtly ethos which saw breeding and nobility as naturally identical. Adalbero, bishop of Laon, writes around 1000 that the perfect Christian community can be divided into laborers, fighters, and prayers,³³ but these are fluid occupations less described by birth and more by function. Such classifications partake in what Strohm calls “classical ideas of the body politic and the ‘corporate’ state.”³⁴ The roles form interdependent and horizontal parts of a functioning Christian body rather than a hierarchy of blood. The status of most peasants declined under the Normans and became more socially fixed.³⁵ Strohm asserts that the aristocratic prestige of knights was in decline by the fourteenth century,³⁶ yet both the culture and the increasingly prohibitive costs of armor and cavalry tended to exacerbate lower divisions, and by 1300 there is an increasing rigidifying of class and access to parliament. Rank becomes increasingly a matter of birth, whereas before 1337 the only heritable title is earl.³⁷ One reason for the prohibition of clerical marriage during the Cluniac reforms was to prevent clerical dynasties, and as church positions were non-hereditary it had become one of the few avenues open to advancement.³⁸

Havelock’s aristocracy is not in question as he is of royal blood. However, his adoptive family is not. Havelock refers to his brothers as “louerdinges” (1402) and

³² Baker uses the example of *The Wanderer* (line 12). Peter S. Baker, *Introduction to Old English*, second ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 223.

³³ In Herlihy, in Rotberg, 19.

³⁴ Strohm, 3.

³⁵ Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 20.

³⁶ Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5.

³⁷ Given-Wilson, 29.

³⁸ Herlihy, in Rotberg, 20.

promises them advancement. Ubbe explicitly tells the Danish assembly that Grim was a fisherman (2051), hence a commoner, and yet neither the Danes nor the English question Hugh, Robert and William fighting at the head of the line or their being knighted later, making them “barouns alle pre” (2171). In Shakespeare’s *Henry V* the king makes a patriotic speech promising that by fighting for England the lowest of his soldiers will “gentle their condition” (IV.iii.67), and here it also seems sufficient that Havelock’s brothers were “ful strong and ful with” (2168). Their peasant-class origins seem to have been dismissed, both because of their association with Havelock and because of their performance in battle. As with *Henry V* the appeal is to Germanic ideals of the warrior hero as having loyalty and strength rather than noble breeding.

The interpretation of Grim has been controversial. The *Lai* attempts to explain away his sons’ social elevation by making Grim a baron as well as a fisherman,³⁹ but in the English version Godard taunts him as a “fule drit-cherl” (683), making his status unambiguous. Grim has been compared to Saint Peter, another fisherman who weeps in repentance (Mark 14:72).⁴⁰ He has also been read as suspiciously enthusiastic to carry out Godard’s orders.⁴¹ The inference in either interpretation is that Havelock’s royalty and goodness redeem Grim, just as Ubbe is later reformed from his corrupt tendencies.⁴² Beowulf similarly rehabilitates Unferth’s character with his own overflowing heroic dignity. Yet the poet, so liberal in heaping damnation on Godard and Godrich, has no

³⁹ Stephen H.A. Shepherd, ed., *Middle English Romances* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), 323. Also Halverson, 145.

⁴⁰ Delaney, 65.

⁴¹ Maldwyn Mills, “Havelok and the Brutal Fisherman,” *Medium Aevum* 36 (1967): 227.

⁴² Shepherd, 318.

such words of censure for either Grim or Ubbe. Grim apparently only follows orders, and Ubbe's gift seems business as usual, just as Beowulf gives the Danish coast guard who guides him to Heorot a sword (1899). Grim ostensibly occupies a cultural setting where class is simply less vital of a concern. It does not seem objectionable to anyone that the village of Grimsby is named after a runaway slave.

The class identity of the narrator has also occasioned comment. Throughout the text the storyteller assumes an easy affiliation and intimacy with his audience as he adds personal comments to the action. Halverson points out that the French-version narrator "is not really talking to anyone,"⁴³ but the English voice is more like a tavern entertainer talking to fellow "godemen, wiues, maydnes, and alle men" (1-2) rather than the courtly audience of a private room. Critics have argued that ale-drinking does not necessarily entail a bar or a public space, but the effect is to suggest a shared activity bonding the speaker to his audience,⁴⁴ just as the cup has associations with holy communion. The poem was likely not composed by an actual minstrel, but such is its fictional frame which the poet attempts to depict, and for a reason.

Other characters also participate in the blithely flattened social hierarchy of the poem's world. At the end of the poem Havelock's brothers become landholding knights, Havelock's stepsister, Gunnild, marries the Earl of Chester, and even the cook is made an earl and marries another sister, Levi. These are considerable promotions. Another critic posits that being a cook could actually be a prestigious position and that Bertram might

⁴³ Halverson, 144.

⁴⁴ Kenneth E. Gadoski, "Narrative Style in *King Horn* and *Havelok the Dane*," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 15:2 (1985): 140. Gadoski replies to Dieter Mehl's criticisms.

have been a “tenant-knight with merely supervisory duties.”⁴⁵ This seems unlikely.

Bertram clearly knows his craft, and he has Havelock sit and rest while he stirs “þe broys in þe led” (924). The English poet gives a wealth of “concrete details of the life of the kitchen”⁴⁶ missing in the French. In the poem’s denouement, Havelock knights Bertram (2924), indicating he is not one previously. Nor would real-life knighthood guarantee acceptance among peers. After Richard II made a favorite steward, John de Beauchamp, a baron in 1387 the Merciless Parliament convicted the court of treason and the steward was executed. He was not entitled to a trial, the Magna Carta having been amended in 1217 to exclude legal rights for commoners.⁴⁷

A better explanation for these improbable events is that the poem, like much romance, does not reflect its contemporary reality but rather nostalgically looks back to a time of easier social mobility and universal desires. The poet praises Levi not for royal lineage, of which she has none, but for her physical comforts. The poem ends with all being blessed with long life and large families. Halverson dismisses this sentimentality as “a peasant fantasy,”⁴⁸ but as with Levi’s attractiveness, these are traditional aspirations for every class. No less than Beowulf mourns not having a son as he dies, and in the *Clerk’s Tale* Walter’s subjects worry about their bachelor lord. The coda that Havelock and Goldeboru were inseparable and did not quarrel—“nevere yete no weren he wrothe”

⁴⁵ Delaney, 72.

⁴⁶ Halverson, 148.

⁴⁷ Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272-1553* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

⁴⁸ Halverson, 149.

(2973)—is a conventional closure in romance for all classes, so much so that the Wife of Bath can poke fun at the formula with her knight.

The time setting of the Havelock versions is additionally significant. Whereas the *Lai d'Havelock* places the action in a magical Arthurian time where all good French romances go,⁴⁹ the English poet has a generic past accessible to his audience. Occasionally he even uses present-tense interjections, such as “þe devil of hell him sone take” (446) for Godard.⁵⁰ The argument has been made that the English Havelock is meant to suggest Edward I, also a popular king with a reputation for combating crime and supporting parliamentary rule.⁵¹ The poet stresses Havelock’s height and at the games he towers over the lads “als a mast” (987). Edward was equally tall at 6’2”, which gave him the nickname ‘Longshanks.’ Stuart suggests the poem may have had a propagandistic purpose as an idealization of Edward in later years when his admiration had declined. Similarly, God-*rich* and God-*ard* have been identified with a historical Rich-ard (1209-72), Edward’s uncle and also Earl of Cornwall. Richard was an agitator who periodically organized to undermine the king, and his switching of allegiances for calculated personal benefit “earned him disrespect from all sides.”⁵² Nevertheless, even if the poet intends such a linkage, the focus remains on Havelock as a past ideal which Edward might have or was subtly identified with.

⁴⁹ Halverson, 144.

⁵⁰ Swanton, *English Literature*, 196.

⁵¹ Staines, 617. See also Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 132.

⁵² Shepherd, 13. See also Prestwich, 89.

Havelock has been described as “a walking metaphor for kingship, literally marked with a sign of royalty.”⁵³ The source of Havelock’s legitimacy as a ruler is ambiguously dual, perhaps intentionally, for he both is entitled by regal birth to be king and is seen to deserve it by being strong and good. A blending of both a Latinate sense of primogeniture and a Germanic work ethic seems operant in the text. Significantly, Havelock’s understanding of his identity is clear, but his destiny is opaque until revealed to him by Goldeboru through the angel. Unlike Prince Hal who associates with the rabble but remains apart, or *Floris and Blancheflour*’s hero who transparently affects working-class credentials, Havelock does not masquerade as a beggar; he is one.⁵⁴ As a sort of male-Cinderella, he is born to rule, but through his trials, courage, and good nature he also earns the right to reign, and the poet seems to suggest the good king has both characteristics. The Danish are convinced by Havelock’s glowing light that he is their legitimate heir, but even in their first meeting Ubbe marvels to himself, “qui ne were he knith” (“why is he not a knight!” 1471).

Nevertheless, the ideals of kingship in *Havelock* reflect more traditional Germanic values than Latinate or late-feudal concepts. Like Hrothgar, Havelock as king is praised for his sharing: “he was large and nouth chiche” (“he was generous and not stingy,” 2941). The medieval period saw a gradual shift from the *cyning* as merely one of the kin, serving at the pleasure of the *witan* with the tenuous support of warriors, to the Latinate concept of an emperor serving as God’s representative. Alcuin, steeped in the new

⁵³ *Four Romances of England*, 75. The theme of kingly behavior was an issue I also explored in a paper read at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies, 7-10 May 2009 in Kalamazoo, forming the basis of this chapter. My thanks to participants for ideas I have incorporated.

⁵⁴ Swanton, *English Literature*, 200.

system, advises Charlemagne that “the people are to be led, not followed.”⁵⁵ The medieval expansion of parliamentary power after Edward I undermined the Germanic ideal of authority originating upward from the *folc*, for by the fourteenth century parliaments were increasingly hereditary,⁵⁶ even while actual economic power in England became increasingly diversified.

Crane argues that the barony’s likely audience for romances lay in just such a nostalgic yearning for a world less pre-empted by royal and urban encroachments on their class’ privileges.⁵⁷ Yet she also sees *Havelock* as “a romance of the law,”⁵⁸ a story set in a world regulated by constitutional justice. The two claims are contradictory, especially when the earls in the poem fare the worst, ending up on donkeys because of judicial decisions. Yet the principles come closer to resolution if the rule of law is set in a utopian past of “are dawes” (27), as it is here. The late medieval English saw the Anglo-Saxon period as a lost golden age where laws applied to all.⁵⁹ Numerous open assemblies occur in the poem to deliberate Athelwold’s and Birkabeyn’s succession, Havelock’s claim to the throne, and even the fate of Godrich and Godard, which he defers to the people’s verdict. Absent in the French versions, such assemblies include “riche and pouere, heye

⁵⁵ “Populus iuxta sanctiones divinas ducendus est non sequendus,” quoted in Michael J. Swanton, *Crisis and Development in Germanic Society 700-800* (Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1982), 13.

⁵⁶ Given-Wilson, 57.

⁵⁷ Crane, 8.

⁵⁸ Crane, 48.

⁵⁹ Rouse gives the example of the tenants of St. Alban’s Abbey who demanded during the Peasants’ Rebellion of 1381 that the abbot renew the privileges granted them by King Offa. The rebels refused to believe the abbot’s protests that no charter existed. Rosamund Faith, “The Great Rumour of 1377 and Peasant Ideology,” in *The English Rising of 1381*, ed. R.H. Hilton and T.H. Aston (Cambridge, 1984), 64, in Robert Allen Rouse, “English Identity and the Law in *Havelock the Dane*, *Horn Childe* and *Maiden Rimmild* and *Beues of Hamtoun*,” *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. Corinne Sanders (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 70.

and lowe” (2292) as summoned to judge Godard. The poet has been called “a virtuoso of violence”⁶⁰ for taking a rather pornographic glee in the executions, but Havelock decides that even royal traitors deserve a trial. The ideal ruler is no sun king relying on imperial grandeur, but justifies his rule “in strictly practical terms: the good king brings justice, peace, and loyalty to his people.”⁶¹ Most importantly, the three kings share that most leveling of emotions with their subjects: love.

Godard and Godrich both pervert and subvert the ideal of legitimacy through popular consent as expressed by Athelwold and Birkabeyn. Godrich calls a “parlement” (1007), but it is a bread-and-circuses affair more than meaningful political deliberation, for the poet mentions only athletic games. The competitors cheerfully play by the rules and are good losers, in juxtaposition to Godrich’s cheating intrigues. He stacks state institutions with his own cronies, all at “his wille, at hise merci” (271), and without admitting any as partners in government.⁶² Godard similarly coerces his subjects into obedience (441). Swanton believes that Godrich has some redemption in wanting his son to be king,⁶³ but his actions debase primogeniture into a cynical power-grab rather than fatherly concern or desire for stability of succession. Godrich never considers marrying Goldeboru to his son, and even the Archbishop of York is forced to dignify the hoax of wedding Goldeboru to the *hexte* man. Whereas Athelwold genuinely asks for *rede* from

⁶⁰ Levine, 96. But Godard’s sentence is in keeping with actual punishments meted out to individuals guilty of high treason. In 1283 Edward I similarly summoned a parliament which sentenced the rebel Prince of Wales’ brother to be drawn by horses, hanged, and quartered (Staines, 620).

⁶¹ A.C. Spearing, *Readings in Medieval Poetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 44.

⁶² Delaney, 67.

⁶³ Swanton, 197.

his advisors, Godrich makes only a perfunctory show of consultation: “wat wile ye, frend, her-offe rede?” (2585).⁶⁴ That Godrich has already vowed to kill Havelock and does not wait for a reply before giving orders demonstrates the appeal’s emptiness.

The absence of a just king ruling by popular consent in turn corrupts the body politic, and Godrich and Godard’s unlawful rule results in public disorder. Both usurpers’ subjects sink into tyrannical rule based on animal fear rather than popular consent. Godrich’s army fears him “so runic spore” (“as an old horse does the spur,” 2390), and Godrich has to threaten his soldiers with slavery in order to coerce their support (2385), a “flagrant and unheard-of violation of custom and law.”⁶⁵ Lacking the personal bonds of loyalty of the *comitatus*, Godard’s men put up only a token defense (2237). The poet’s praise for the public order during Athelwold’s reign is telling. The repetition of phrases such as “in that time” (25) emphasize how under Godrich’s tenure England is no longer a place where traders can safely carry gold. Ubbe’s rebel sergeants who harass Havelock at the guardhouse demonstrate his heroism but also indicate how Denmark’s violence reflects that of Godard.

The opposing views on power that distinguish Germanic kingship from Latinate authority are also seen in the differing religious practices depicted in the poem. Critics have noted the “complete secularity” of Havelock’s succession, which has no cathedrals or bishops in either Denmark or England.⁶⁶ Instead of a religious ceremony, there is a

⁶⁴ Scott, 155.

⁶⁵ Delaney, 68. Simon de Montfort, who led a baron’s revolt against Henry III, did threaten those who failed to muster with disinheritance but was killed a month later at Evesham. Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 118.

⁶⁶ Delaney, 71.

forty-day feast (2771). One explanation is that the historical Edward also ruled for years before ecclesiastical confirmation.⁶⁷ Such an omission would be consistent in the more secular French version,⁶⁸ but Havelock is elsewhere presented as an ideal of Christian piety. There is a long scene of tearful contrition in a church where Havelock “bifor þe rode bigan falle / croiz and Crist bigan to kalle” (1358-9). Neither Havelock nor Goldeboru defy what they believe to be “Godes wille” (1167) in a forced marriage. Similarly, both Athelwold and Birkabeyn meticulously undergo last rites, with Athelwold scourging himself and giving away his possessions, leaving not even clothing (220) in order not to risk entering heaven as a rich man. The poet requests the audience’s prayers at the end of his labors (2818), for death spares none, “riche ne poure” (353). Couch even suggests a hagiographic reading of *Havelock*, as it appears in MS Laud Misc. 108 next to several pietistic texts such as the *South English Legendary*.⁶⁹

The kings have been criticized for narcissistically obsessing over their own souls instead of being concerned with their political succession. Yet all of these religious observances of the dying monarchs and of Havelock form a consistent pattern: they are all essentially personal acts of devotion rather than state rituals of power. Neither Athelwold nor Birkabeyn uses Christian ritual in order to buttress his kingship, for they are on their deathbeds; they do it for their own souls. Similarly, Havelock’s wedding vows do not have a publicly kingly purpose (yet), and Havelock’s night-long penitence

⁶⁷ Delaney, 72.

⁶⁸ Staines, 609.

⁶⁹ Julie Nelson Couch, “Defiant Devotion in MS Laud Misc. 108: The Narrator of *Havelok the Dane* and Affective Piety,” *Parergon* 25:1 (2008): 53-79.

before his journey to Denmark is done alone. Only Godrich and Godard publicly swear on altars and missals while receiving political authority (186-9) in an attempt to sugarcoat their power seizure through the church. The implicit assertion is that the just king is legitimized by the people, not by Roman ecclesiastical authority. Only Havelock's inner piety is used by the poet to indicate moral character; both Havelock and Edward I endow a Cistercian house in thanks for protection from storms.⁷⁰

At times the poet tries to have things both ways by having an angel appear to Goldeboru to explain Havelock's kingly heritage, and by putting a gold cross birthmark on his shoulder. A balance must still be drawn between kingship legitimized either wholly by the *folc* or ordered by God. Were it absolutely the former, Birkabeyn would not have the right in a primitive Germanic tribe to designate his son as king. Nevertheless, the angel's visitation forms a private scene in the pair's bedroom and not the basis of Havelock's claim to Denmark. The angel does not proclaim, he informs. Similarly, when Ubbe and his nobles puzzle over the light emanating from Havelock's mouth and his cross-mark, they do not shout, "Deus vult!" The response is rather secular. The men seem more focused on Havelock's position as Birkabeyn's lawful heir rather than the idea of divine selection. As with Grim and his wife, the purpose of the Heavenly light seems more to draw attention. In the Robin Hood folktales the rich abbot is abused, but the friar is viewed warmly for being on the side of the people.⁷¹ *Havelock* is not an anti-clerical poem, but genuine faith is consistently portrayed in personal rather than institutional terms.

⁷⁰ Staines, 619.

⁷¹ Swanton, *English Literature*, 23.

Certainly, a contemporary understanding of class and authority would have been necessary for the poem if it were to survive or be relevant to an audience, in the same way that Chaucer cheerily makes his Troilus and Palamon ancient pagans with Ricardian courtly values. A hostile chronicler, Jean Froissart writes around 1400 that the English peasants are “cruel, perfidious, proud and disloyal,” and are so haughty that the nobles cannot even have an egg without paying for it.⁷² While unlikely, such demonizations echoed many aristocratic and literary attitudes toward the peasant class. Justice, previously everyone’s concern and right to secure through revenge or *wergild*, had become a selective prerogative of ‘the king’s peace.’ Godard’s dismissive slur to Grim, “be eueremore / þral and cherl, als þou er wore” (684-5) would not seem extreme in Chaucer’s time: Richard II betrays the peasant rebels of 1381 with almost identical words.⁷³ Even the cook’s purchase of new clothes, hose, and shoes for Havelock (970) might have been complicated in later centuries by sumptuary laws prescribing permitted attire for each class. Strohm concludes that such niggling laws were futile attempts to arrest the creeping obsolescence of feudalism and the stirrings of capitalism. Yet they typified attempts to secure ostensible class boundaries.

Nevertheless, a critical fixation on class divisions in *Havelock* oversimplifies a complex time period. Class does not seem to be a primary issue for the poet, or for the narrator who ostensibly tells the tale in an ale-house. His concern is rather depicting the moral example of a “ful god gome” (7) who overcomes difficulty and injustice through

⁷² Jean Froissart, *Chroniques*, from the Rome MS (3ième redaction, c. 1400), quoted in Janet Coleman, *Medieval Readers and Writers 1350-1400* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 14.

⁷³ “Rustici quidem fuistis et estis; in bondagio permanebitis...,” quoted in Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T. Riley (London, 1864) II, 156, in Halverson, 145.

his own virtues as well as his birthright. While there were likely homiletic intentions to the story—an endorsement of working with a *blibe* spirit and of trusting in God—the sort of audience imagined to be sitting in a tavern would have wanted an entertaining story then just as now. If *Havelock*'s audience was expected to see parallels between contemporary events and the values of their ancestors under pre-Norman or Danelaw England, it was an affirming comparison, and a general one rather than the desideratum of one particular social class.

That ideal was overall more Germanic than Latinate. The characters who populate *Havelock* value food, family, strong drink, and horseplay more than chivalry or ceremony. They have a greater expectation of social mobility which emphasizes strength and fortitude in legitimizing status. A man may be born to be king but must earn respect. These assumptions were not automatic in England or its literature, but they are the water in which the poem swims. The poet asks that God bless *us* (20). The peasant might have heard *Havelock* and thought this a uniting concept, and the gentility might have read it and thought it a pleasant even if naïve sentiment. Northrop Frye describes the audience of the quest-romance as desiring a fulfillment that will escape reality while still containing that reality.⁷⁴ The audience of *Havelock* might have enjoyed such a tale, set in an antique England still consisting of the best aspects of an older Germanic heritage that had partly ceased to exist.

⁷⁴ In Delaney, 61.

CHAPTER 8

King Horn

King Horn survives in three manuscripts: Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 108 (c. 1300), Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27.2 (c. 1300), and British Library MS Harley 2253 (c. 1325). I take as my text source Ronald B. Herzman, Graham Drake, and Eve Salisbury, eds. *King Horn. Four Romances of England*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/hornfrm.htm>. Herzman *et al.* use as their base text Cambridge Gg.4.27.2. Selected editions include Joseph Hall, *King Horn: A Middle English Romance* (1901), Walter Hoyt French & Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930), and Rosamund Allen, *King Horn* (1984).

1	Alle beon he blithe That to my song lythe! A sang ich schal you singe Of Murry the Kinge. King he was biweste So longe so hit laste. Godhild het his quen; Faire ne mighte non ben. He hadde a sone that het Horn;	May all be happy Who listen to my song! I will sing you a melody About Murray the King. He was a king in the far west As long as his life lasted. His queen was named Godhild; No one could be more beautiful. He had a son called Horn. ¹
10	Fairer ne mighte non beo born, Ne no rein upon birine, Ne sunne upon bischine. Fairer nis non thane he was: He was bright so the glas; He was whit so the flur; Rose red was his colur.	No one could be born more handsome, No one who had rain fall on them Or the sun shine on them. There was no fairer child than he was. He was as bright as glass; He was as white as a flower; His features were red like a rose. ²

¹ Garbaty points out that, unlike many medieval romances, Murray, Godhild, Horn, and others in the text do not seem to refer to or represent any known historical figures. Thomas J. Garbaty, *King Horn, Medieval English Literature* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), note to line 4.

² The poet connects Horn's features to his mother's. TEAMS cites Hall, who comments that such language is usually reserved for women, and he has "not found anything quite like it used for a hero of romance." Joseph Hall, *King Horn: A Middle English Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), 93.

20	<p>He was fayr and eke bold, And of fiftene winter hold. In none kinge riche Nas non his iliche. Twelf feren he hadde That he alle with him ladde, Alle riche mannes sones, And alle hi were faire gomes, With him for to pleie, And mest he luvede tweie; That on him het Hathulf child, And that other Fikenild.</p>	<p>He was fair and brave as well, And fifteen years old. In no other rich kingdom Was there anyone like him. He had twelve companions Who always went with him, All noble men's sons, And all of them were fine boys For him to have fun with. And he loved two the most— One of them was called Child Athulf,³ And the other Fickenhild.</p>
30	<p>Athulf was the beste, And Fikenylde the werste. Hit was upon a someres day, Also ich you telle may, Murri, the gode King, Rod on his pleing Bi the se side, Ase he was woned ride. With him riden bote two - Al to fewe ware tho! He fond bi the stronde,</p>	<p>Athulf was the best, And Fickenhild the worst. It was on a summer's day, As I can tell you as well, When Murray, the good king, Rode for leisure By the seaside, As he was accustomed to do. There were only two riding with him; They were all too few! He noticed by the shore</p>
40	<p>Arived on his londe, Schipes fiftene With Sarazins kene He axede what hi soghte Other to londe broghte. A payn hit ofherde, And hym wel sone answarede: “Thy lond folk we schulle slon, And alle that Crist luveþ upon And the selve right anon.</p>	<p>Fifteen ships That had arrived on his land With zealous Saracens. He asked what they were looking for Or what they brought to the land. A pagan heard him And answered him brusquely, “We will kill your land's people And all who have love for Christ, And yourself right away. You will not leave here today.”</p>
50	<p>Ne shaltu todai henne gon.” The king alighte of his stede, For tho he haveþe nede, And his gode knightes two; Al to fewe he hadde tho. Swerd hi gunne gripe And togadere smite. Hy smyten under schelde That sume hit yfelde.</p>	<p>The king dismounted from his horse, For he needed the help Of his two good knights. He had all too few then! They began to grip swords And strike against each other. They struck under shields So that some were brought down, But the king had all too few</p>
60	<p>Togenes so fele schrewe; So wele mighten ythe Bringe hem thre to dithe. The pains come to londe</p>	<p>Against so many villains. They could too easily Bring the three to death. The pagans came to the land</p>

³ *Hathulf child*: ME *child* as a post-positive adjective usually indicates not childhood but the role of apprentice knight, similar to the titles *page* and *squire*, though it can also be initial (*Childe Roland*). Normally boys began as pages very young and became squires around age fourteen. See also *Guy of Warwick*, line 1625.

70	<p>And neme hit in here honde That folc hi gunne quelle, And churchen for to felle. Ther ne moste libbe The fremde ne the sibbe. Bute hi here laye asoke, And to here toke. Of alle wymmanne Wurst was Godhild thanne. For Murri heo weop sore And for Horn yute more. He wente ut of halle Fram hire maidenen alle Under a roche of stone Ther heo livede alone.</p>	<p>And took it into their hand. They began to kill the people And to destroy churches. No one might live, Whether friend or family, Unless they renounced their faith And took theirs. Of all women, The most miserable was Godhild. She wept bitterly for Murray And for Horn even more. She went out of the hall, Away from all her maidens, Into a cave of stone Where she lived alone.</p>
80	<p>Ther heo servede Gode Aghenes the paynes forbode. Ther he servede Criste That no payn hit ne wiste. Evre heo bad for Horn child That Jesu Crist him beo myld. Horn was in paynes honde With his feren of the londe. Muchel was his fairhede, For Jhesu Crist him makede. Payns him wolde slen,</p>	<p>There she served God Against the pagans' injunction. There she served Christ, So that no pagan knew of it. She continually prayed for Child Horn, That Jesus Christ might be kind to him. Horn was in pagan hands With his companions from the land. His noble grace stood out, For Jesus Christ had made him so. The pagans would have killed him Or flayed him alive, If not for his beauty; The children would all be slain.</p>
90	<p>Other al quic flen, Yef his fairnesse nere: The children alle aslaye were. Thanne spak on admirad - Of wordes he was bald, - "Horn, thu art well kene, And that is wel isene. Thu art gret and strong, Fair and evene long; Thu schalt waxe more</p>	<p>Then one admiral spoke Who was bold in words: "Horn, you are strong-willed, That is clear to see. You are great and strong, Handsome and tall. You will grow bigger Before seven years more. If you were to leave alive, And your company as well, It might so happen that You would kill us all.</p>
100	<p>Bi fulle seve yere. Yef thu mote to live go And thine feren also, Yef hit so bi falle, Ye scholde slen us alle: Tharvore thu most to stere, Thu and thine ifere; To schupe schulle ye funde, And sinke to the grunde. The se you schal adrenche,</p>	<p>Therefore you are headed for sea, You and your companions. You will hustle onto the ship, And sink to the bottom. The sea will drown you, And we will have no regrets. For if you were alive, We would all die, And you would avenge your father, With sword or with knife."</p>
110	<p>Ne schal hit us noght ofthinche. For if thu were alive, With swerd other with knive, We scholden alle deie, And thi fader deth abeie." The children hi broghte to stronde, Wringinde here honde, Into schupes borde</p>	<p>The youths were brought to the shore, Wringing their hands, And boarded the boat</p>

120	At the furste worde. Ofte hadde Horn beo wo, Ac nevre wurs than him was tho. The se bigan to flowe, And Horn child to rowe; The se that schup so fasste drof The children dradde therof. Hi wenden towisse Of here lif to misse, Al the day and al the night Til hit sprang dailight, Til Horn sagh on the stronde	At the first command. ⁴ Often Horn had been sorrowful, But never worse than he was then. The sea began to rise, And Child Horn began to sail. ⁵ The sea drove that ship so fast That the children were terrified. They expected for certain To lose their lives, Through all the day and all the night Until daylight had sprung, Until Horn saw on the shore Men walking about the land.
130	Men gon in the londe. “Feren,” quath he, “yonge, Ich telle you tithinge: Ich here foyeles singe And that gras him springe. Blithe beo we on lyve; Ure schup is on ryve.” Of schup hi gunne funde, And setten fout to grunde. Bi the se side	“Fellows,” he said, “lads, I will tell you some good news: I hear birds singing And see the grass growing. Let us be happy to be alive! Our boat is on the shore.” They hurried off the boat And set their feet on the ground By the seaside, Letting the boat drift. Then Child Horn, born in The Southlands, addressed it: ⁶ “Boat on the ocean tide, May you have good days On the brink of the sea. May you drink no water! If you return to the Southlands, Greet my family well. Greet my mother well, Godhild, the good queen, And tell the heathen king, Jesus Christ’s enemy, That I am safe and sound And have arrived here on this land. And say that they will feel The strike of my hand!” The children went to the town,
140	Hi leten that schup ride. Thanne spak him child Horn, In Suddene he was iborn: “Schup bi the se flode, Daies have thu gode. Bi the se brinke, No water the nadrinke. Yef thu cume to Suddene, Gret thu wel of myne kenne, Gret thu wel my moder, Godhild, Quen the gode, And seie the paene king, Jesu Cristes withering, That ich am hol and fer On this lond arived her; And seie that hei schal fonde The dent of myne honde.” The children yede to tune,	
150		

⁴ The children are set adrift and expected to drown. Tradition held that the sinful would die but the innocent would receive providential aid, as Bevis does (TEAMS). As with Godard and Havelock (519-36), the Saracens perhaps believe they will avoid sinning, as the *water* will be responsible for the childrens’ deaths. In the *Man of Law’s Tale* Custance’s heathen mothers-in-law set her adrift twice for similar reasons (CT II.439-41 and 799-802).

⁵ *Rowe*: TEAMS renders this as *rue*, i.e. Horn began to regret the sea waves, but several manuscripts have *rowen* and for Horn to take charge makes more sense within the poem’s sentiments.

⁶ *Suddene*: Scholars do not agree where this is and have posited areas in southern England as well as Sweden and Suðdene, i.e. southern Denmark. Like the character names, the locations may be as fanciful as Riverdale in an *Archie* comic. See also the notes to line 161 and 689.

160	<p>Bi dales and bi dune. Hy metten with Almair King, Crist yeven him His blessing King of Westernesse Crist yive him muchel blisse! He him spac to Horn child Wordes that were mild: “Whannes beo ye, faire gumes, That her to londe beoth icume, Alle throttene, Of bodie swithe kene? Bi God that me makede,</p>	<p>Over hills and over valleys. They met with King Almair. May Christ give him His blessing! He was king of Westlands.⁷ May Christ give him great peace! He spoke to Child Horn With words that were kind: “Where are you from, fair lads, That you have come here, All thirteen of you, With such hardy bodies? By God who made me, I never saw such a noble group In any time In western lands. Tell me what you are looking for.” Horn made a speech there. He spoke for them all, For it was most fitting As he was the fairest And quickest of wits. “We are from the Southlands. I come from a good family, Of Christian blood, And a highly honorable king. Pagans have arrived there And taken his life. They have slain and torn apart Enough Christian men. So may Christ help me, They had us led Onto a galley To sport on the sea. One day passed, and another, Without sail or rudder. Our boat began to drift Toward the shore of this land. You might slay us now or bind Our hands behind us. But if it is your will, Help us so that we do not die.” The good king then spoke. I know he was no villain. “Tell me, child, what is your name? You will have nothing but leisure.” The boy answered him As soon as he heard the king:</p>
170	<p>A swich fair verade Ne saugh ich in none stunde, Bi westene londe: Seie me wat ye seche.” Horn spak here speche, He spak for hem alle, Vor so hit moste bivalle: He was the faireste And of wit the beste. “We beoth of Suddenne,</p>	
180	<p>Icome of gode kenne, Of Cristene blode, And kynges swthe gode. Payns ther gunne arive And duden hem of lyve. Hi sloghen and todroghe Cristene men inoghe. So Crist me mote rede, Us hi dude lede Into a galeie, With the se to pleie,</p>	
190	<p>Dai hit is igon and other, Withute sail and rother: Ure schip bigan to swymme To this londes brymme. Nu thu might us slen and binde Ore honde bihynde. Bute yef hit beo thi wille, Helpe that we ne spille.” Thanne spak the gode kyng</p>	
200	<p>Iwis he nas no nithing “Seie me, child, what is thi name? Ne schaltu have bute game.” The child him answerde, Sone so he hit herde:</p>	

⁷ *Westernesse*: Like *Suddene*, this seems to ambiguously mean western England. Schofield suggests the Isle of Man based on the French manuscript where the queen flees to *Ardenne*, a Manx word and now The Ard (18-19). William Henry Schofield, *The Story of Horn and Rimenhild* (Baltimore: Modern Language Association of America, 1903). But see the note to line 689 for different clues.

210	<p>“Horn ich am ihote, Icomen ut of the bote, Fram the se side. Kyng, wel mote thee tide.” Thanne hym spak the gode king, “Well bruc thu thin evening.</p>	<p>“I am called Horn. I came out of the boat From the sea side. Sire, may you have good fortune.” Then the good king spoke to him, “May your name carry well!”⁸</p>
220	<p>Horn, thu go wel schulle Bi dales and bi hulle; Horn, thu lude sune, Bi dales and bi dune; So schal thi name springe Fram kynge to kynge, And thi fairnesse Abute Westernesse, The strengthe of thine honde Into evrech londe.</p>	<p>Horn, you will travel well By valley and by hill. Horn, you will loudly sound By plain and by dune. Your name will resound From king to king, And your nobility Around the Westlands. The strength of your hand Will be known in every land.</p>
230	<p>Horn, thu art so swete, Ne may ich the forlete.” Hom rod Aylmar the Kyng And Horn mid him, his fundling, And alle his ifere, That were him so dere. The kyng com into halle Among his knightes alle; Forth he clupede Athelbrus, That was stiward of his hus.</p>	<p>Horn, you are so sweet, I cannot abandon you.” Almair the king rode home with Horn alongside him, his foundling, And all his companions Who were so dear to him. The king came into the hall Among all of his knights. He called forth Athelbruce, Who was steward of his house.</p>
240	<p>“Stiward, tak nu here My fundlyng for to lere Of thine mestere, Of wude and of rivere, And tech him to harpe With his nayles scharpe, Bivore me to kerve, And of the cupe serve. Thu tech him of alle the liste</p>	<p>“Steward, now take here My foundling, to teach him Your trade, Of hunting and hawking, And teach him to harp With his fingernails sharp; And to carve meat before me And to serve from the cup.”⁹ Tutor him in all the skills That you ever learned, And guide his companions Into other services.</p>
250	<p>Horn thou undervonge And tech him of harpe and songe.” Ailbrus gan lere Horn and his yfere. Horn in herte laghte Al that he him taghte. In the curt and ute, And elles al abute</p>	<p>Take charge of Horn And train him in harp and song.” Athelbruce began to teach Horn and his company. Horn took to heart All that he taught him In the court and outside it. And every man around Loved Child Horn,</p>
250	<p>Luvete men Horn child,</p>	<p>Loved Child Horn,</p>

⁸ *Well bruc thu thin evening*: Garbaty has *well bruc thu thi neuening*, “may you long enjoy your name.” The king is making a series of puns on Horn’s name, that his ‘sound’ or reputation will travel widely.

⁹ These are traditional duties of the squire, and Chaucer’s squire similarly serves by cutting meat “biforn his fader at the table” (*CT* I.100).

	<p>And mest him luvede Rymenhild, The kynges owene doghter. He was mest in thoghte; Heo luvede so Horn child That negh heo gan wexe wild: For heo ne mighte at borde With him speke no worde, Ne nocht in the halle</p>	<p>And Rimenhild loved him the most, The king's own daughter. He was first in her thoughts. She loved Child Horn so much That she nearly grew mad. For she could not speak a word With him at the table Or in the hall</p>
260	<p>Among the knightes alle, Ne nowhar in non othere stede. Of folk heo hadde drede: Bi daie ne bi nighte With him speke ne mighte. Hire soreghe ne hire pine Ne mighte nevre fine. In heorte heo hadde wo, And thus hire bithoghte tho: Heo sende hire sonde</p>	<p>Among all the knights, Or anywhere in another place. She was afraid of being seen. By day and by night, She could not speak with him. Neither her sorrow nor her pain Might ever have an end. She had sadness in her heart, And so she decided then She would send her word</p>
270	<p>Athelbrus to honde, That he come hire to, And also scholde Horn do, Al in to bure, For heo gan to lure; And the sonde seide That sik lai that maide, And bad him come swithe For heo nas nothing blithe. The stward was in herte wo, For he nuste what to do.</p>	<p>To Athelbruce's hand, That he come to her, And Horn as well, Together into her bedroom, For she had begun to look pale. And the message said That the maiden lay sick, And asked him to come quickly For she was not well at all. The steward was distressed at heart, For he did not know what to do.</p>
280	<p>Wat Rymenhild hure thoghte Gret wunder him thughte, Abute Horn the yonge To bure for to bringe. He thoghte upon his mode Hit nas for none gode: He tok him another, Athulf, Hornes brother.</p>	<p>What Rimenheld's intentions were Seemed very mysterious to him, To bring the young Horn Into her chamber. He turned it over in his mind But it was for no good. He took someone else with him, Athulf, Horn's brother in arms.</p>
290	<p>"Athulf," he sede, "right anon Thu schalt with me to bure gon To speke with Rymenhild stille And witen hure wille. In Hornes ilike Thu schalt hure biswike: Sore ich me ofdrede Heo wolde Horn misrede." Athelbrus gan Athulf lede, And into bure with him yede: Anon upon Athulf child</p>	<p>With me right away to the chamber To speak with Rimenhild privately And find out her will. In Horn's likeness You will fool her. I am sorely afraid She would lead Horn astray." Athelbruce escorted Athulf And went with him into the bower. Upon that, Rimenhild began To grow unrestrained with Athulf.</p>
300	<p>Rymenhild gan wexe wild: Heo wende that Horn hit were That heo havede there: Heo sette him on bedde; With Athulf child he wedde; On hire armes tweie</p>	<p>She thought it was Horn That she had there. She set him on the bed And began to woo Athulf. She embraced him</p>

<p>310</p> <p>320</p> <p>330</p> <p>340</p> <p>350</p>	<p>Athulf heo gan leie. “Horn,” quath heo, “wel longe Ich habbe thee luvd stronge. Thu schalt thi trewthe plighte On myn hond her righte, Me to spuse holde, And ich thee lord to wolde.” Athulf sede on hire ire So stille so hit were, “Thi tale nu thu lynne, For Horn nis noght her inne. Ne beo we noght iliche: Horn is fairer and riche, Fairer bi one ribbe Thane eni man that libbe: Thegh Horn were under molde Other elles wher he wolde Other henne a thusend mile, Ich nolde him ne thee bigile.” Rymenhild hire biwente, And Athelbrus fule heo schente. “Hennes thu go, thu fule theof, Ne wurstu me nevre more leof; Went ut of my bur, With muchel mesaventur. Schame mote thu fonge And on highe rode anhonge. Ne spek ich noght with Horn: Nis he noght so unorn; Horn is fairer thane beo he: With muchel schame mote thu deie.” Athelbrus in a stunde Fel anon to grunde. “Lefdi min oghe, Lithe me a litel throghe! Lust whi ich wonde Bringe thee Horn to honde. For Horn is fair and riche, Nis no whar his iliche. Aylmar, the gode Kyng, Dude him on mi lokyng. Yef Horn were her abute, Sore I me dute With him ye wolden pleie Bitwex you selve tweie. Thanne scholde withuten othe The kyng maken us wrothe.</p>	<p>In her two arms. “Horn,” she said, “for the longest time I have loved you passionately. You must swear your faithfulness On my hand right here, To hold me as your spouse, And for me to have you as lord.” Athulf whispered in her ear, As gently as possible, “Stop your talking now, For Horn is not in here. We are not alike; Horn is more handsome and strong, Fairer by a rib Than any man that lives! Even if Horn were under the earth Or wherever else he was, Or a thousand miles from here, I cannot deceive him or you!” Rimenhild changed her mood, And reviled Athelbruce foully. “Get out of here, you foul thief! You will never again be dear to me. Leave my bower, With cursed luck! May shame undo you And hang you high on the gallows! I have not spoken to Horn. He is not so plain! Horn is fairer than this man is. May you die in great disgrace!” In a moment, Athelbruce Fell to the ground. “My dear lady, Listen to me for a moment! Hear why I hesitated To bring Horn to your hand. For Horn is fair and rich, And there is no one his equal anywhere. Almair, the good king, Placed him in my care. If Horn were about here, I would be sorely worried That you would go too far¹⁰ With the two of you alone. Then, beyond question, The king would make us sorry.</p>
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¹⁰ *Ye wolden pleie*: *Play* in ME covers a variety of meanings, from innocent merriment to battle to sexual intercourse. Athelbruce is delicately suggesting that young passion would get the better of both of them. His concern is that the king would view the seduction of his daughter as treason, as also happens in *Amis and Amiloun*.

360	<p>Rymenhild, foryef me thi tene, Lefdi, my quene, And Horn ich schal thee fecche, Wham so hit recche.” Rymenhild, yef he cuthe, Gan lynne with hire muthe. Heo makede hire wel blithe; Wel was hire that sithe. “Go nu,” quath heo, “sone, And send him after none, On a squieres wise. Whane the kyng arise To wude for to pleie, Nis non that him biwreie. He schal with me bileve Til hit beo nir eve, To haven of him mi wille;</p>	<p>Rimenhild, forgive me your anger, Lady, my queen, And I will bring you Horn, No matter who cares about it.” Rimenhild, as much as she could, Kept her mouth quiet. She made herself cheerful and Things were well with her then. “Go now,” she said, “at once, And send him after noon In a squire’s disguise. When the king rises To sport in the woods, There is no one who will betray him. He will stay with me Until it is nearly night, So that I have my will with him.</p>
370	<p>After ne recche ich what me telle.” Aylbrus wende hire fro; Horn in halle fond he tho Bifore the kyng on benche, Wyn for to schenche. “Horn,” quath he, “so hende, To bure nu thu wende, After mete stille, With Rymenhild to dwelle; Wordes swthe bolde,</p>	<p>I don’t care what is said about me after.” Athelbruce departed from her. He found Horn in the hall, On a bench before the king To pour him wine. “Horn,” he said, “so noble, Go to the chamber After the meal, quietly, To stay with Rimenhild. If you have strong words, Hold them in your heart. Horn, be true to my counsel And you will never regret it.”¹¹ Horn took to heart All that he said to him. He went right away To Rimenhild the beautiful. He set himself on his knees And greeted her sweetly. From his fair appearance All the room began to glow. He spoke a pleasing speech; He needed no man to teach him. “You sit graciously and softly, Shining Rimenhild, With your six maidens That you sit next to. Our king’s steward Sent me to your room. I am to speak with you. Tell me what you wish To say, and I shall hear What your will is.”</p>
380	<p>In herte thu hem holde. Horn, beo me wel trewe; Ne schal hit thee nevre rewe.” Horn in herte leide Al that he him seide; He yeode in wel righte To Rymenhild the brighte. On knes he him sette, And sweteliche hure grette. Of his feire sighte</p>	
390	<p>Al the bur gan lighte. He spac faire speche - Ne dorte him noman teche. “Wel thu sitte and softe, Rymenhild the brighte, With thine maidenes sixe That the sitteth nixte. Kinges stward ure Sende me in to bure; With thee speke ich scholde.</p>	
400	<p>Seie me what thu woldest: Seie, and ich schal here What thi wille were.”</p>	

¹¹ MS Harleian 2253, *Shal þe nout arewe*, gives a better sense of Athelbruce’s warning to Horn.

	Rymenhild up gan stonde And tok him bi the honde: Heo sette him on pelle Of wyn to drinke his fulle: Heo makede him faire chere And tok him abute the swere. Ofte heo him custe, So wel so hire luste.	Rimenhild stood up And took him by the hand. She set him on a fur cover And gave him wine to drink his fill. She showed him good cheer And took him about the neck. She continually kissed him, As much as she pleased. ¹²
410
H	Welcome horn þus sayde	“Welcome, Horn!”
406	Rymenild þat mayde An even & amorewe For þe ich habbe sorewe For þe y have no reste	The maid then whispered. “By day and night, For you I am in sorrow. For you I have no rest, Nor can I find a way to sleep.”
410	Ne slepe me ne lyste
411	“Horn,” heo sede, “withute strif, Thu schalt have me to thi wif. Horn, have of me rewthe, And plist me thi trewthe. Horn tho him bithoghte What he speke mighte. “Crist,” quath he, “thee wisse, And yive thee hevene blisse Of thine husebonde, Wher he beo in londe.	“Horn,” she said, “without doubt, You must have me for your wife. Horn, have pity on me, And pledge me your promise.” Horn thought to himself What he might say. “May Christ guide you,” he said, And give you Heaven’s joy In your husband, Wherever he is in the land.
420	Ich am ibore to lowe Such wimman to knowe. Ich am icome of thralle And fundling bifalle. Ne feolle hit the of cunde To spuse beo me bunde. Hit nere no fair wedding Bitwexe a thral and a king.” Tho gan Rymenhild mislyke	I was born too low To have such a woman. I come from a serf’s home And ended up a foundling. It would not be proper for you To wed me as a spouse. It would not be a fair wedding Between a peasant and a king.” Rimenhild was distaught then And began to sigh bitterly.
430	And sore gan to sike: Armes heo gan bughe; Adun heo feol iswoghe. Horn in herte was ful wo And tok hire on his armes two. He gan hire for to kesse Wel ofte mid ywisse. “Lemman,” he sede, “dere, Thin herte nu thu stere. Help me to knighte	Her arms began to bow And she fell down in a swoon. Horn was grieved in his heart And took her in his two arms. He began to kiss her repeatedly With growing confidence. “Darling,” he said, “dear one, Take charge of your heart now. Help me to become a knight, With all your might, By my lord the king So that he will give me dubbing. ¹³
440	Bi al thine mighte, To my lord the king That he me yive dubbing:	

¹² Rimenhild’s wooing seems abrupt here, and Hall believes the copyist has missed some lines (note to 410, p. 118, in TEAMS). The inserted six lines are from MS Harleian 2253, in Hall.

<p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>Thanne is mi thralhod I went in to knighthod And I schal wexe more, And do, lemman, thi lore.” Rymenhild, that swete thing, Wakede of hire swoghning. “Horn,” quath heo, “wel sone That schal beon idone. Thu schalt beo dubbed knight Are come seve night. Have her this cuppe And this ryng ther uppe To Aylbrus the stuard, And se he holde foreward. Seie ich him biseche, With loveliche speche, That he adun falle Bifore the king in halle, And bidde the king arighte Dubbe thee to knighte. With selver and with golde Hit wurth him wel iyolde. Crist him lene spede Thin erende to bede.” Horn tok his leve, For hit was negh eve. Athelbrus he soghte And yaf him that he broghte, And tolde him ful yare Hu he hadde ifare, And sede him his nede, And bihet him his mede. Athelbrus also swithe Wente to halle blive. “Kyng,” he sede, “thu leste A tale mid the beste. Thu schalt bere crune Tomoreghe in this tune; Tomoreghe is thi feste: Ther bihoveth geste. Hit nere noght for loren For to knighti child Horn, Thine armes for to welde: God knight he schal yelde.”</p>	<p>Then my serfdom Will be turned into knighthood And I will grow to more, dear, And obey your instruction.” Rimenhild, that sweet thing, Woke from her swoon. “Horn,” she said, “very soon That will be done! You will be dubbed a knight Before seven nights have passed. Take this cup here, And this ring with it, To Athelbruce the steward, And see that he keeps his word. Say that I pleaded, With words of affection,¹⁴ For him to fall down Before the king in the hall And ask the king directly To dub you a knight at once. He will be well-rewarded With silver and with gold. May Christ grant him success In pursuing your case.” Horn took his leave, For it was nearly evening. He looked for Athelbruce And gave him what he brought And told him quickly How he had fared, And told him his desires, And promised him his reward. Athelbruce, just as quickly, Went promptly to the hall. “Sire,” he said, “please listen To a tale as good as the best. Tomorrow you will bear Your crown in this town; Tomorrow is your feast. It is fitting to enjoy yourself. It would not be a wasted effort To knight Child Horn To bear your arms. He will make a good knight.”</p>
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¹³ Hall points out that an unfree man being knighted would have been acceptable under the laws of Ethelred but would have been rare by the thirteenth century (note to 439). Horn is of course already royal, though he ostensibly wishes to minimize the king’s potential anger if he accedes to Rimenhild’s desires.

¹⁴ *With loveliche speche*: Who the ‘loving words’ are for is not clear, and ME has not yet worked out conventions of indirect speech. Rimenhild seemingly asks Horn to tell Athelbruce that she is asking him with fondness. TEAMS also suggests that the king is meant to understand that she is asking him with a daughter’s affection.

490	<p>The king sede sone, "That is wel idone. Horn me wel iquemeth; God knight him bisemeth. He schal have mi dubbing And after wurth mi derling. And alle his feren twelf He schal knighten himself: Alle he schal hem knighte Bifore me this nighte." Til the light of day sprang Ailmar him thughte lang.</p>	<p>The king soon replied, "That is well thought. I am well pleased with Horn. It seems he will be a fine knight. He will have my dubbing And after he will be my favorite. And as for his twelve companions, He will knight them himself. He will dub them all Before me this night." Until the light of day sprang, Almair was deep in thought.</p>
500	<p>The day bigan to springe; Horn com bivore the kinge, Mid his twelf yfere, Sume hi were luthere. Horn he dubbede to knighte With swerd and spures brighte. He sette him on a stede whit: Ther nas no knight hym ilik. He smot him a litel wight And bed him beon a god knight. Athulf fel aknes thar</p>	<p>The day began to spring. Horn came before the king With his twelve companions, Though some of them were wicked. He dubbed Horn a knight With a sword and shining spurs. He set him on a white steed; There was no knight like him. He struck him a light blow¹⁵ And charged him to be a worthy knight. Athulf fell on his knees there Before King Almair.</p>
510	<p>Bivore the King Aylmar. "King," he sede, "so kene Grante me a bene: Nu is knight Sire Horn That in Suddene was iboren; Lord he is of londe Over us that bi him stonde; Thin armes he hath and scheld To fighte with upon the feld: Let him us alle knighte For that is ure righte."</p>	<p>"Sire, so valiant," he said, "Grant me a favor. Now Sir Horn is a knight, Who was born in the Southlands. He is lord of the land Over all of us who stand near him. He has your arms and shield To fight with on the field. Let him knight us all, For that is our right."</p>
520	<p>Aylmar sede sone ywis, "Do nu that thi wille is." Horn adun lighte And makede hem alle knightes. Murie was the feste Al of faire gestes: Ac Rymenhild nas noght ther, And that hire thughte seve yer. After Horn heo sente,</p>	<p>Almair answered at once, in truth, "Do now what your will is." Horn knelt down And made them all knights. The feast was merry, Filled with fine entertainments. But Rimenhild was not there, And it seemed like seven years to her. She sent for Horn,</p>
530	<p>And he to bure wente. Nolde he noght go one; Athulf was his mone. Rymenhild on flore stod: Hornes come hire thughte god:</p>	<p>And he went to her chamber. But he would not go alone, As Athulf was his companion. Rimenhild stood on the floor, Pleased with Horn's coming,</p>

¹⁵ *He smot him a litel wight*: Dubbing by tapping a kneeling knight with a sword is a late medieval development. Dubbing originally involved a firm box on the ear, cheek, or neck (as is probably the case here) or an embrace around the neck. See also Hall's note (page 126).

540	<p>And sede, "Welcome, Sire Horn, And Athulf knight the biforn. Knight, nu is thi time For to sitte bi me. Do nu that thu er of spake: To thy wif thu me take. Ef thu art trewe of dedes, Do nu ase thu sedes. Nu thu hast wille thine, Unbind me of my pine." "Rymenhild," quath he, "beo stille! Ich wulle don al thi wille, Also hit mot bitide. Mid spere I schal furst ride, And mi knighthod prove,</p>	<p>And said, "Welcome, Sir Horn, And Sir Athulf before you. Knight, now is the time For you to sit by me. Do now what you spoke about before; Take me to be your wife. If you are true to your words, Do now as you said. Now that you have your will, Release me from my pain." "Rimenhild," he said, "be still! I will do all that you want When the time is right. I will first ride with a spear And prove my knighthood Before I begin to court you. We are both young knights, Sprung up in one day, And this is the custom Of our profession. It is good for a knight's lover That he fight with some other knight Before he takes a wife. For you I go in greater haste. Today, so may Christ bless me, I will prove my abilities, For your love, in the field, With spear and shield. If I come back alive, I will make you my wife." "Knight so true," she answered, "I know that I can trust you. Take this gold ring here. The detailing on it is fine; On the ring is engraved 'Rimenhild the Young.' There is none better under the sun That any man can speak of. Wear it for my love, And bear it on your finger. The stones are of such power That you need not, in any place, Be afraid of any blows, Nor be maddened in battle, If you look upon it And think of your sweetheart. And Sir Athulf, your brother, He will have another. Horn, I plead for you, With loving words, That Christ give you a good result And bring you back again." The knight kissed her And she blessed him.</p>
550	<p>Ar ich thee ginne to woghe. We beth knightes yonge, Of o dai al isprunge; And of ure mestere So is the manere: With sume othere knichte Wel for his lemman fighte Or he eni wif take; Forthi me stondesth the more rape. Today, so Crist me blesse, Ich wulle do pruesse, For thi luve in the felde Mid spere and mid schelde. If ich come to lyve, Ich schal thee take to wyve." "Knight," quath heo, "trewe, Ich wene ich mai thee leve: Tak nu her this gold ring: God him is the dubbing; Ther is upon the ringe</p>	<p>I will first ride with a spear And prove my knighthood Before I begin to court you. We are both young knights, Sprung up in one day, And this is the custom Of our profession. It is good for a knight's lover That he fight with some other knight Before he takes a wife. For you I go in greater haste. Today, so may Christ bless me, I will prove my abilities, For your love, in the field, With spear and shield. If I come back alive, I will make you my wife." "Knight so true," she answered, "I know that I can trust you. Take this gold ring here. The detailing on it is fine; On the ring is engraved 'Rimenhild the Young.' There is none better under the sun That any man can speak of. Wear it for my love, And bear it on your finger. The stones are of such power That you need not, in any place, Be afraid of any blows, Nor be maddened in battle, If you look upon it And think of your sweetheart. And Sir Athulf, your brother, He will have another. Horn, I plead for you, With loving words, That Christ give you a good result And bring you back again." The knight kissed her And she blessed him.</p>
560	<p>Ich schal thee take to wyve." "Knight," quath heo, "trewe, Ich wene ich mai thee leve: Tak nu her this gold ring: God him is the dubbing; Ther is upon the ringe</p>	<p>I will make you my wife." "Knight so true," she answered, "I know that I can trust you. Take this gold ring here. The detailing on it is fine; On the ring is engraved 'Rimenhild the Young.' There is none better under the sun That any man can speak of. Wear it for my love, And bear it on your finger. The stones are of such power That you need not, in any place, Be afraid of any blows, Nor be maddened in battle, If you look upon it And think of your sweetheart. And Sir Athulf, your brother, He will have another. Horn, I plead for you, With loving words, That Christ give you a good result And bring you back again." The knight kissed her And she blessed him.</p>
570	<p>Igrave "Rymenhild the yonge": Ther nis non betere anonder sunne That eni man of telle cunne. For my luve thu hit were And on thi finger thu him bere. The stones beoth of suche grace That thu ne schalt in none place Of none dundes beon ofdrad, Ne on bataille beon amad, Ef thu loke theran</p>	<p>There is none better under the sun That any man can speak of. Wear it for my love, And bear it on your finger. The stones are of such power That you need not, in any place, Be afraid of any blows, Nor be maddened in battle, If you look upon it And think of your sweetheart. And Sir Athulf, your brother, He will have another. Horn, I plead for you, With loving words, That Christ give you a good result And bring you back again." The knight kissed her And she blessed him.</p>
580	<p>And thenke upon thi lemman. And Sire Athulf, thi brother, He schal have another. Horn, ich thee biseche With loveliche speche, Crist yeve god erndinge Thee aghen to bringe." The knight hire gan kesse, And heo him to blesse.</p>	<p>And she blessed him.</p>

590	<p>Leve at hire he nam, And in to halle cam: The knightes yeden to table, And Horne yede to stable: Thar he tok his gode fole, Also blak so eny cole. The fole schok the brunie That al the curt gan denie. The fole bigan to springe, And Horn murie to singe. Horn rod in a while</p>	<p>He took his leave of her And came into the hall. The knights went to dinner, And Horn went to the stable. There he took his fine horse, As black as any coal. The foal shook its armor¹⁶ So that it resounded through the court. The horse began to spring, And Horn began to sing merrily. In a while Horn had ridden More than a mile.</p>
600	<p>More than a myle. He fond o schup stonde With hethene honde. He axede what hi soghte Other to londe broghte. An hund him gan bihelde That spac wordes belde: “This lond we wullegh winne And sle that ther is inne.” Horn gan his swerd gripe</p>	<p>He found an anchored ship, Filled with heathen hounds. He asked what they were looking for Or had brought to the land. One pagan dog beheld him As he spoke belligerent words: “We will conquer this land And slay those who are in it.” Horn gripped his sword And wiped it on his arm. He struck at the Saracens So that his blood grew hot. With every blow A head flew off. Then the hounds began To surround the lone Horn. He looked on the ring And thought of Rimenhild. He slayed there in his rush At least a hundred, Nor might anyone count The men that he destroyed. Of all who had arrived,¹⁷ None would succeed there. Horn took the leader’s head, Which he had lost because of him, And set it on his sword, On top of the point. He traveled home into the hall Among all the knights. “Sire,” he announced, “sit easily With all your knights beside you. Today, after my dubbing, As I rode for sport, I found a row of ships Surrounded by the waters,</p>
610	<p>And on his arme wype. The Sarazins he smatte That his blod hatte; At evreche dunte The heved of wente; Tho gunne the hundes gone Abute Horn a lone: He lokede on the ringe, And thoughte on Rimenilde; He slogh ther on haste</p>	
620	<p>On hundred bi the laste, Ne mighte noman telle That folc that he gan quelle. Of alle that were alive, Ne mighte ther non thrive. Horn tok the maisteres heved, That he hadde him bireved And sette hit on his swerde, Anoven at than orde. He verde hom into halle, Among the knightes alle.</p>	
630	<p>“Kyng,” he sede, “wel thu sitte, And alle thine knightes mitte. Today, after mi dubbing, So I rod on my pleing I fond o schup rowe Mid watere al byflowe</p>	

¹⁶ *The fole schok the brunie*: Horses were commonly armored only after the late twelfth century (Hall, note to 591). Horn is knighted on a white steed (505) and so either this is a slip or he has several horses.

¹⁷ *Alive*: Harleian 2253 MS has *aryve*.

<p>640</p>	<p>Al with Sarazines kyn, And none londisse men To dai for to pine Thee and alle thine. Hi gonne me assaille: Mi swerd me nolde faille: I smot hem alle to grunde, Other yaf hem dithes wunde. That heved I thee bringe Of the maister kinge. Nu is thi wile iyolde, King, that thu me knighty woldest.”</p>	<p>All with Saracen kin, To torment you and all That is yours this day, With no one on the land to help. They tried to attack me, But my sword would not fail me. I struck them all to the ground Or gave them deadly wounds. I bring you the head Of the chief king. Now your effort is rewarded, Sire, for making me a knight.”</p>
<p>650</p>	<p>A moreghe tho the day gan springe, The king him rod an huntinge. At hom lefte Fikenhild, That was the wurste moder child. Horn ferde into bure To sen aventure. He saw Rymenild sitte Also heo were of witte. Heo sat on the sunne With tieres al birunne. Horn sede, “Lef, thin ore! Wi wepestu so sore?”</p>	<p>In the morning when day began to spring, The king rode out to go hunting. Fickenhild was left home, Who was the worst mother’s child. Horn went into the bower To look for diversion. He found Rimenhild pining As if she were out of her wits. She sat in the window sun With tears running down. Horn said, “Dear, your patience! Why are you weeping so sorely?”</p>
<p>660</p>	<p>Heo sede, “Noght I ne wepe, Bute ase I lay aslepe To the se my net I caste, And hit nolde noght ilaste; A gret fiss at the furste Mi net he gan to berste. Ich wene that ich schal leose The fiss that ich wolde cheose.” “Crist,” quath Horn, “and Seint Stevene</p>	<p>She said, “I do not weep for nothing, But as I lay asleep, I cast my net to the sea, And it would not stay together. At the first moment a great fish Began to burst through my net. I believe that I will lose The fish that I wish to choose.” Horn replied, “May Christ and Saint Stephen amend your dream! I will not deceive you, Nor do what displeases you. I will make myself your own, To hold and to be known To every other person, And to that I pledge my oath.”</p>
<p>670</p>	<p>Turne thine swevene. Ne schal I thee biswike, Ne do that thee mislike. I schal me make thin owe To holden and to knowe For everech othere wighte, And tharto mi treuthe I thee plighte.” Muchel was the ruthe That was at thare truthe, For Rymenhild weop ille, And Horn let the tires stille.</p>	<p>There was great dismay In that betrothal, For Rimenhild wept bitterly Until Horn stopped her tears. “Lover,” he said, “dear heart, There is more to hear. Your dream will show that Some other man will harm us. The fish that broke the line, Truly, he will cause us pain. That result will bring us grief,</p>
<p>680</p>	<p>“Lemman, quath he, “dere, Thu schalt more ihere. Thi sweven schal wende Other sum man schal us schende. The fiss that brak the lyne, Ywis he doth us pine. That schal don us tene,</p>	<p>That result will bring us grief,</p>

690	<p>And wurth wel sone isene.” Aylmar rod bi Sture, And Horn lai in bure. Fykenhild hadde envye And sede thes folye: “Aylmar, ich thee warne Horn thee wule berne: Ich herde whar he sede, And his swerd forth leide, To bringe thee of lyve, And take Rymenhild to wyve. He lith in bure</p>	<p>And will soon be seen.” Almair rode by the Stour,¹⁸ And Horn lay in the room. Fickenhild was jealous And spoke these lies: “Almair, I must warn you: Horn will destroy you. I heard what he said, And his sword is laid ready To take your life And to take Rimenhild as his wife. He is lying in her chamber, Under the bedcovers With your daughter Rimenhild, And he does this often. If you go there straightaway, You will find him there. Banish him out of the land Before he brings you to ruin!” Almair began to turn back In great anger and distress. He found Horn in her arms, In Rimenhild’s embrace. “Away, out,” he said, “foul thief! You will never be dear to me again! Get out of this room With cursed fortune! Unless you flee at once, I will strike you with my sword!¹⁹ Get out of my land, Or you will have greater shame!” Horn saddled his steed And laid out his arms. He began to lace his chainmail As if he were going to battle. He seized his sword And did not linger long; He went forth quickly To Rimenhild, his betrothed. He said, “Darling, dear one, Now you have your dream. The fish that tore your net Has now been sent from you. Rimenhild, goodbye.</p>
700	<p>Under coverture By Rymenhild thi doghter, And so he doth wel ofte. And thider thu go al right, Ther thu him finde might. Thu do him ut of londe, Other he doth thee schonde!” Aylmar aghen gan turne Wel modi and wel murne. He fond Horn in arme</p>	
710	<p>On Rymenhilde barme. “Awey ut,” he sede, “fule theof, Ne wurstu me nevremore leof! Wend ut of my bure With muchel messaventure. Wel sone bute thu flitte, With swerde ich thee anhitte. Wend ut of my londe, Other thu schalt have schonde.” Horn sadelede his stede</p>	
720	<p>And his armes he gan sprede. His brunie he gan lace So he scholde in to place. His swerd he gan fonge: Nabod he noght to longe. He yede forth blive To Rymenhild his wyve. He sede, “Lemman derling, Nu havestu thi swevening. The fiss that thi net rente, Fram thee he me sente.</p>	
730	<p>Rymenhild, have wel godne day:</p>	

¹⁸ *Sture*: TEAMS and Garbaty claim this is the Mersey, but there is a River Stour running through Stourport-on-Severn and Kidderminster, near Worcester. If this is ‘southern’ to the poet, perhaps *Westernesse* is much further northwest, only limited by Ireland. *Suddene* might then refer to southern stretches of the Danelaw, but Worcester was part of Mercia and not occupied by the Danes.

¹⁹ This exposure scene is similar to the duke’s discovery of Amis and Belisaunt, or even of the emir and Floris and Blancheflor. The king is relatively lenient here in not attempting to execute Horn by his own hand in a rage or by trial as the emir does.

740	<p>No leng abiden I ne may. In to uncuthe londe, Wel more for to fonde; I schal wune there Fulle seve yere. At seve yeres ende, Yef I ne come ne sende, Tak thee husebonde; For me thu ne wonde.</p>	<p>I cannot stay any longer, But will go to unknown lands To find a new life. I will stay there A full seven years. At the end of seven years, If I do not come or send word, Take a husband And do not wait for me.</p>
750	<p>In armes thu me fonge, And kes me wel longe.” Heo custe him wel a stunde And Rymenhild feol to grunde. Horn tok his leve: Ne mighte he no leng bileve; He tok Athulf, his fere, Al abute the swere, And sede, “Knight so trewe, Kep wel mi luvne newe.</p>	<p>Take me in your arms And kiss me for a while.” She kissed him for a long time And Rimenhild swooned to the ground. Horn took his leave; He could not stay any longer. He embraced his friend Athulf about the neck And said, “Knight so true, Keep my new lover well. Do not ever forsake me! Protect and look after Rimenhild.”</p>
760	<p>Thu nevre me ne forsok: Rymenhild thu kep and loke. His stede he gan bistride, And forth he gan ride: To the havene he ferde, And a god schup he hurede, That him scholde londe In westene londe. Athulf weop with ighe And al that him isighe. The whyght him gan stonde, And drof til Hirelonde. To londe he him sette And fot on stirop sette. He fond bi the weie Kynges sonnes tweie; That on him het Harild, And that other Berild.</p>	<p>He mounted his steed And began to ride forth. He traveled to the harbor And hired a sturdy ship That would take him To western lands. Athulf wept from his eyes In seeing all that. The sea breeze carried him And drove him to Ireland. He set foot on land And put his feet in stirrups. He found, on his way, The king’s two sons. One called himself Harold And the other Berild.</p>
770	<p>Berild gan him preie That he scholde him seie What his name were And what he wolde there. “Cutberd,” he sede, “ich hote, Icomen ut of the bote, Wel feor fram biweste To seche mine beste.”</p>	<p>Berild asked of him That he would say What his name was, And what he wanted there. “Cutbeard is my name,” he said.²⁰ “I come from out of a boat From far away on the western coast²¹ To seek my fortune.”</p>

²⁰ *Cutberd*: The name may not have any significance, and Harleian MS 2253 has *Godmod*. Garbaty posits an influence from the legend of the Anglo-Saxon bishop Saint Cuthbert (c. 634-687), who was also set adrift and landed in Galloway, Scotland (note to 773). For more on possible borrowings from saints’ legends, see Irene P. McKeehan, “The Book of the Nativity of St. Cuthbert,” *PMLA* 48 (1933): 981-99.

²¹ *Biweste*: ‘by way of the west’ or ‘from the west’ does not make sense from the perspective of Ireland. The poet perhaps means ‘western England’ or ‘west Danelaw.’

780	<p>Berild gan him nier ride And tok him by the bridel: “Wel beo thu, knight, ifounde; With me thu lef a stunde. Also mote I sterve, The king thu schalt serve. Ne sagh I nevre my lyve So fair knight aryve.” Cutberd heo ladde in to halle, And hi a kne gan falle: He sette him a knewelyng And grette wel the gode king. Thanne sede Berild sone:</p>	<p>Bereld rode nearer him And took him by the bridle. “You are well met, knight! Stay with me a while. As sure as I must die, You shall serve the king! I never saw such a fair knight Arrive here in all my life.” They led Cutbeard into the hall And fell on to their knees. They set themselves kneeling And courteously greeted the good king. Then Bereld said at once, “Sire King, you have duties for him. Entrust him to defend your land. No man will harm him, For he is the noblest man That ever yet came to this land.” Then the dear king said, “You are welcome here. Go now, Berild, quickly, And make him at ease. And if you go courting, Give him your glove.²² If you intend to marry someone, He will outshine you! Because of Cutbeard’s manliness You would surely never succeed.” It was on Christmas Day, Neither before or after, When at noon a giant Abruptly came inside, Armed from pagan lands, Who said this rhyme: “Be still, Sire King, And listen to what I say. Pagan warriors have arrived, Far more than five. They are on the shore, King, on your land. Tomorrow one of them will fight Against three of your knights. If the three slay our one, This land will remain yours. If our one overcomes your three, All this kingdom will be ours. Tomorrow will be the battle, When the light of day springs.”</p>
790	<p>“Sire King, of him thu hast to done; Bitak him thi lond to werie; Ne schal hit noman derie, For he is the faireste man That evre yut on thi londe cam.” Thanne sede the king so dere, “Welcome beo thu here. Go nu, Berild, swithe, And make him ful blithe. And whan thu farst to woghe,</p>	
800	<p>Tak him thine glove: Iment thu havest to wyve, Awai he schal thee dryve; For Cutberdes fairhede Ne schal thee nevre wel spede.” Hit was at Cristemasse, Neither more ne lasse; Ther cam in at none A geaunt swthe sone, Iarmed fram paynyme</p>	
810	<p>And seide thes ryme: “Site stille, Sire Kyng, And herkne this tything: Her buth paens arived; Wel mo thane five Her beoth on the sonde, King, upon thy londe; On of hem wile fighte Aghen thre knightes. Yef other thre slen ure,</p>	
820	<p>Al this lond beo youre; Yef ure on overcometh your threo, Al this lond schal ure beo. Tomoreghe be the fightinge, Whane the light of daye springe.”</p>	

²² *Tak him thine glove*: The meaning of the line is opaque. The king perhaps praises Horn’s handsomeness and teases his son by saying that Berild should give Horn his glove when he is courting to show that Horn is not a competitor, as otherwise Berild will be outclassed. See TEAMS and Hall, note to lines 793-7.

<p>830</p> <p>840</p> <p>850</p> <p>860</p> <p>870</p>	<p>Thanne sede the Kyng Thurston, “Cutberd schal beo that on; Berild schal beo that other, The thridde Alrid his brother; For hi beoth the strengeste And of armes the beste. Bute what schal us to rede? Ich wene we beth alle dede.” Cutberd sat at borde And sede thes wordes: “Sire King, hit nis no righte On with thre to fighte: Aghen one hunde, Thre Cristen men to fonde. Sire, I schal alone, Withute more ymone, With mi swerd wel ethe Bringe hem thre to dethe.” The king aros amoreghe, That hadde muchel sorghe; And Cutberd ros of bedde, With armes he him schredde: Horn his brunie gan on caste, And lacede hit wel faste, And cam to the kinge At his up risinge. “King,” he sede, “cum to felde, For to bihelde Hu we fighte schulle, And togare go wulle.” Right at prime tide Hi gunnen ut ride And funden on a grene A geaunt swthe kene, His feren him biside Hore deth to abide. The ilke bataille Cutberd gan asaille: He yaf dentes inoghe; The knightes felle iswoghe. His dent he gan withdraghe, For hi were negh aslaghe; And sede, “Knights, nu ye reste One while ef you leste.” Hi sede hi nevre nadde Of knighte dentes so harde, Bote of the King Murry, That wes swithe sturdy. He was of Hornes kunne, Iborn in Suddene. Horn him gan to agrise, And his blod arise. Bivo him sagh he stonde That driven him of lond</p>	<p>King Thurston said after, “Cutbeard will be one, And Berild will be the other, And Alfred, his brother, the third. For they are the strongest And the finest in arms. But what shall we do? I expect we will all be dead!” Cutbeard sat at the table And said these words: “Sire King, it is not right For one to fight with three, For three Christian men To take on one heathen hound. Sire, I will go alone, Without any other companions. With my sword I will easily Bring the three of them to death.” In the morning, the king rose, With great misgivings. And Cutbeard got out of bed And fitted himself with arms. He cast on his chainmail coat And laced it tightly, And came to the king When he had risen up. “Sire,” he said, “come to the field To behold How the fighting will go, And we will go together.” Right at the first light, They rode out And met on the green. The giant was very keen, With his companions by him, Waiting to bring their deaths. Cutbeard began to fight The agreed battle. He struck blows enough, And the warriors became faint. He began to ease off his strikes, For they were nearly slain, And said, “Sirs, you may rest now For a while if you like.” They said they had never had Such hard blows from a knight, Except from King Murray, Who was also very formidable. He was from Horn’s family, Born in the Southlands. Horn began to shudder, And his blood rose. He saw standing before him the men Who had driven him from his land</p>
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880	<p>And that his fader slogh. To him his swerd he drogh. He lokede on his rynge And thoghte on Rymenhilde. He smot him thuregh the herte, That sore him gan to smerte. The paens that er were so sturne Hi gunne awei urne; Horn and his compaynye Gunne after hem wel swithe highe</p>	<p>And killed his father. He drew his sword to himself. He looked at his ring, And thought of Rimenhild. He stabbed them through their chests, Which pained them harshly. The pagans, who were so fierce earlier, Began to run away. Horn and his company Took after them in great haste And slaughtered all the hounds Before they could reach their ships. He brought them all to death; They paid dearly for his father's murder. Of all the king's knights, Not a person was hurt Except for his two sons, Whom he saw die before him. The king began to weep And to let tears fall. Men laid them on a funeral bier And buried them right away. The king came into the hall Among all of his knights. "Horn," he said, "I say to you, Do as I will advise you. Both of my heirs are dead, And you are a knight of great fame, And of great strength, And fair, with a tall body. You will rule my kingdom And will have for a wife Renild, my daughter, Who waits upstairs." "O Sire King, it would be wrong For me to accept Your daughter that you offer me, Or to govern your realm. It is better that I serve you, Sire, before you die.²³ Your sorrow will be relieved Before seven years' end. When they have passed, Sire, give me my reward. If I ask for your daughter, You will not refuse me." Cutbeard lived there For a full seven years, And neither sent word to Rimenhild</p>
890	<p>Er hi here schipes funde. To dethe he hem alle broghhte. His fader deth wel dere hi boghte. Of alle the kynges knightes Ne scathede wer no wighte, Bute his sones tweie Bifore him he sagh deie. The king bigan to grete And teres for to lete. Me leiden hem in bare And burden hem ful yare.</p>	
900	<p>The king com into halle Among his knightes alle. "Horn," he sede, "I seie thee, Do as I schal rede thee. Aslaghen beth mine heirs, And thu art knight of muchel pris, And of grete strengthe, And fair o bodie lengthe. Mi rengne thu schalt welde,</p>	
910	<p>And to spuse helde Reynild, mi doghter, That sitteth on the lofte." "O Sire King, with wronge Scholte ich hit underfonge, Thi doghter, that ye me bede, Ower rengne for to lede. Wel more ich schal thee serve, Sire Kyng, or thu sterve. Thi sorwe schal wende</p>	
920	<p>Or seve yeres ende. Whanne hit is wente, Sire King, yef me mi rente. Whanne I thi doghter yerne, Ne shaltu me hire werne." Cutberd wonede there Fulle seve yere That to Rymenild he ne sente</p>	

²³ *Sterve*: in OE and ME *starve* has the more general meaning of 'die.' It only later gained the more specific meaning of dying of hunger.

930	<p>Ne him self ne wente. Rymenild was in Westernesse With wel muchel sorinesse. A king ther gan arive That wolde hire have to wyve; Aton he was with the king Of that ilke wedding. The daies were schorte, That Rimenhild ne dorste Leten in none wise. A writ he dude devise; Athulf hit dude write,</p>	<p>Nor did he journey himself. Rimenhild was in the Westlands In great sorrow. Another king arrived there Who wanted to have her as his wife. He was in accord with the king On the matter of the wedding. The days were so short That Rimenhild did not dare To obstruct it in any way. She dictated a letter, And it was written by Athulf, Who did not love Horn lightly. She sent her messenger To every land To seek Horn the knight, Wherever he might find him. Horn heard nothing of it Until one day when he went Into the woods to hunt, And he met a servant there. Horn said, "Dear fellow, What are you looking for here?"</p>
940	<p>That Horn ne luvede nocht lite. Heo sende hire sonde To evereche londe To seche Horn the knight Ther me him finde mighte. Horn nocht therof ne herde Til o day that he ferde To wude for to schete. A knave he gan imete. Horn seden, "Leve fere, What sechestu here?"</p>	<p>She sent her messenger To every land To seek Horn the knight, Wherever he might find him. Horn heard nothing of it Until one day when he went Into the woods to hunt, And he met a servant there. Horn said, "Dear fellow, What are you looking for here?"</p>
950	<p>"Knight, if beo thi wille, I mai thee sone telle. I seche fram biweste Horn of Westernesse For a maiden Rymenhild, That for him gan wexe wild. A king hire wile wedde And bringe to his bedde, King Modi of Reynes, On of Hornes enemis.</p>	<p>"Knight, if it is your will, I will soon tell you. I come from the English coast Seeking Horn of the Westlands For a maiden, Rimenhild, Who is growing mad for his sake. A king will marry her And bring her to his bed, King Moody of Furness,²⁴ One of Horn's enemies.</p>
960	<p>Ich habbe walke wide, Bi the se side; Nis he nowar ifunde. Walawai the stunde! Wailaway the while! Nu wurth Rymenild bigiled."</p>	<p>I have walked far Along the sea side. He is nowhere to be found. Alas the hour! Alas the time! Now Rimenhild has been deceived!"</p>
970	<p>Horn iherde with his ires, And spak with bidere tires: "Knave, wel thee bitide! Horn stondesth thee biside. Aghen to hure thu turne And seie that heo nu murne, For I schal beo ther bitime, A Soneday by prime." The knave was wel blithe And highede aghen blive.</p>	<p>Horn heard with his own ears And said through bitter tears, "Lad, good fortune is with you! Horn stands in front of you. Turn back to her again And tell her not to mourn, For I will be there in good time, On Sunday by sunrise." The servant was very glad And hurried back quickly.</p>

²⁴ *Reynes*: Perhaps Furness, Lancashire, in the Lake District. Schofield argues that the French MS has *Fenice* and that the English *Reynis* might be a corruption (15).

980	<p>The se bigan to throghe Under hire woghe. The knave there gan adrinke: Rymenhild hit mighte ofthinke. The see him con ded throwe Under hire chambre wowe. Rymenhild undude the durepin Of the hus ther heo was in, To loke with hire ighe If heo oght of Horn isighe: Tho fond heo the knave adrent, That heo hadde for Horn isent, And that scholde Horn bringe.</p>	<p>But the sea began to surge Under Rimenhild's walls, And the servant began to founder there. Rimenhild thought she could see Him capsized in the ocean's rush, Under her chamber walls. Rimenhild undid the door bolt Of the house that she was in, To look with her eyes If she could see anything of Horn. When she found the drowned servant That she had sent for Horn,</p>
990	<p>Hire fingres heo gan wringe. Horn cam to Thurston the King And tolde him this tithing. Tho he was iknowe That Rimenhild was his oghe; Of his gode kenne The King of Suddenne, And hu he slogh in felde That his fader quelde, And seide, "King the wise, Yeld me mi servise.</p>	<p>Who was to bring him home, She began to wring her hands. Horn went to Thurston the king And told him this news. Then he was made aware How Rimenhild was Horn's own, About Horn's noble father, The king of the Southlands, And how he killed on the field The men who murdered his father. Horn said, "Wise king, Reward me for my service. Help me to win Rimenhild And do not fail me, And I will have your daughter Married into a good family. She will have for a husband Athulf, my best friend, A good knight among the best, And the truest."</p>
1000	<p>Rymenhild help me winne, That thu noght ne linne: And I schal do to spuse Thi doghter wel to huse: Heo schal to spuse have Athulf, mi gode felaghe, God knight mid the beste And the treweste."</p>	<p>The king said gently, "Horn, have your will now." He had letters sent Around Ireland For keen knights, Fighting Irish men. Enough came to Horn And boarded the ship, And Horn got under way In a strong galley. The wind began to blow In a little while. The sea began to push them Right into the Westlands. They struck the sail and mast, And cast off their anchor Before another day had sprung Or a bell was rung. The word began to spread Of Rimenhild's wedding. Horn was on the sea And could not be late.</p>
1010	<p>The king sede so stille, "Horn, have nu thi wille." He dude writes sende Into Yrlonde After knightes lighte, Irisse men to fighte. To Horn come inoghe That to schupe droghe. Horn dude him in the weie On a god galeie. The wind him gan to blowe In a litel throghe.</p>	<p>The king said gently, "Horn, have your will now." He had letters sent Around Ireland For keen knights, Fighting Irish men. Enough came to Horn And boarded the ship, And Horn got under way In a strong galley. The wind began to blow In a little while. The sea began to push them Right into the Westlands. They struck the sail and mast, And cast off their anchor Before another day had sprung Or a bell was rung. The word began to spread Of Rimenhild's wedding. Horn was on the sea And could not be late.</p>
1020	<p>The se bigan to posse Right in to Westernesse. Hi strike seil and maste And ankere gunne caste, Or eny day was sprunge Other belle irunge. The word bigan to springe Of Rymenhilde weddinge. Horn was in the watere, 1030 Ne mighte he come no latere.</p>	<p>The wind began to blow In a little while. The sea began to push them Right into the Westlands. They struck the sail and mast, And cast off their anchor Before another day had sprung Or a bell was rung. The word began to spread Of Rimenhild's wedding. Horn was on the sea And could not be late.</p>

	He let his schup stonde, And yede to londe. His folk he dude abide Under wude side. Horn him yede alone Also he sprunge of stone. A palmere he thar mette And faire hine grette: "Palmere, thu schalt me telle 1040 Al of thine spelle." He sede upon his tale, "I come fram o brudale; 1044 Ich was at o wedding Of a maide Rymenhild: L Fram honder chyrche wowe Pe gan louerd owe 1045 Ne mighte heo adrighe That heo ne weop with ighe. Heo sede that heo nolde Ben ispuised with golde. Heo hadde on husbonde 1050 Thegh he were ut of londe. L Mody myd strenþe hyre hadde And in to toure ladde 1051 And in strong halle, Bithinne castel walle, Ther I was atte yate, Nolde hi me in late. Modi ihote hadde To bure that me hire ladde: Away I gan glide: That deol I nolde abide. The bride wepeth sore, 1060 And that is muche deole." Quath Horn, "So Crist me rede, We schulle chaungi wede.	He let his ship stand anchored And went ashore. He had his company wait At the side of the woods; Horn made his way alone, As if he had sprung from the rocks. ²⁵ He met a pilgrim there And greeted him courteously. "Pilgrim, you must tell me All that is happening." He said in his conversation, "I've come from a bridal feast." ²⁶ I was at the wedding Of a maiden, Rimenhild. Under the church walls nearby She wedded a husband. ²⁷ She could not dry Her eyes from crying. She said that she would not Be married with a gold ring! She had a husband, Even if he was in another land. Moody had married her by force And had her brought to the tower, Into a strong hall Inside the castle walls. I was there at the gate But they would not let me in. Moody had ordered men To take her to her bower. I slipped away, For I could not endure that scene. The bride weeps bitterly, And that is a great pity." Horn said, "So help me Christ, We will exchange clothes!
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²⁵ *Also he sprunge of stone*: Garbaty mentions "an ancient belief that the first men originated from stones, singly, and hence were solitary" (note to line 1034). Hall gives as examples Teutonic legends and the *Odyssey*, xix.162-3, where Penelope tells the beggar, "You must have ancestors, for you did not spring from a tree or a rock."

²⁶ Garbaty notes that pilgrims, who collected palm branches in the Holy Lands and were thus called *palmer*s, were welcome guests at celebrations as they entertained everyone with their adventures. Refusing visitors during a wedding, as Moody does, was in very poor taste (note to 1037, 1052).

²⁷ Extra lines from MS Laud Misc. 108 (1076-7 and 1084-7). The lines make the sequence clearer: the pilgrim observed the public church ceremony before being shooed away from the reception. They also emphasize that Riminhild is married unwillingly and thus the marriage is both invalid and unconsummated.

	<p>Have her clothes myne And tak me thi sclavyne, Today I schal ther drinke That some hit schulle ofthinke.”</p>	<p>Take my clothing here, And give me your cloak. Today I will drink there To something others will regret.”</p>
1070	<p>His sclavyne he dude dun legge, And tok hit on his rigge, He tok Horn his clothes: That nere him noght lothe. Horn tok burdon and scrippe And wrong his lippe. He makede him a ful chere, And al bicolmede his swere. He makede him unbicomelich Hes he nas nevremore ilich. He com to the gateward, That him answerede hard:</p>	<p>The pilgrim laid down his cloak And took Horn’s clothes, And put them on his back. They were not displeasing to him! Horn took the staff and bag And twisted his lip. He gave himself a foul appearance And dirtied up his neck. He made himself unattractive As he had never looked before. He came to the gatekeeper, Who answered him coldly.</p>
1080	<p>Horn bad undo softe Mani tyme and ofte; Ne mighte he awynne That he come therinne. Horn gan to the yate turne And that wicket unspurne. The boye hit scholde abugge. Horn threw him over the brigge That his ribbes him tobrake, And suthe com in atte gate. He sette him wel loghe</p>	<p>Horn asked him softly to open it, Many times repeatedly. He did not gain permission So that he might come in. Horn finally turned to the gate And kicked out the wicket. The oaf would pay for it! Horn threw him over the bridge So that his ribs cracked, And swiftly came through the gate.</p>
1090	<p>In beggeres rowe; He lokede him abute With his colmie snute; He segh Rymenhild sitte Ase heo were of witte, Sore wepinge and yerne; Ne mighte hure no man wurne. He lokede in eche halke; Ne segh he nowhar walke Athulf his felawe,</p>	<p>He set himself down low, Among a row of beggars. He looked about him With his dirty snout. He saw Rimenhild pining As if she were out of her wits, Weeping sadly and earnestly. No man might console her. He looked in each corner, But he did not see his friend Athulf walking anywhere,</p>
1100	<p>That he cuthe knowe. Athulf was in the ture, Abute for to pure After his comynge, Yef schup him wolde bringe. He segh the se flowe And Horn nowar rowe. He sede upon his songe: “Horn, nu thou ert wel longe. Rymenhild thou me toke</p>	<p>As far as he could tell. Athulf was in the tower, Keeping a lookout For his coming, If a ship were to bring him. He saw the ocean flow And Horn nowhere on it. He said in singing, “Horn, you are slow to come. You entrusted Rimenhild to me, That I should look after her.</p>
1110	<p>That I scholde loke; Ich habbe ikept hure evre; Com nu other nevre: I ne may no leng hure kepe. For soreghe nu I wepe.” Rymenhild ros of benche, Wyn for to schenche,</p>	<p>I have always watched over her. Come now or never! I cannot protect her any longer, And now I weep for sorrow.” Rimenhild rose from the bench To pour some wine</p>

1120	<p>After mete in sale, Bothe wyn and ale. On horn heo bar anhonde, So laghe was in londe. Knightes and squier Alle dronken of the ber, Bute Horn alone Nadde therof no mone. Horn sat upon the grunde; Him thughte he was ibunde. He sede, "Quen so hende, To meward thu wende; 1130</p>	<p>With the dinner in the hall, Both wine and ale.²⁸ She carried a drinking horn in hand, As was the custom in the land. Knights and squires All drank the beer, All except for Horn, Who alone had no share of it. Horn sat on the ground, Thinking he was overcome. He said, "Gracious queen, Come toward me. Give us some first. The beggars are thirsty."</p>
1140	<p>Hure horn heo leide adun, And fulde him of a brun His bolle of a galun; For heo wende he were a gloutoun. Heo seide, "Have this cuppe, And this thing theruppe. Ne sagh ich nevre, so ich wene, Beggere that were so kene." Horn tok hit his ifere And sede, "Quen so dere, Wyn nelle ich mucche ne lite But of cuppe white. 1150</p>	<p>She laid down her horn And filled a bowl with a gallon Of beer from a brown jug, For she assumed he was a drunkard. She said, "Drink your cup, And this portion as well. I never saw, so far as I know, A beggar that was so bold." Horn gave it to his companion And said, "Dear queen, I do not want much wine, Only a cupful of white. You believe I am a beggar, But I am a fisherman Who has come far east To fish at your feast. My net lies nearby at hand Along a fair shore. It has laid there A full seven years. I have come to find out If it has captured any fish. I have come as an angler, Not to drink from a bowl. Drink to Horn with your horn, For I have journeyed far." Rimenhild looked at him And her heart began to quake. She did not understand his fishing Or recognize Horn himself, But she thought it so mysterious That she invited Horn to drink. She filled her horn with wine, And drank to the pilgrim. She said, "Drink your fill,</p>
1160	<p>1160 Fulle seve yere. Ich am icome to loke Ef eni fiss hit toke. Ich am icome to fisse: Drynke null I of dyssh: Drink to Horn of horne. Feor ich am jorne." Rymenhild him gan bihelde; Hire heorte bigan to chelde. Ne knew heo noght his fissing, Ne Horn hymselfe nothing. Ac wunder hire gan thinke Whi he bad to Horn drinke. Heo fulde hire horn with wyn And dronk to the pilegrym. Heo sede, "Drink thi fulle,</p>	<p>She said, "Dear queen, I do not want much wine, Only a cupful of white. You believe I am a beggar, But I am a fisherman Who has come far east To fish at your feast. My net lies nearby at hand Along a fair shore. It has laid there A full seven years. I have come to find out If it has captured any fish. I have come as an angler, Not to drink from a bowl. Drink to Horn with your horn, For I have journeyed far." Rimenhild looked at him And her heart began to quake. She did not understand his fishing Or recognize Horn himself, But she thought it so mysterious That she invited Horn to drink. She filled her horn with wine, And drank to the pilgrim. She said, "Drink your fill,</p>

²⁸ Pouring alcohol for the king and his guests is not a servile task but Rimenhild's royal privilege. In *Beowulf*, Hrothgar's wife Wealhþeow ceremoniously fills the warriors' cups in the mead hall (622-4).

1170	<p>And suthen thou telle If thou ever isighen Horn under wude lighen.” Horn drank of horn a stunde And threw the ring to grunde. He seyde, “Queen, now seche What is in thy drenchen.” The Queen yede to bure With hire maidenen foure. Thou fond heo what heo wolde, A ring igraven of golde That Horn of hire hadde; Sore hire dradde That Horn isterve were,</p>	<p>And tell me the truth, If you ever saw Horn lying in the woods.” Horn drank from the horn a while And dropped the ring to the bottom. He said, “Queen, look for What is in your drink.” The queen went to her chamber With her four maidenen. She found what she wished then, A ring engraved of gold That she had given Horn. She sorely dreaded That Horn was dead, For the ring was there.</p>	
1180	<p>For the ring was there. Thou sente heo a damesele After the palmere; “Palmere,” quath heo, “trewe, The ring that thou threwe, Thou seie whar thou hit nome, And whi thou hider come.” He sede, “Bi Seint Gile, Ich habbe go mani mile, Wel feor by yonde weste</p>	<p>Then she sent a maiden For the pilgrim. “Pilgrim,” she said, “be honest About the ring that you dropped. Say where you got it And why you have come here.” He said, “By Saint Giles, I have traveled many miles, Far beyond the west To seek my fortune. I found Child Horn in a certain place Waiting to board a ship. He said he was intending To return to the Westlands. The ship took to the waters With me and good Horn. Horn was sick and dying, And entreated me courteously, ‘Go with the ring To Rymenhild the yonge.’ Ofte he hit custe, God yeve his saule reste!” Rymenhild sede at the furste, “Herte, nu thou berste, For Horn nastu namore, That thee hath pined so sore.” Heo feol on hire bedde, Ther heo knif hudde, To sle with king lothe And hureselve bothe In that ulke nighte, If Horn come ne mighte. To herte knif heo sette, Ac Horn anon hire kepte. He wiped that blake of his swere, And sede, “Queen, so swete and dere, Ich am Horn thin oghe. Ne canstu me nocht knowe? Ich am Horn of Westernesse;</p>	<p>For the ring was there. Then she sent a maiden For the pilgrim. “Pilgrim,” she said, “be honest About the ring that you dropped. Say where you got it And why you have come here.” He said, “By Saint Giles, I have traveled many miles, Far beyond the west To seek my fortune. I found Child Horn in a certain place Waiting to board a ship. He said he was intending To return to the Westlands. The ship took to the waters With me and good Horn. Horn was sick and dying, And entreated me courteously, ‘Go with the ring To Rymenhild the Young.’ He continually kissed it. May God give his soul rest!” Rymenhild exclaimed at once, “Heart, now burst, For you no longer have Horn, Who has hurt you so sorely.” She fell on her bed, Where she had hidden a knife To slay the loathed king And herself as well On that same night If Horn would not come. She set the knife to her heart But Horn quickly caught her. He wiped the soot off his neck And said, “Queen, so sweet and dear, I am your own Horn! Don’t you recognize me? I am Horn of the Westlands.</p>
1190	<p>To seche my beste. I fond Horn child stonde To schupeward in londe. He sede he wolde agesse To arive in Westernesse. The schip nam to the flode With me and Horn the gode; Horn was sik and deide, And faire he me preide: ‘Go with the ringe To Rymenhild the yonge.’ Ofte he hit custe, God yeve his saule reste!” Rymenhild sede at the furste, “Herte, nu thou berste, For Horn nastu namore, That thee hath pined so sore.” Heo feol on hire bedde, Ther heo knif hudde, To sle with king lothe And hureselve bothe In that ulke nighte, If Horn come ne mighte. To herte knif heo sette, Ac Horn anon hire kepte. He wiped that blake of his swere, And sede, “Queen, so swete and dere, Ich am Horn thin oghe. Ne canstu me nocht knowe? Ich am Horn of Westernesse;</p>	<p>To seek my fortune. I found Child Horn in a certain place Waiting to board a ship. He said he was intending To return to the Westlands. The ship took to the waters With me and good Horn. Horn was sick and dying, And entreated me courteously, ‘Go with the ring To Rymenhild the Young.’ He continually kissed it. May God give his soul rest!” Rymenhild exclaimed at once, “Heart, now burst, For you no longer have Horn, Who has hurt you so sorely.” She fell on her bed, Where she had hidden a knife To slay the loathed king And herself as well On that same night If Horn would not come. She set the knife to her heart But Horn quickly caught her. He wiped the soot off his neck And said, “Queen, so sweet and dear, I am your own Horn! Don’t you recognize me? I am Horn of the Westlands.</p>	
1200	<p>To seche my beste. I fond Horn child stonde To schupeward in londe. He sede he wolde agesse To arive in Westernesse. The schip nam to the flode With me and Horn the gode; Horn was sik and deide, And faire he me preide: ‘Go with the ringe To Rymenhild the yonge.’ Ofte he hit custe, God yeve his saule reste!” Rymenhild sede at the furste, “Herte, nu thou berste, For Horn nastu namore, That thee hath pined so sore.” Heo feol on hire bedde, Ther heo knif hudde, To sle with king lothe And hureselve bothe In that ulke nighte, If Horn come ne mighte. To herte knif heo sette, Ac Horn anon hire kepte. He wiped that blake of his swere, And sede, “Queen, so swete and dere, Ich am Horn thin oghe. Ne canstu me nocht knowe? Ich am Horn of Westernesse;</p>	<p>To seek my fortune. I found Child Horn in a certain place Waiting to board a ship. He said he was intending To return to the Westlands. The ship took to the waters With me and good Horn. Horn was sick and dying, And entreated me courteously, ‘Go with the ring To Rymenhild the Young.’ He continually kissed it. May God give his soul rest!” Rymenhild exclaimed at once, “Heart, now burst, For you no longer have Horn, Who has hurt you so sorely.” She fell on her bed, Where she had hidden a knife To slay the loathed king And herself as well On that same night If Horn would not come. She set the knife to her heart But Horn quickly caught her. He wiped the soot off his neck And said, “Queen, so sweet and dear, I am your own Horn! Don’t you recognize me? I am Horn of the Westlands.</p>	
1210	<p>To seche my beste. I fond Horn child stonde To schupeward in londe. He sede he wolde agesse To arive in Westernesse. The schip nam to the flode With me and Horn the gode; Horn was sik and deide, And faire he me preide: ‘Go with the ringe To Rymenhild the yonge.’ Ofte he hit custe, God yeve his saule reste!” Rymenhild sede at the furste, “Herte, nu thou berste, For Horn nastu namore, That thee hath pined so sore.” Heo feol on hire bedde, Ther heo knif hudde, To sle with king lothe And hureselve bothe In that ulke nighte, If Horn come ne mighte. To herte knif heo sette, Ac Horn anon hire kepte. He wiped that blake of his swere, And sede, “Queen, so swete and dere, Ich am Horn thin oghe. Ne canstu me nocht knowe? Ich am Horn of Westernesse;</p>	<p>To seek my fortune. I found Child Horn in a certain place Waiting to board a ship. He said he was intending To return to the Westlands. The ship took to the waters With me and good Horn. Horn was sick and dying, And entreated me courteously, ‘Go with the ring To Rymenhild the Young.’ He continually kissed it. May God give his soul rest!” Rymenhild exclaimed at once, “Heart, now burst, For you no longer have Horn, Who has hurt you so sorely.” She fell on her bed, Where she had hidden a knife To slay the loathed king And herself as well On that same night If Horn would not come. She set the knife to her heart But Horn quickly caught her. He wiped the soot off his neck And said, “Queen, so sweet and dear, I am your own Horn! Don’t you recognize me? I am Horn of the Westlands.</p>	

1220	In armes thu me cusse.” Hi custe hem mid ywisse And makeden muche blisse. “Rymenhild,” he sede, “I wende Adun to the wudes ende: Ther beth myne knightes Redi to fighte; Iarmed under clothe, Hi schulle make wrothe The king and his geste	Kiss me in your arms!” They kissed each other, certainly, And had great joy. “Rimenhild,” he said, “I must go Down to the woods’ end. My knights are there, Ready to fight, Armed under their clothes. They will make the king And his guests who have Come to the feast displeased! Today I will teach them And correct them harshly.” Horn sprang out of the hall And let his cloak fall. The queen ran to the chamber And found Athulf in the tower. “Athulf,” she said, “be glad, And go to Horn quickly! He is under the forest boughs With knights enough with him.”
1230	That come to the feste. Today I schal hem teche And sore hem areche.” Horn sprong ut of halle And let his sclavin falle. The quen yede to bure And fond Athulf in ture. “Athulf,” heo sede, “be blithe And to Horn thu go wel swithe. He is under wude boghe	Today I will teach them And correct them harshly.” Horn sprang out of the hall And let his cloak fall. The queen ran to the chamber And found Athulf in the tower. “Athulf,” she said, “be glad, And go to Horn quickly! He is under the forest boughs With knights enough with him.”
1240	And with him knightes inoghe.” Athulf bigan to springe For the tithinge. After Horn he arnde anon, Also that hors mighte gon. He him overtok ywis; Hi makede swithe muchel blis. Horn tok his preie And dude him in the weie. He com in wel sone:	Athulf began to hurry Because of the news, And ran after Horn as quickly As a horse might go. In fact, he overtook him. They made great rejoicing. Horn called his band And set them on their way. Very soon he came in; The gates were undone. Armed heavily From head to foot, He made sorry Everyone who was inside At the celebration, Except his twelve companions And King Almair. They forfeited their lives there! Yet Horn took no vengeance On Fickenhild’s false tongue. He swore oaths of loyalty, That he would Never betray Horn, Even if death threatened. They rang the bell To celebrate the wedding. Horn went with his men To the king’s palace. There was a sweet wedding feast For the fine men who ate there. No tongue might tell Of the joys that were sung there. Horn sat on the throne,
1250	The yates were undone. Iarmed ful thikke Fram fote to the nekke, Alle that were therin Bithute his twelf ferin And the King Aylmare, He dude hem alle to kare, That at the feste were; Here lif hi lete there. Horn ne dude no wunder	Very soon he came in; The gates were undone. Armed heavily From head to foot, He made sorry Everyone who was inside At the celebration, Except his twelve companions And King Almair. They forfeited their lives there! Yet Horn took no vengeance On Fickenhild’s false tongue. He swore oaths of loyalty, That he would Never betray Horn, Even if death threatened. They rang the bell To celebrate the wedding. Horn went with his men To the king’s palace. There was a sweet wedding feast For the fine men who ate there. No tongue might tell Of the joys that were sung there. Horn sat on the throne,
1260	Of Fikenhildes false tunge. Hi sworn othes holde, That nevre ne scholde Horn nevre bitraie, Thegh he at dithe laie. Hi runge the belle The wedlak for to felle; Horn him yede with his To the kinges palais, Ther was bridale swete,	He swore oaths of loyalty, That he would Never betray Horn, Even if death threatened. They rang the bell To celebrate the wedding. Horn went with his men To the king’s palace. There was a sweet wedding feast For the fine men who ate there. No tongue might tell Of the joys that were sung there. Horn sat on the throne,
1270	For riche men ther ete. Telle ne mighte tunge That gle that ther was sunge. Horn sat on chaere,	Of the joys that were sung there. Horn sat on the throne,

	<p>And bad hem alle ihere. "King," he sede, "thu luste A tale mid the beste. I ne seie hit for no blame: Horn is mi name. Thu me to knight hove,</p>	<p>And asked them all to listen. "Sire King," he said, "listen to A tale among the best. I do not tell it to blame you. Horn is my name. You raised me to be a knight,</p>
1280	<p>And knighthod have proved To thee, king, men seide That I thee bitraide; Thu makedest me fleme, And thi lond to reme; Thu wendest that I wroghte That I nevre ne thoghte, Bi Rymenhild for to ligge, And that I withsegge.</p>	<p>And I have proven my knighthood. Men said to you, king, That I betrayed you. You made me flee And to leave your land. You believed that I had done What I had never thought of, To lay with Rimenhild, And that I deny!</p>
1290	<p>Ne schal ich hit biginne, Til I Suddene winne. Thu kep hure a stunde, The while that I funde In to min heritage, And to mi baronage. That lond I schal ofreche And do mi fader wreche. I schal beo king of tune, And bere kinges crune; Thanne schal Rymenhilde</p>	<p>Nor will I begin to do so Until I win the Southlands. Keep her for a time, While I attempt To recover my heritage And my own baronage. I will take that land And wreak vengeance for my father. I will be lord of that town, And bear a king's crown. Then Rimenhild will Lie with a king!"</p>
1300	<p>Ligge bi the kinge." Horn gan to schupe draghe With his Irisse felaghes, Athulf with him, his brother: Nolde he non other. That schup bigan to crude; The wind him bleu lude; Bithinne daies five That schup gan arive Abute middelnichte.</p>	<p>Horn took to the ship With his Irish fellows, With his brother Athulf by him. He did not want any others. The ship began to move And the wind blew loudly. Within five days The ship arrived Around midnight.</p>
1310	<p>Horn him yede wel righte; He tok Athulf bi honde And up he yede to londe. Hi founde under schelde A knight hende in felde. Op the schelde was drawe A crowch of Jhesu Cristes lawe. The knight him aslepe lay Al beside the way.</p>	<p>Horn set forth right away. He took Athulf by the hand And went up onto the land. Under a shield they found a knight Who was valiant on the battlefield. On the shield was drawn A cross of the faith of Jesus Christ. The knight lay asleep Along the pathway.</p>
1320	<p>Horn him gan to take And sede, "Knight, awake! Seie what thu kepest? And whi thu her slepest? Me thinkth bi thine crois lighte, That thu longest to ure Drighte. Bute thu wule me schewe, I schal thee tohewe." The gode knight up aros;</p>	<p>Horn took hold of him And said, "Knight, wake up! What you are guarding, And why you are sleeping there? I assume by your shining cross That you belong to our Lord. But unless you show me, I will hack you to pieces." The good knight rose up;</p>

1330	Of the wordes him gros. He sede, "Ich serve aghenes my wille Payns ful ylle.	He was terrified by the words. He pleaded, "Against my will, I serve evil pagans!
	Ich was Cristene a while: Tho icom to this ille Sarazins blake, That dude me forsake. On Crist ich wolde bileve. On him hi makede me reve To kepe this passage Fram Horn that is of age, That wunieth biweste,	I was once a Christian. Then black Saracens Came to this island, Who made me abandon my faith. Otherwise I would follow Christ. They made me a guard To protect this passage From Horn, who is of age And lives in the Westlands,
1340	Knight with the beste; Hi sloghe with here honde The king of this londe, And with him fele hundred, And therof is wunder That he ne cometh to fighte. God sende him the righte, And wind him hider drive To bringe hem of live.	A knight among the best. By their hands they killed The king of this land, And with him many hundreds. It is a mystery that he Has not returned to fight! May God send him the right, And the wind, to drive him here, To take away their lives!
1350	He sloghen Kyng Murry, Hornes fader, king hendy. Horn hi ut of londe sente; Twelf felawes with him wente, Among hem Athulf the gode, Min owene child, my leve fode: Ef Horn child is hol and sund, And Athulf bithute wund, He luveth him so dere, And is him so stere.	They slaughtered King Murray, Horn's father, a gracious king. They exiled Horn out of the land; Twelve fellows went with him, Among them Athulf the good, My own child, my dear son. If Child Horn is whole and sound, And Athulf is without harm, He loved my son so dearly that He was like a guiding star to him.
1360	Mighte I seon hem tweie, For joie I scholde deie." "Knight, beo thanne blithe Mest of alle sithe; Horn and Athulf his fere Bothe hi ben here." To Horn he gan gon And grette him anon. Muche joie hi makede there The while hi togadere were. "Childre," he sede, hu habbe ye fare?	If I could see the two of them, I would die for joy." "Then rejoice, knight, More than ever before! Horn and Athulf his friend Are both here." He rushed to Horn And embraced him at once. They made great joy there While they were together. "My boys," he said, "how have you fared?"
1370	That ich you segh, hit is ful yare. Wulle ye this lond winne And sle that ther is inne?" He sede, "Leve Horn child, Yut lyveth thi moder Godhild: Of joie heo miste If heo thee alive wiste." Horn sede on his rime, "Iblessed beo the time I com to Suddene	It is a long time since I saw you. Will you win back this land And slay those who rule it?" He continued, "Dear Child Horn, You mother Godhild still lives. She would have great joy If she knew you were alive." Horn said in his speech, "Blessed be the time When I came to the Southlands
1380	With mine Irisse menne: We schulle the hundes teche	With my Irish men! We will teach the hounds

1390	<p>To speken ure speche. Alle we hem schulle sle, And al quic hem fle.” Horn gan his horn to blowe; His folk hit gan iknowe; Hi comen ut of stere, Fram Hornes banere; Hi sloghen and fughten, The night and the ughten. The Sarazins cunde Ne lefde ther non in th’ende. Horn let wurche Chapeles and chirche; He let belles ringe And masses let singe. He com to his moder halle In a roche walle. Corn he let serie,</p>	<p>To speak as we want!²⁹ We will slaughter them all And quickly flay them.” Horn began to sound his horn And his men heard it. They came out of the stern, From under Horn’s banner. They killed and fought From night until morning. Of the Saracens’ kind, None were left in the end.³⁰ Horn ordered that chapels And churches be built; He had bells rung, And masses sung. He came to his mother’s hall In the rock cliffside, Where he had food readied And held a merry feast. He made their lives happy. But Rimenhild paid dearly for it, For Fickenhild was proud at heart And it would bring him pain. He gave money to young and old To build alliances with him. He had stone brought in, Hoping for success there By having a strong castle built, Filled around with sea water. No one might land there, Except for birds in flight, But when the sea drew back, Men might come enough. Fickenhild turned his attention To shaming Rimenhild. He began to court her intensely; The king did not dare prevent him. Rimenhild was sick at heart, And she wept tears of blood. That night, Horn became feverish And began to have nightmares About Rimenhild, his mate. She was taken onto a ship, The boat began to capsize, And his lover was about to drown. Rimenhild wished to swim back To land with her arms,</p>
1400	<p>And makede feste merie; Murye lif he wroghte. Rymenhild hit dere boghte. Fikenhild was prut on herte, And that him dude smerte. Yonge he yaf and elde Mid him for to helde. Ston he dude lede, Ther he hopede spede, Strong castel he let sette,</p>	<p>And held a merry feast. He made their lives happy. But Rimenhild paid dearly for it, For Fickenhild was proud at heart And it would bring him pain. He gave money to young and old To build alliances with him. He had stone brought in, Hoping for success there By having a strong castle built, Filled around with sea water. No one might land there, Except for birds in flight, But when the sea drew back, Men might come enough. Fickenhild turned his attention To shaming Rimenhild. He began to court her intensely; The king did not dare prevent him. Rimenhild was sick at heart, And she wept tears of blood. That night, Horn became feverish And began to have nightmares About Rimenhild, his mate. She was taken onto a ship, The boat began to capsize, And his lover was about to drown. Rimenhild wished to swim back To land with her arms,</p>
1410	<p>Mid see him biflette; Ther ne mighte lighte Bute foghel with flighte. Bute whanne the se withdrowe, Mighte come men ynoghe. Fikenhild gan wende Rymenhild to schende. To woghe he gan hure yerne; The kyng ne dorste him werne. Rymenhild was ful of mode;</p>	<p>By having a strong castle built, Filled around with sea water. No one might land there, Except for birds in flight, But when the sea drew back, Men might come enough. Fickenhild turned his attention To shaming Rimenhild. He began to court her intensely; The king did not dare prevent him. Rimenhild was sick at heart, And she wept tears of blood. That night, Horn became feverish And began to have nightmares About Rimenhild, his mate. She was taken onto a ship, The boat began to capsize, And his lover was about to drown. Rimenhild wished to swim back To land with her arms,</p>
1420	<p>He wep teres of blode. That night Horn gan swete And hevie for tomete Of Rymenhild, his make, Into schupe was itake. The schup bigan to blenche: His lemman scholde adrenche. Rymenhild with hire honde Wolde up to londe;</p>	<p>And she wept tears of blood. That night, Horn became feverish And began to have nightmares About Rimenhild, his mate. She was taken onto a ship, The boat began to capsize, And his lover was about to drown. Rimenhild wished to swim back To land with her arms,</p>

²⁹ *To speken ure speche*: Hall interprets this as a euphemism for “we will teach them a humiliating lesson” (note to 1366), whereas Garbaty is more prosaic: “they will meet our spoken terms” (note to 1380).

³⁰ TEAMS makes 1391-2 a simple sentence, so that the *Saracens* leave nothing in the end for the locals, but it does not seem to fit contextually here.

1430	Fikenhild aghen hire pelte With his swerdes hilde. Horn him wok of slape So a man that hadde rape. “Athulf,” he sede, “felaghe, To schupe we mote draghe. Fikenhild me hath idon under And Rymenhild to do wunder. Crist, for his wundes five, Tonight me thuder drive.” Horn gan to schupe ride,	But Fickenhild threw her back With his sword’s hilt. Horn woke from his sleep Like a man in urgent haste. “Athulf,” he said, “my brother, We must get on board the ship! Fickenhild has deceived me And has put Rimenhild in danger. May Christ, for his five wounds, Drive us toward there tonight!” Horn set off on his ship With his companions beside him.
1440	His feren him biside. Fikenhild, or the dai gan springe, Al right he ferde to the kinge, After Rymenhild the brighte, To wedden hire bi nighte. He ladde hure bi the derke Into his nywe werke. The feste hi bigunne, Er that ros the sunne. Er thane Horn hit wiste,	Fickenhild, before the day sprang, Went straightaway to the king For Rimenhild the bright, To marry her before sunrise. He took her in the darkness Into his new fortress. The festivities began Before the sun rose, And before Horn knew of it. Before the sun was up, His ship stood under the tower Near Rimenhild’s chamber. Rimenhild little suspected That Horn was alive. They did not know the castle, For it was so new.
1450	Tofore the sunne upriste, His schup stod under ture At Rymenhilde bure. Rymenhild, litel weneth heo That Horn thanne alive beo. The castel thei ne knewe, For he was so nywe. Horn fond sittinde Arnoldin, That was Athulfes cosin, That ther was in that tide,	Then Horn found Arnold, Who was Athulf’s cousin, Who was at that moment Sitting and waiting for Horn. “Sir Horn,” he said, “son of the king, Welcome to this land! This morning Fickenhild has married Your sweet lover Rimenhild. I will not lie to you; He has deceived you twice. He had this tower made, All for your sake. No man may get inside By any contriving. Horn, may Christ guide you now So that you do not lose Rimenhild.” Horn knew all the tricks That any man might know of. He brought out a harp, And took a few fellows, Very keen knights, who disguised Themselves as they wished. They went along the sand Toward the castle.
1460	Horn for tabide. “Horn knight,” he sede, “kinges sone, Wel beo thu to londe icome. Today hath ywedde Fikenhild Thi swete lemman Rymenhild. Ne schal I thee lie: He hath giled thee twie. This tur he let make Al for thine sake. Ne mai ther come inne	They began to sing merrily And made harping music.
1470	Noman with none ginne. Horn, nu Crist thee wisse, Of Rymenhild that thu ne misse.” Horn cuthe al the liste That eni man of wiste. Harpe he gan schewe, And tok felawes fewe, Of knightes swithe snelle That schrudde hem at wille. Hi yeden bi the gravel	
1480	Toward the castel. Hi gunne murie singe And makede here gleowinge.	

1490	<p>Rymenhild hit gan ihere And axede what hi were. Hi sede hi weren harpurs And sume were gigours. He dude Horn in late Right at halle gate. He sette him on the benche, His harpe for to clenche. He makede Rymenhilde lay, And heo makede walaway. Rymenhild feol yswoghe Ne was ther non that loughe. Hit smot to Hornes herte So bitere that hit smerte. He lokede on the ringe And thoughte on Rymenhilde: He yede up to borde</p>	<p>Rimenhild heard it And asked who they were. They replied that they were harpists And some were fiddlers. They let Horn in Right through the hall gate. He set himself on the bench And grasped his harp. He played Rimenhild a lay, And made her a lament. Rimenhild fell in a swoon then; There was no one there who laughed! It pierced to Horn's heart So bitterly that it pained him. He looked on the ring And thought of Rimenhild.</p>
1500	<p>With gode swerdes orde: Fikenhildes crune Ther he fulde adune, And al his men a rowe, Hi dude adun throwe. Whanne hi weren aslaghe Fikenhild hi dude todraghe. Horn makede Arnoldin thare King after King Aylmare Of al Westernesne</p>	<p>He went up to the table With a good sword edge. He made Fickenhild's head Fall to the ground, And struck down All his men in a row, And when they were dead, He cut apart Fickenhild. There Horn made Arnold king To follow King Almair, Of all the Westlands, For his gentleness.</p>
1510	<p>For his meoknesse. The king and his homage Yeuen Arnoldin trewage. Horn tok Rymenhild bi the honde And ladde hure to the stronde, And ladde with him Athelbrus, The gode stward of his hus. The se bigan to flowe, And Horn gan to rowe. Hi gunne for to arive</p>	<p>The king and his vassals Gave Arnold tribute.³¹ Horn took Rimenhild by the hand And led her to the shore, And took along Athelbruce, The good steward of the house. The sea began to flow, And Horn began to sail. They arrived where King Moody had been lord.</p>
1520	<p>Ther King Modi was sire. Athelbrus he makede ther king For his gode teching: He yaf alle the knightes ore For Horn knightes lore. Horn gan for to ride; The wind him blew wel wide. He arivede in Yrlonde, Ther he wo fonde,</p>	<p>He gave all the knights clemency Because of Sir Horn's counsel. Horn sailed away again, And the wind blew him far away. He arrived in Ireland, where he Had found bittersweet fortune.³²</p>

³¹ In MS Cambridge Library, the sense is that the aged Almair will be succeeded by Arnold as king and that the knights pay respect to him. Hall suggests a possible darker reading of MS Laud Misc. 108, where 1545 is *utrage* instead of *truage*. If so, Almair is deposed and 1507-12 would read more like "Horn made Arnold king there, after King Almair, the knights, and the baronage did him all kinds of outrage." Yet MS Harleian 2253 agrees more with the Cambridge MS, and Horn has earlier reconciled with Almair (1275-1300).

1530	<p>Ther he dude Athulf child Wedden maide Reynild. Horn com to Suddenne Among al his kenne; Rymenhild he made his quene; So hit mighte wel beon. Al folk hem mighte rewe That loveden hem so trewe: Nu ben hi bothe dede - Crist to hevene hem lede! Her endeth the tale of Horn</p>	<p>There he had young Athulf Wed maid Reynild. Then Horn came home to the Southlands, Among all of his kin. He made Rimenhild his queen So that all might be well. All the people who loved them truly Might grieve for them now, For now they are both dead. May Christ lead them to Heaven! Here ends the tale of Horn, Who was noble and never cowardly.</p>
1540	<p>That fair was and noght unorn. Make we us glade evre among, For thus him endeth Hornes song. Jesus, that is of hevene king, Yeve us alle His swete blessing.</p>	<p>Let us always together be glad, For thus ends Horn's song. May Jesus, who is Heaven's king, Give us all His sweet blessing.</p>
1545	Amen.	Amen.

³² Garbaty explains this confusing line: *fonde* does not refer to Horn's last arrival in Ireland but his first, where he finds refuge but also *woe* because of the deaths of Harild and Berild (note to 1526).

King Horn, Real Kings, and the Auchinleck Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild

Medieval English romances usually have apparent roots in French analogues or folktale, but the genesis of *King Horn* remains especially obscure. TEAMS uses an amalgam of three variant manuscripts, University Library Cambridge Gg.4.27.2, Harleian 2553, and Laud Misc. 108, all from the mid-late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The incomplete *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild* in Auchinleck is later than *King Horn* but current consensus holds that all versions derive from a common Anglo-Norman original of about 1170, *Horn et Rimenhild*.¹ Schofield argued in 1901 that *King Horn* was geographically centered on the Isle of Man, for centuries a Norse stronghold, and that the essential tale derived from Norse legend.² The names in *King Horn* are “French transformations of Germanic names,”³ but other versions retain more Anglo-Saxon trappings. Hapulf of *Horn Childe* (Murray in *King Horn*) implies the historic Eadulf who was earl of Northumbria in 966,⁴ or might be the enemy of Beowulf’s father: “wearþ he Heapolafe / to handbonan... þanon he gesohte / Suðdena folc” (“he came to slay Heatholaf with his own hand... from there he searched out the South-Danes,” 460-3).⁵ But these connections and explanations are as murky as the geographical *King Horn* locations *Westernesse* and *Suddene*.

¹ Matthew L. Holford, “History and Politics in *Horn Child and Maiden Rimmild*,” *Review of English Studies* 57:229 (2006): 151.

² William Henry Schofield, *The Story of Horn and Rimenhild* (Baltimore: Modern Language Association of America, 1903), 26.

³ Schofield, 52-3.

⁴ Schofield, 69.

⁵ Daniel H. Haigh, *The Anglo-Saxon Sagas: An Examination of Their Value as Aids to History* (London: John Russell Smith, 1861), 64-5.

Holford complains that the Auchinleck *Horn Childe* (HC) has been critically overlooked or disparaged in relation to the *King Horn* (KH) poems, although Mills has edited a recent critical edition.⁶ Holford argues that HC was written for the political purpose of creating a comforting foundational narrative for English nationalism during or after the reign of Edward II, a king who had failed to quell Scottish and Welsh rebellions. For such an audience “the defence of the realm would have had particular resonance.”⁷ Thus the HC poet inserts several new scenes such as Hafeolf’s defeat of the Danes and his fatal battle against the Irish, patterned on allegedly historical events. Later legends in North Yorkshire refer to Danish bones stored “by Seyn Sibiles Kirke” (HC 84)⁸ and the murderous King Malcan (223) suggests the historical Scottish Malcolm. The poem retains a more traditional sense in its Anglo-Saxon heroic ethos, and the poet has perhaps freely adapted his sources to imply such a nationalistic program.

In the ongoing scholarly dispute over the place names the messages that KH communicates to its audience have equally been neglected. Like HC the KH poet alters the narrative to suit the interests and agendas of his time period. Critics have unfavorably compared the spare style of the English KH to the more elegant and sophisticated French *Horn et Rimenhild* (HR). McKnight complains that such compressions weaken the story both narratively and stylistically. Unlike Rimenhild’s less-than-subtle courtship, the

⁶ Holford, “History and Politics,” 149. Holford refers to *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, Middle English Texts 20 (Heidelberg, 1988).

⁷ Holford, “History and Politics,” 167.

⁸ Matthew L. Holford, “A Local Source for *Horn Child and Maiden Rimmild*,” *Medium Aevum* 74:1 (2005): 34-41.

French Rimenhild “understands the arts of coaxing and of coquetry.”⁹ Scholars previously dated KH as early as 1225, making it one of the first English romances, but it has lately been moved to the 1270s or later with a terminus of about 1290,¹⁰ the likely date of the Laud manuscript which also contains *Havelock*. Much as *Havelock* might have been a delicately coded ideal for the young Edward I (1272 -1307) to emulate,¹¹ might KH also have been revised with the subtle intention of evoking either Edward I or his father Henry III (1216-72)?

Allen posits an argument for Henry III, noting among other linkages that Henry lost his father (John) at age nine and was betrayed in his youth by an intimate named Fawkes de Breauté,¹² with the Fawkes/Fickel similarity much like the Godrich/Godard stewards in *Havelock* who suggest the disloyal Richard, earl of Cornwall (1209-72) and Henry’s brother. Yet Henry apparently had little interest in English or chivalrous romance, unlike Edward who “had been a great lover of all sides of knightly activity since his youth.”¹³ To make such an argument involves a simplification of a complex of sources and unanswered questions about authorial intentions and KH’s audience. Yet the text of the poem suggests that one of the poet’s themes might have been the education of a young prince. The trope is evinced in KH’s purposefully universal setting, in the

⁹ George H. McKnight, *King Horn, Floriz and Blancheflur, The Assumption of Our Lady* (London: EETS, 1901), xi. Compare also Belisaunt’s courtship of Amis, in which she is so aggressive in her emotions that she threatens Amis with a false charge of rape unless he accepts her.

¹⁰ Diane Speed, “The Saracens of *King Horn*,” *Speculum* 65:3 (1990): 564.

¹¹ Discussed in the chapter here on *Havelock* as well as in David Staines’ “*Havelok the Dane*: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes,” *Speculum* 51:4 (1976): 602-623.

¹² Rosamund Allen, *King Horn* (New York: Garland, 1984), 113.

¹³ N. Denholm-Young, “Feudal Society in the Thirteenth Century: The Knights,” *History* 29 (1944): 118, quoted in Allen, 113.

replacement of specific historical enemies by generic antagonists, and in the emphasis on Horn's courtly and leadership qualities. All of these emphases imply an instructive model for an English king less prominent in the heroic mood of HC.

As the hero of *Bevis of Hampton* rushes around Europe and the Middle East, he enters cities and places with now-obscure names, but most are traceable and the poet is hardly to blame for names shifting over seven centuries. HC states its initial setting as north of the Humber (10), and the poet gives precise locations such as York, Stainmore, Westmorland, and Wales. The Anglo-Norman HR also has *Suddene* but Horn's boat drifts to *Bretaigne* (106) and his Irish adventures are set specifically in Dublin (HR 2937). Yet of the three main settings of KH—Ireland, Westernesse, and Suddene—the last two are impossibly vague. No agreement has been reached on whether the placenames signify Scandinavia, Wales, or anything at all, though the west coast of England probably fits most closely as within easy travel of Ireland.¹⁴ No one also seems to have asked why, when other romances unambiguously state Warwick, Lincoln, London, or Lombardy as the homes of their heroes, KH has such nebulous settings. Either the poet assumes a local audience's knowledge or something else is intended.

We know that Chaucer was especially careful not to annoy the powerful in the Ricardian court and perhaps learned from Froissart "not to attach his poetry too closely to the trivia of court life."¹⁵ His writings respond to and obliquely reference broad trends but avoid the current topical allusions of a Langland. Chaucer had good reasons to remain a

¹⁴ For a discussion of the placenames see Schofield and also Speed, 564-66. Schofield (564) notes that Horn's journeys are all between one day (1441) and five (1307), indicating that the locations are close to Ireland if the poet has realism as a goal.

¹⁵ Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 69.

useful and nonthreatening courtier. Even a highly admiring portrayal of Richard might have brought him trouble during the Merciless Parliament and after Richard's deposition. HC, the Northern version of the story in Auchinleck, reflects an interest in other English power centers, and ones by then safely chronologically and geographically distant from London politics.¹⁶ *Havelock*, KH's manuscript companion, has Lincoln as its main locale but the story occurs in the sentimental and finished past of "are dawes" (27).

If the KH poet intended to praise Edward in his depiction of Horn, he may have chosen a generic geographical backdrop in order to avoid too close an identification with the real king's problems. Edward spent much of his later reign fighting rebellions in Wales and Scotland. Despite his plaudit on his tomb as *Malleus Scotorum*, "Hammer of the Scots," and glowing portraits by historians Edward's forces achieved mixed results. Being awarded the crown lands of Wales in 1254 by his father accomplished nothing. As king, Edward preferred to use diplomacy to rein in such agitators as Llewlyn ap Gruffuld in 1277, but when battle was unavoidable it was a never-ending task, as further revolts occurred in 1282, 1287, and 1294.¹⁷ Scotland was equally defiant, but Edward had already antagonized parliament with endless requests for money to fight Wales and France and did not face Scotland until the 1290s.¹⁸ Again, after short-term victories new uprisings followed, and Edward died in 1307 en route to Scotland to deal with fresh mutinies. Edward had few issues with Ireland, and correspondingly KH has Ireland in the

¹⁶ Ralph Hanna, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 130.

¹⁷ Michael Prestwich, *Plantagenet England 1225-1360* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 148-162.

¹⁸ Prestwich, 165-8.

story but perhaps cautiously avoids including Wales and the Scottish kings, all central to HC's narrative but in real life likely points of frustration rather than glory for Edward and the English court.

The KH poet does not seem heavily invested in making Horn a saintly soldier for Christ beyond the routine Christian/Saracen antagonism. Horn identifies with the sleeping knight on the shores of Westernesse as “me thinkth bi thine crois lighte / that thu longest to ure Drighte” (1323-4) and later has “chapeles and chirche” (1394) built, but Horn chiefly fights for land, love, and revenge and not for God. His skirmishes in Suddene against Fickenhild and Modi, presumably also Christians, have no religious purposes. His mother adopts an anchoress's life but out of self-protection, and upon liberation she enjoys a “feste merie” (1400). Elsewhere the poet reduces Horn's thrashing of a hundred Saracens, nearly a 400-line scene in HR, into an “after-dinner recreation”¹⁹ of some thirty lines. Yet KH curiously retains the Saracens from the French even though no Arab fleets ever reached England and Auchinleck more logically has Danes.²⁰ KH is careful to have the invaders strand the children on a *galeie*, an Arabic loanword first appearing in English here,²¹ where HC has the usual *schipes*. KH still has Horn disguise himself as Cutberd in Ireland (773), perhaps a vestige of the story's possible Norse roots

¹⁹ McKnight, viii.

²⁰ *Saracen* might also have denoted all pagans, including Danes. But the poet states that the Saracens threaten death to all “bute hi here laye asoke / and to here toke” (“unless they renounced their faith and took theirs,” 69-70). The Vikings generally desired booty and land and not converts. For a discussion of the definition of *Saracen* see Speed, 567-8 who argues that the term could include Danes in KH—but she notes that the French poet explicitly uses *asfricanz*, *Affrike*, *aufricant*, and *Perse* in describing the Saracens (HR 297, 1298, 2907, 3000).

²¹ Sebastian I. Sobecki, “The 2000 Saracens of *King Horn*,” *Notes and Queries* 52:4 (2005): 443-4.

as Horn has no need for secrecy if the Arabs are his enemy. Why does the poet have Saracens in England?

Horn's battles in Ireland, Suddene, and Westernesse form a geographical trio but "no direct causal connection between the story threads"²² which would impute meaning to the grouping or the placenames seems to exist. Horn simply sojourns in Ireland until events call him back. Similarly, the Saracens perform no indispensable role beyond narratively propelling Horn's exile and return motif. Their improbable inclusion as the story's antagonists might have reminded an audience of Edward's crusading ventures between 1268-74 but perhaps again reflected a diplomatic desire to avoid depicting the enemies who really were troubling English lands. Holford argues that HC specifically invokes Wales and Scotland to portray an idealized united England which was in real life under renewed and severe threat.²³ But by the time of Auchinleck the tale was increasingly antique and unlikely to be supposed a portrait of Edward III, who at any rate was successful in finally pacifying the Scots, more than compensating for Edward II's kingly and martial inabilities.

KH gives fewer lines to the battle scenes with Horn's antagonists than HR, but even compared to HC, a poem of likely similar length, KH's combat scenes are understated. Auchinleck HC features additional battles even within the extant fragment. Hafeolf fights both Danes and Irish, and unlike Murray's sudden seaside ambush the poet lavishes attention on their eleven-day preparation for war with the usual "brinis brigt" (HC 173) formulas. Horn has an extra clash in arms with a knight in Wales and breaks

²² Hynes-Berry, 657.

²³ Holford, 161.

“his arm & his schulderban” (633), and he falls King Elidan (Thurston) to the ground in jousting (673). The poet stresses that “no man of Yrland / miȝt stond a dint of his hand” (781-82) and at the end of the battle Horn has won Blivain (804), the sword of his father’s slayer. In KH Horn chivalrously offers the enemy knights a breathing space and only rises to righteous rage when informed that they are the same men who killed his father. The poem lacks the grim and distinctly Anglo-Saxon warrior ethos of the Auchinleck analogue.

The narrative stress on Horn’s *lof* and fighting prowess in HC also comes at the cost of what little courtliness remains in the abridged English texts from the French. Hynes-Berry calls the character development in KH “skimpy,”²⁴ but the poet attempts to give some limited shading to Horn’s personality beyond HC’s sole focus on the chopping of heads. In KH Horn repeatedly receives favor through his nobility by Saracens, Almair, and Rimenhild herself rather than through armed might. The king praises Horn’s nobility by joking that he will steal the heart of whatever woman his son woos (802-4), a courtly quality—along with the description of Horn’s good looks in childhood (10-16)—absent from HC. Horn gains admittance to Thurston’s court by being a “fair knight” (KH 784) rather than fighting his way in through Wales. Upon meeting the Irish king Horn and the princes “sette him a knewelyng” (KH 787), and Horn proves himself to Thurston with his charm rather than through jousting for eighteen days (HC 667). The delicate interplay and romance of the recognition scene in Suddene where Horn costumes himself as a minstrel

²⁴ Mary Hynes-Berry, “Cohesion in *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*,” *Speculum* 50:4 (1975): 652.

and riddles Rimenhild like a courtly Odysseus vanishes in HC to be replaced with yet another battle.

Whereas HC repeatedly stresses Horn's warrior skills, KH creates an aura of aristocratic courtesy less vital to HC. Edward I has sometimes been called the English Justinian, yet his interest in administrative reform and the nurturing of parliamentary structures should not be seen as a sign of martial impotence. Though the battle was lost Edward fought well at Evesham at age 25 and he would be praised as "in armis strenuus" ("mighty in arms").²⁵ Edward was tall and imposing and was respected, if not loved.²⁶ Neither he nor his father Henry III occasioned the insults of effeminacy and indecision Edward II would receive. Yet despite the incessant irritation of flare-ups in Wales and Scotland and the brief baronial revolt, Edward I grew up in and initially ruled in a period relatively untroubled by war; Henry named him after Edward the Confessor, a king remembered as pious but unsuccessful in battle.²⁷ Again, a poet interested in an oblique royal portrait in KH might well have directed his attention towards other kingly attributes to praise in Horn. Edward was devoted to his wife to an extent unusual in the English monarchy and KH not surprisingly focuses on the heroic travails of Horn's patient pursuit of Rimenhild.

²⁵ Matthew of Westminster, *Flores Historiarum*, ed. H.R. Luard, Rolls Series (London, 1890), 3:19, quoted in David Staines, "Havelok the Dane: A Thirteenth-Century Handbook for Princes," *Speculum* 51 (1976): 618.

²⁶ Prestwich, 178.

²⁷ Prestwich, 29.

McKnight observes that the Horn story involves two intersecting narratives of Horn's exile/return and his separation/reunion with Rimenhild.²⁸ The weighting favors the courtly love story in KH to the point that the poet has "a strange reduplication"²⁹ of Horn's previous landing in Suddene, where Rimenhild again faces a coerced marriage and Horn takes a second disguise to deliver her. HC is very much about land, and Horn constantly receives land grants and bequests in each of the three kingdoms, so much so that Rimenhild's importance diminishes. In KH proper marital love and kingship are mutually supportive, and Horn refuses to sleep with Rimenhild until he has attained his crown: "thanne schal Rymenhilde / ligge bi the kinge!" (KH 1189-90). HC states that "Horn brouzt her to his bedde" (1112), preventing any such climactic connection.

Holford notes that

The 'love' and 'war' elements of the plot are, consequently, less well integrated than in the other versions. In *King Horn*, Horn looks at the ring which Rimnild has given him before defeating important adversaries; there are no such moments in *Horn Child*. Rather than marriage, the action of *Horn Child* is directed towards Horn's recovery of his inheritance...³⁰

Beowulf has no strong love interest, but by the English romance period it may not be coincidence that a poem like *Gamelyn* which lacks a marriage narrative also lacks aristocratic heroes. Havelock may push people into the mud but his marriage to Goldeboru thematically (and legally) connects him to the English crown. The HC Horn amasses vast land holdings, but the denouement seems more conducive to baronial than royal sentiments. KH inextricably links courtly love with kingly deportment, and when

²⁸ George H. McKnight, "Germanic Elements in the Story of *King Horn*," *PMLA* 15:2 (1900): 222.

²⁹ James R. Hurt, "The Texts of *King Horn*." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 7:1 (1970): 50.

³⁰ Holford, "History and Politics," 153-4.

“Rymenhild he makede his quene” (1533) the end of the poem quickly comes as Horn’s kingdom has been established in full.

Fundamentally, the HC Horn is a warrior and the KH Horn is already a king in childhood. The KH poet steadily depicts Horn with prescient leadership qualities befitting his inborn royalty. As the Saracens dispatch Horn, he enters the boat with twelve children who follow him as his *comitatus*, whereas HC has eight children (19) and lacks the episode. The numeration implies Christ and his disciples, particularly when Fickenhild later betrays him in the fashion of a Judas. Horn captains the marooned ship (122) and within a short space of 1545 lines he undertakes six sea journeys, returning to Rimenhild by boat on a Sunday at sunrise (974). Whereas the ocean panics the other children and drowns the messenger, “Horn’s control over the elemental power of the sea demonstrates his superiority.”³¹ The poet delicately depicts Horn’s aristocratic courtesy. Houlac (Almair) dubs Horn “& oper mani” (424) where in KH Horn receives grace to “do nu that thi wille is” (522) and dub them himself. As a subtle touch, in HC Horn attempts to return into the king’s favor after being lied about by Fickel with the gift of a hart, and is forced to leave when Houlac answers that “it is for nouȝt” (559). In KH Horn receives a more compelling threat of execution but perhaps displays some injured pride in defiantly lacing his chainmail for battle (721).

Rimenhild’s role also has narrative and thematic implications. All we really know about her “is that she loves Horn,”³² though she has a passion and temper which reminds

³¹ Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 32.

³² Hynes-Berry, 653.

McKnight of Freyja.³³ HC has a rougher edge and when Houlac (Almair) suspects Rimenhild of dallying with Horn “he bete hir so / þat sche gan blede” (499). Yet women play a more proactive role in HC than in KH. Rimenhild has a steadier disposition as she courts Horn and then gives him a sword and a hue-changing ring, explaining its function (571-6). Elidan’s (Thurston’s) daughter Acula has medical abilities and “of woundes was sche sleize” (HC 761), just as in *Bevis of Hampton* the assertive Josian has healing skills after Bevis faces similar injuries in battle.

In KH, despite Rimenhild’s passionate ire against Athelbruce, she is in the wrong. The good steward, a rarity in medieval romance, rightly worries that “ye wolden pleie / bitwex you selve tweie” (349-50) and risk Almair’s wrath. From then on Rimenhild does little more than “wexe wild” as she awaits Horn’s return, threatening to slay her coerced husband “and hureselve bothe” (1210). The effect enhances Horn’s kingly dominance through her passivity. Much as feminist critiques of courtly love have argued,³⁴ while the more genteel KH elevates Horn’s devotion to Rimenhild to be coequal to kingship, her actions ironically are restricted in comparison to the more Germanic HC, where Rimenhild is a lesser objective for Horn but retains more actual agency. To make a further speculation, both Henry III’s and Edward I’s foreign spouses were devoted wives but disliked by the English for their French ambitions and followers. Henry’s wife Eleanor of Provence was pelted with vegetables and debris by a London mob as she rode

³³ McKnight, 228.

³⁴ Millet charges that “both the courtly and the romantic versions of love are ‘grants’ which the male concedes out of his total power. Both have had the effect of obscuring the patriarchal character of Western culture and in their general tendency to attribute impossible virtues to women, have ended by confirming them in a narrow and often remarkably constricting sphere of behavior.” Kate Millet, *Sexual Politics* (1969) (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 37.

on a royal barge in 1263,³⁵ and Edward's wife endured similar xenophobia. A poem in which Horn's queen seems to be "tamed" into obedience might have had particular appeal to an English audience.

What might Chaucer have made of the Horn story? He certainly knew of it or read it as he mentions "Horn child" as one of the "romances of prys" (897) in *Sir Thopas*. He may have seen HC, uniquely in Auchinleck, or read or heard other versions. Yet the work seems to have had little impression on *Thopas*, and Charbonneau finds only minor and tenuous textual connections—with *Thopas* "whit was his face as payndemayn / his lippes rede as rose" (725-6) and with Horn "whit so the flur / rose red was his colur" (15-16)³⁶—and these lines come from KH. Chaucer might have taken less interest in a Northern romance simplistic enough to be boiled down into a ballad, which it would be later in the form of "Hind Horn." Chaucer likely would have enjoyed the defter touch of KH with its finer, courtlier rendering of the hero and the longer and more elegant HR even more so.

Yet King Horn has its own political subthemes relevant to its time period overlaid on its entertaining narrative. Working from possible Norse or French analogues of the story, the Auchinleck *Horn Childe and Maiden Rimmild* depicts a heroic Germanic warrior who ably fights for *lof*, land, and Rimenhild, in that order of priority. KH has a more aristocratic atmosphere which prioritizes Horn's noble fairness, his courtly love toward Rimenhild, and his kingly leadership. Though Havelock is slightly earthier and

³⁵ Prestwich, 112.

³⁶ Joanne A. Charbonneau, "Sir Thopas," in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert M. Correale, and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 665.

more passive, both characters display the sort of regal character and charisma appropriate to a king. Possibly both poets gently allude to Edward I in this portrait, a charismatic king who combined an able and intelligent hand at administration with a firm personal will, and whose wife enjoyed and patronized romances.³⁷ Edward, had he ever heard of *King Horn*, might have found the tale pleasing, particularly in his latter days of declining popularity when Eleanor was deceased and Horn's happy ending was eluding him.

³⁷ Prestwich notes that Eleanor was a cultured women who owned a library of romances, and "some Arthurian works were dedicated to her" (137), though probably none in English.

CHAPTER 9

Sir Degare

Sir Degare is well-preserved in six manuscripts: Auchinleck (c. 1330), British Library MS Egerton 2862 (c. 1400), Cambridge University Library MS Ff. 2.38 (c. 1450), Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson Poetry 34 (c. 1450), Bodleian Library MS Douce 261 (dated 1561), and British Library Add. MS 27879 (dated 1650). There are also several sixteenth-century print editions. I take as my text source Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds. *Sir Degaré. The Middle English Breton Lays*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995. <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/degarfrm.htm>. Laskaya *et al.* chiefly use Auchinleck as a base text and use Cambridge to supply the missing ending. Among the few modern editions is Walter Hoyt French & Charles Brockway Hale, eds., *Middle English Metrical Romances* (1930).

1	Lysteneth, lordinges, gente and fre, Ich wille you telle of Sire Degarre: Knightes that were sometyme in londe Ferli fele wolde fonde And sechen adventures bi night and dai, Hou thai mighte here strengthe asai; So dede a knyght, Sire Degarree: Ich wille you telle wat man was he. In Litel Bretaygne was a kyng	Listen, lordings, noble and generous, And I will tell you about Sir Degare. There were once in this land knights, A wondrous number, who would By day and night seek out adventures To see how they might test their valor. So did one knight, Sir Degare. I will tell you what kind of man he was. In Brittany there was a king ¹
10	Of gret poer in all thing, Stif in armes under sscheld, And mochel idouted in the feld. Ther nas no man, verraiment, That mighte in werre ne in tornament, Ne in justes for no thing, Him out of his sadel bring,	With great might in all things, Stout in arms wielded under his shield, And greatly feared on the field. There was no man, truly, Who faced him in war or tournament Or in jousts who might by any means Force him out of his saddle

¹ *Litel Bretaygne*: This may either refer to ‘Little Britain’—Brittany, or more specifically the northwest tip between Brest and Quimper. There are few other placename clues, and the poet may simply be giving the *lay* a suitably mythical Celtic setting.

	<p>Ne out of his stirop bringe his fot, So strong he was of bon and blod. This Kyng he hadde none hair 20 But a maidenchild, fre and fair; Here gentresse and here beauté Was moche renound in ich countré. This maiden he loved als his lif, Of hire was ded the Quene his wif: In travailing here lif she les. And tho the maiden of age wes Kynges sones to him speke, Emperours and Dukes eke, 30 To haven his doughter in mariage, For love of here heritage; Ac the Kyng answered ever That no man sschal here halden ever But yif he mai in turneyng Him out of his sadel bring, And maken him lesen hise stiropes bayne. Many assayed and myght not gayne. That ryche Kyng every yere wolde A solempne feste make and holde 40 On hys wyvys mynnyng day, That was beryed in an abbay In a foreste there besyde. With grete meyné he wolde ryde, Hire dirige do, and masse bothe, Poure men fede, and naked clothe, Offring brenge, gret plenté, And fede the covent with gret daynté. Toward the abbai als he com ride, And mani knyghtes bi his side, His doughter also bi him rod. 50 Amidde the forest hii abod. Here chamberleyn she clepede hire to And other dammaiseles two And seide that hii moste alighte To don here nedes and hire righte; Thai alight adoun alle thre, Tweie damaiseles and ssche, And longe while ther abiden, Til al the folk was forht iriden. Thai wolden up and after wolde, 60 And couthen nowt here way holde. The wode was rough and thikke, iwis, And thai token the wai amys.</p>	<p>Or bring his feet out of his stirrups, So strong was he in body and blood. This king had no heir, Other than a young maiden, noble and fair. Her courtliness and her beauty Were renowned in every land. He loved this maiden as much as his life. The queen, his wife, had died having her; She had lost her life in childbirth. And when the maiden was of age, The sons of kings asked him, Emperors and dukes as well, To have his daughter in marriage, For the love of their heritage. But the king always answered That no man should ever have her Unless he could throw him Out of his saddle in tourneyng, And make him lose both his stirrups. Many tried and did not succeed. Every year that noble king would Proclaim and hold a magnificent feast On the memorial day of his wife,² Who was buried in an abbey In a forest nearby. With a great company he would ride And perform a dirge and mass as well, Feed the poor and clothe the naked, Bring offerings, in great plenty, And support the convent with lavish gifts. As he came riding toward the abbey, With many knights by his side, His daughter also rode with him As they journeyed in the forest. She called her chamberlain to her, And two other maidens, And said that they must dismount To relieve themselves as their natural right.³ All three of them dismounted, The two damsels and her, And paused there a long while Until all the company had ridden past. They wanted to mount and ride after them, But could not find their way. These woods were rough and thick, I know, And they took the wrong way.</p>
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² *Mynnyng day*: A ‘minding day’ was a day “set apart for prayers and penances for the soul of a dead person” (French & Hale 289, quoted in TEAMS). As in many of these romances, building a religious house for prayers for the dead was common among the nobility. W.H. French and C. B. Hale, ed., *The Middle English Metrical Romances* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964).

³ *To don here nedes and hire righte*: the poet considers answering nature’s call “a natural right” (TEAMS).

70	<p>Thai moste souht and riden west Into the thikke of the forest. Into a launde hii ben icome, And habbeth wel undernome That thai were amis igon. Thai light adoun everichon And cleded and criede al ifere, Ac no man aright hem ihere.</p>	<p>They should have gone south but rode west, Into the thick of the forest. They came into a land And saw clearly That they had gone astray. Each of them dismounted And called and cried together, But no man heard them well enough.</p>
80	<p>Thai nist what hem was best to don; The weder was hot bifor the non; Hii leien hem doun upon a grene, Under a chastein tre, ich wene, And fillen aslepe everichone Bote the damaisele alone. She wente aboute and gaderede floures, And herknede song of wilde foules. So fer in the launde she goht, iwis, That she ne wot nevere whare se is. To hire maidenens she wolde anon. Ac hi ne wiste never wat wei to gon. Whenne hi wende best to hem terne, Aweiward than hi goth wel yerne. “Allas!” hi seide, “that I was boren! Nou ich wot ich am forloren! Wilde bestes me willeth togrinde Or ani man me sschulle finde!” Than segh hi swich a sight:</p>	<p>They did not know what was best to do. The weather was hot before noon. They laid themselves down on a green, Under a chestnut tree, as I know,⁴ And everyone fell asleep Except for the princess alone. She walked about and gathered flowers And listened to the songs of wild birds. She strayed so far in the land, indeed, That she did not know where she was. She wanted to go back at once to her ladies, But she did not know which way to walk. Wherever she thought it best to turn, In her hurrying she ended up further away. “Alas,” she said, “that I was ever born! Now I know that I am lost! Wild beasts will grind me up Before any man will find me!” Then she saw such a sight.</p>
90	<p>Toward hire comen a knight, Gentil, yong, and jolif man; A robe of scarlet he hadde upon; His visage was feir, his bodi ech weies; Of countenance right curteis; Wel farende legges, fot, and honde: Ther nas non in al the Kynges londe More apert man than was he. “Damaisele, welcome mote thou be! Be thou afered of none wihghte:</p>	<p>Toward her came a knight, A graceful, young, and handsome man, With a robe of scarlet upon him. His face and body were fair in every way, And his appearance was perfectly noble, With well-shaped legs, feet, and hands. There was no one in all the king’s land Who was more chivalrous than he was. “Lady, may you be welcome! Do not be afraid of any man.</p>
100	<p>Ich am comen here a fairi knyghte; Mi kynde is armes for to were, On horse to ride with scheld and spere; Forthi afered be thou nowt: I ne have nowt but mi swerd ibrou. Ich have iloved the mani a yer, And now we beth us selve her, Thou best mi lemman ar thou go, Wether the liketh wel or wo.” Tho nothing ne coude do she</p>	<p>I have come here as a fairy knight. Our nature is to wear arms, And to ride on horse with shield and spear, And so do not be afraid! I have brought nothing but my sword. I have loved you for many a year, And now we are here by ourselves. You will be my lover before you go, Whether you like it or not.” There was nothing she could do</p>
110	<p>But wep and criede and wolde fle;</p>	<p>But cry and shout and try to flee,</p>

⁴ *Chastein tre*: TEAMS points out that chestnut trees not only represent Christian chastity but serve as a medial point between reality and fairy otherworlds. Like Queen Herodis in *Sir Orfeo*, the maidens fall asleep, but here the princess does not.

	<p>And he anon gan hire at holde, And dide his wille, what he wolde. He binam hire here maidenhod, And seththen up toforen hire stod. “Lemman,” he seide, “gent and fre, Mid schilde I wot that thou schalt be; Siker ich wot hit worht a knave; Forthi mi swerd thou sschalt have, And whenne that he is of elde</p>	<p>But he seized her at once And did his will as he desired.⁵ He took away her maidenhead, And soon after stood over her. “Lover,” he said, “noble and free, I know that you will be with child, And know for sure it will be a boy. For this you shall take my sword. And when he is of age,</p>
120	<p>That he mai himself biwelde, Tak him the swerd, and bidde him fonde To sechen his fader in eche londe. The swerd his god and avenaunt: Lo, as I faugt with a geaunt, I brak the point in his hed; And siththen, when that he was ded, I tok hit out and have hit er, Redi in min aumener. Yit paraventure time bith</p>	<p>So that he may protect himself, Give him the sword, and tell him to try To seek his father in every land. The sword is firm and powerful. Listen to me; as I fought with a giant, I broke the point in his head. And later, when he was dead, I took it out and have it here, Ready in my pouch. If by chance the time comes</p>
130	<p>That mi sone mete me with: Be mi swerd I mai him kenne. Have god dai! I mot gon henne.” Thi knight passede as he cam. Al wepende the swerd she nam, And com hom sore sikend, And fond here maidenes al slepend. The swerd she hidde als she mighte, And awaked hem in highte, And doht hem to horse anon,</p>	<p>That my son meets with me, I will know him by my sword. Good day to you! I must go on.” The knight disappeared, just as he came. All in tears, she took the sword, And came back sighing bitterly And found her maidens all sleeping. She hid the sword as best she could, And awakened them in haste, And ordered them to their horses at once</p>
140	<p>And gonne to ride everichon. Thanne seghen hi ate last Tweie squiers come prikend fast. Fram the Kyng thai weren isent, To white whider his doughter went. Thai browt hire into the righte wai And comen faire to the abbay, And doth the servise in alle thingges, Mani masse and riche offringes; And whanne the servise was al idone</p>	<p>And for everyone to ride. Then at last she saw Two squires coming, riding swiftly. They were sent from the king To find out where his daughter went. They showed her the right way And they came pleasantly to the abbey. They did every part of the service, With many masses and rich offerings. And when the ceremony was all done, And the afternoon was past,</p>
150	<p>And ipassed over the none, The Kyng to his castel gan ride; His doughter rod bi his side. And he yemeth his kyngdom overal Stoutliche, as a god king sschal. Ac whan ech man was glad an blithe, His doughter siked an sorewed swithe;</p>	<p>The king rode back to the castle, And his daughter rode by his side, And he ruled over all his kingdom, Stoutly, as a good king does. But when each man was glad and at ease, His daughter sickened and grieved sorely.</p>

⁵ In *Sir Orfeo* the queen is abducted by the fairy king, but here the princess is raped. TEAMS notes that actual sexual assault is rare in medieval romance, and notes the connection to the Wife of Bath’s tale. Loomis states that no other analogue of the Loathly Lady story has a rape incident and posits that Chaucer might have been reminded of *Degare*. Laura Hibbard Loomis, “Chaucer and the Breton Lays of the Auchinleck,” *Studies in Philology* 38:1 (1941): 30-1.

	Here wombe greted more and more; Therwhile she mighte, se hidde here sore. On a dai, as hi wepende set, 160 On of hire maidenenes hit underyet. “Madame,” she seide, “par charité, Whi wepe ye now, telleth hit me.” “A! gentil maiden, kinde icoren, Help me, other ich am forloren! Ich have ever yete ben meke and milde: Lo, now ich am with quike schilde! Yif ani man hit underyete, Men wolde sai bi sti and strete 170 That mi fader the King hit wan And I ne was never aqueint with man! And yif he hit himselve wite, Swich sorewe schal to him smite That never blithe schal he be, For al his joie is in me,” And tolde here al togeder ther Hou hit was bigete and wher. ”Madame,” quad the maide, “ne care thou nowt: Stille awai hit sschal be browt. No man schal wite in Godes riche 180 Whar hit bicometh, but thou and iche.” Her time come, she was unbounde, And delivred al mid sounde; A knaveschild ther was ibore: Glad was the moder tharfore. The maiden servede here at wille, Wond that child in clothes stille, And laid hit in a cradel anon, And was al prest tharwith to gon. Yhit is moder was him hold: 190 Four pound she tok of gold, And ten of selver also; Under his fote she laid hit tho, - For swich thing hit mighte hove; And seththen she tok a paire glove That here lemman here sente of fairi londe, That nolde on no manne honde, Ne on child ne on womman yhe nolde,	Her womb grew greater and greater. While she could, she hid herself miserably. One day as she sat weeping, One of her maidens noticed it. “Madam,” she said, “for charity’s sake, Why are you crying now, tell me.” “Oh, gentle maiden, chosen one, Help me, for otherwise I am lost. I have always been obedient and mild. Listen, now I am with a living child! If anyone realized it, People would say my father the king Had me near some sty or back alley, ⁶ For I was never intimate with a man! And if he himself learns of it, It will strike his heart with such sorrow That he will never be happy again, For all his joy is in me.” And she told her there in full How the child was fathered and where. “Madam,” said the maid, “don’t be anxious. It will be taken quietly away. ⁷ No man in God’s realm will know Where it went but you and I.” Her time came and she was unburdened And delivered, all in sound health. A boy was born there; The mother was glad for it. The maid served her in her needs, Silently wrapped the child in clothes, And laid it at once in a cradle, And was all ready to leave. Yet his mother was faithful to him. She took four pounds of gold, And ten of silver as well, And she laid it under his feet For such things as it might help with. And then she took a pair of gloves Which her lover had sent her from fairyland And would not fit any man’s hand, Nor on any child or a woman,
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⁶ *Bi sti and strete*: MED defines *sti* as a pigsty but also as a place of degradation. But compare MS Digby No. 86 “Love is sofft, love is swet, love is goed”: “Love hath his stivart [steward] by sti and by strete.” The poet may intend some irony in that Degare later does marry his mother, though without knowledge or consummation.

⁷ John Boswell, in *The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), states that child abandonment for economic or social reasons was endemic in the ancient and medieval world and may have been as high as 20-40% of all live births in some periods. Babies were abandoned to religious houses and often took church positions or became servants to nobility, although many landed in brothels. The maid seems suspiciously knowledgeable about how to discreetly deal with just such a situation.

200	<p>But on hire selve wel yhe wolde. Tho gloven she put under his hade, And siththen a letter she wrot and made, And knit hit with a selkene thred Aboute his nekke wel god sped That who hit founde sscholde iwite. Than was in the lettre thous iwite: "Par charité, yif ani god man This helpes child finde can, Lat cristen hit with prestes honde, And bringgen hit to live in londe, For hit is comen of gentil blod.</p>	<p>Except for herself, as she knew well. She put the gloves under his head, And then she wrote out a letter, And tied it with a silk thread About his neck for God's blessing That whoever found it would see What was thus written in the letter: <i>For charity's sake, if any good man Can save this helpless child, Let him be christened by a priest's hand, And raise him to live in the land, For he has come from noble blood.</i></p>
210	<p>Helpeth hit with his owen god, With tresor that under his fet lis; And ten yer eld whan that he his, Taket him this ilke gloven two, And biddeh him, wharevere he go, That he ne lovie no womman in londe But this gloves willen on hire honde; For siker on honde nelle thai nere But on his moder that him bere."</p>	<p><i>Help him using his own goods, With the treasure that lies under his feet. And when he is ten years old, Give him these two gloves here And instruct him, wherever he goes, Not to love any woman in the land Unless these gloves will go on her hands. For certain, they will never fit any hand Except his mother who bore him.</i></p>
220	<p>The maiden tok the child here mide, Stille awai in aven tide, Alle the winteres longe night. The weder was cler, the mone light; Than warhth she war anon Of an hermitage in a ston: An holi man had ther his woniyng. Thider she wente on heyng, An sette the cradel at his dore, And durste abide no lengore, And passede forth anon right.</p>	<p>The maid took the child with her And stole away in the evening, All the long winter's night. The weather was clear, the moon was bright. Soon she was aware Of a hermitage in a cliffside Where a holy man had his dwelling. She went there in haste And set the cradle at his door, Not daring not wait any longer, And passed on right away.</p>
230	<p>Hom she com in that other night, And fond the levedi al drupni, Sore wepinde, and was sori, And tolde hire al togeder ther Hou she had iben and wher. The hermite aros erliche tho, And his knave was uppe also, An seide ifere here matines, And servede God and Hise seins.</p>	<p>She came home the next day And found the lady all despondent, Weeping bitterly and full of regret. She told her in full there How she had fared and where she had been. The hermit rose early, And his servant was up as well, And they said their matins together And worshipped God and His saints.</p>
240	<p>The litel child thai herde crie, And clepede after help on hie; The holi man his dore undede, And fond the cradel in the stede; He tok up the clothes anon And biheld the litel grom; He tok the letter and radde wel sone That tolde him that he scholde done. The heremite held up bothe his honde</p>	<p>They heard the little child crying And called for help in haste.⁸ The holy man unfastened his door And found the cradle on the step. He lifted up the cloths at once And saw the little boy. He took and quickly read the letter Which told him what he should do. The hermit held up both his hands</p>

⁸ *On hie*: Or, possibly "They called for help from on high."

250	<p>An thonked God of al His sonde, And bar that child in to his chapel, And for joie he rong his bel. He dede up the gloven and the tresour And cristned the child with gret honour: In the name of the Trinité, He hit nemnede Degarre, Degarre nowt elles ne is But thing that not never what hit is, Other thing that is neggh forlorn also; Forthi the schild he nemnede thous tho.</p>	<p>And thanked God for all His blessings, And carried the child into his chapel, And rang his bell for joy. He put away the gloves and the treasure And baptized the child with great honor. In the name of the Trinity, He named it Degare. Degare meant nothing else But something that is unknown, A thing that was almost lost.⁹ For this the child was named so. The hermit, who led a holy life, Had a sister who was a wife. A rich merchant of that land Had married her in the city. He sent the child to her, And the silver as well, by his servant, And asked her to take good care To foster and raise him, And if God Almighty would Give him ten years of life, She should arrange for him to return, And he would teach him the clergy.</p>	
260	<p>The heremite that was holi of lif Hadde a soster that was a wif; A riche marchaunt of that countré Hadde hire ispoused into that cité. To hire that schild he sente tho Bi his knave, and the silver also, And bad here take gode hede Hit to foster and to fede, And yif God Almighty wolde Ten yer his lif holde, Ayen to him hi scholde hit wise:</p>	<p>The litel child Degare Was ibrount into that cité. The wif and hire loverd ifere Kept his ase hit here owen were. Bi that hit was ten yer old, Hit was a fair child and a bold, Wel inorissched, god and hende; Was non betere in al that ende. He wende wel that the gode man Had ben his fader that him wan, And the wif his moder also, And the hermite his unkel bo; And whan the ten yer was ispent, To the hermitage he was sent, And he was glad him to se, He was so feir and so fre. He taughte him of clerkes lore Other ten wynter other more; And when he was of twenti yer, Staleworth he was, of swich pouer</p>	<p>The little child Degare Was brought into the city. The wife and her husband together Kept him as if he were their own. By the time he was ten years old, He was a fair and spirited child, Well-raised, kind, and courteous. There was no one better in all the area. He fully thought that the good man Was his father who had begotten him, And the woman his mother also, And the hermit his uncle as well. And when the tenth year had passed, He was sent to the hermitage. The hermit was glad to see him, For he was so fair and so noble. He taught him the lore of clerics¹⁰ For another ten years or more. And when he was in his twentieth year, He was sturdy and of such might That there was no man in the land Who could stand one blow from him. Then the hermit said, without a lie, That he was ready to be his own man,</p>
270	<p>He hit wolde tech of clergise. The litel child Degarre Was ibrount into that cité. The wif and hire loverd ifere Kept his ase hit here owen were. Bi that hit was ten yer old, Hit was a fair child and a bold, Wel inorissched, god and hende; Was non betere in al that ende.</p>	<p>The little child Degare Was brought into the city. The wife and her husband together Kept him as if he were their own. By the time he was ten years old, He was a fair and spirited child, Well-raised, kind, and courteous. There was no one better in all the area. He fully thought that the good man Was his father who had begotten him, And the woman his mother also, And the hermit his uncle as well. And when the tenth year had passed, He was sent to the hermitage. The hermit was glad to see him, For he was so fair and so noble. He taught him the lore of clerics¹⁰ For another ten years or more. And when he was in his twentieth year, He was sturdy and of such might That there was no man in the land Who could stand one blow from him. Then the hermit said, without a lie, That he was ready to be his own man,</p>	
280	<p>He wende wel that the gode man Had ben his fader that him wan, And the wif his moder also, And the hermite his unkel bo; And whan the ten yer was ispent, To the hermitage he was sent, And he was glad him to se, He was so feir and so fre. He taughte him of clerkes lore Other ten wynter other more; And when he was of twenti yer, Staleworth he was, of swich pouer</p>	<p>The little child Degare Was brought into the city. The wife and her husband together Kept him as if he were their own. By the time he was ten years old, He was a fair and spirited child, Well-raised, kind, and courteous. There was no one better in all the area. He fully thought that the good man Was his father who had begotten him, And the woman his mother also, And the hermit his uncle as well. And when the tenth year had passed, He was sent to the hermitage. The hermit was glad to see him, For he was so fair and so noble. He taught him the lore of clerics¹⁰ For another ten years or more. And when he was in his twentieth year, He was sturdy and of such might That there was no man in the land Who could stand one blow from him. Then the hermit said, without a lie, That he was ready to be his own man,</p>	
290	<p>That ther ne wan man in that lond That o breid him might astond. Tho the hermite seth, withouten les, Man for himself that he wes,</p>	<p>That there was no man in the land Who could stand one blow from him. Then the hermit said, without a lie, That he was ready to be his own man,</p>	

⁹ French *égaré* has the meaning of misplaced or strayed, and TEAMS gives the meaning of *Degarre* as “almost lost.”

¹⁰ *Clerkes lore*: Degare is receiving a Latin education. He is evidently not being groomed for priestly vows but for a lay position.

300	<p>Staleworht to don ech werk, And of his elde so god a clerk, He tok him his florines and his gloves That he had kept to hise bihovos. Ac the ten pound of starlings Were ispended in his fostrings. He tok him the letter to rede, And biheld al the dede. “O leve hem, par charité, Was this letter mad for me?” “Ye, bi oure Lord, us helpe sschal! Thus hit was,” and told him al. He knelede adoun al so swithe, And thonked the ermite of his live, And swor he nolde stinte no stounde</p>	<p>To do all his work with steadfastness, And for his age a fine clerk. He gave him his gold coins and gloves¹¹ That he had kept to fulfill his needs, Except for the ten pounds of silver, Which were spent in raising him. He gave him the letter to read, And watched all that happened. “Oh, dear uncle, for charity’s sake, Was this letter written for me?” “Yes, by our Lord, our help, So it was,” and he told him everything. The youth knelt down as quickly And thanked the hermit for his life, And swore he would not lose a moment</p>
310	<p>Til he his kinrede hadde ifounde. For in the lettre was thous iwrite, That bi the gloven he sscholde iwite Wich were his moder and who, Yhif that sche livede tho, For on hire honden hii wolde, And on non other hii nolde. Half the florines he gaf the hermite, And halvendel he tok him mide, And nam his leve an wolde go.</p>	<p>Until he had found his kin. For in the letter it was so written That by the gloves he would know Who his mother was, If she were still alive, For they would fit on her hands And would go on no other’s. He gave the hermit half the gold And took the other half with him, And made his goodbye and readied to go.</p>
320	<p>“Nai,” seide the hermite, “schaltu no! To seche thi ken mightou nowt dure Withouten hors and god armure.” “Nai,” quad he, “bi Hevene Kyng, Ich wil have first another thing!” He hew adoun, bothe gret and grim, To beren in his hond with him, A god sapling of an ok; Whan he tharwith gaf a strok, Ne wer he never so strong a man</p>	<p>“No,” said the hermit, “you must not. Your search for your kin will not last Without a horse and strong armor.” “No,” he replied, “by Heaven’s king, I will first have other assistance.” He chopped down a stout oak sapling, Both huge and forbidding,¹² To carry in his hand with him. When he gave a blow with it There would be no strong man Wearing fine arms upon himself Who would not fall to the ground. He found for himself such an aid. Then he commended the hermit to God And each left the other, weeping.</p>
330	<p>Ne so gode armes hadde upon, That he ne scholde falle to grounde; Swich a bourdon to him he founde. Tho thenne God he him bitawt, And aither fram other wepyng rawt. Child Degarre wente his wai Thourgh the forest al that dai. No man he ne herd, ne non he segh, Til hit was non ipassed hegh; Thanne he herde a noise kete</p>	<p>Child Degare made his way Through the forest all that day. He heard no man, nor did he see anyone Until it was well into the afternoon. Then he heard a loud noise</p>

¹¹ *Florines*: Florins were gold coins first minted in Florence in 1252, and issued in England only once by Edward III in 1344. Several European countries had their own florins but not France.

¹² Degare declines a knight’s gear in favor of an oak club as a sign of humility, as does Havelock, who fights with a door bar. TEAMS also gives Ferguson’s note that oaks had significance both as objects of worship in the pagan Celtic world and as Christian symbols of faith and virtue. George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (London: Zwemmer, 1955). See also the note to line 371.

340	In o valai, an dintes grete. Blive thider he gan to te: What hit ware he wolde ise. An Herl of the countré, stout and fers, With a knight and four squiers, Hadde ihonted a der other two, And al here houndes weren ago. Than was thar a dragon grim, Ful of filth and of venim, With wide throte and teth grete,	In a valley and a great clashing. He hurried that way swiftly, Wanting to see what it was. An earl of the countryside, hardy and fierce, With a knight and four squires, Had hunted a deer or two, And all their hounds were gone. A fearsome dragon had appeared, Full of filth and venom, With a wide throat and great teeth,
350	And wynges bitere with to bete. As a lyoun he hadde fet, And his tail was long and gret. The smoke com of his nose awai Ase fer out of a chimenai. The knyght and squiers he had torent, Man and hors to dethe chent. The dragon the Erl assaile gan, And he defended him as a man, And stoutliche leid on with his swerd,	And wings to beat cruelly with. He had feet like a lion, And his tail was long and massive. The smoke came from his nose Like a fire out of a chimney. He had torn apart the knight and squires And sent man and horse to their deaths. The earl began to face the dragon, And he defended himself as a man, And laid on stoutly with his sword, And struck him with harsh blows.
360	And stronge strokes on him gerd; Ac alle his dentes ne greved him nowt: His hide was hard so iren wrout. Therl flei fram tre to tre - Fein he wolde fram him be - And the dragon him gan asail; The doughti Erl in that batail Ofsegh this child Degarre; “Ha! help!” he seide, “par charité!”	But all his strokes gave him no harm. His hide was as tough as wrought iron. The earl fled from tree to tree, Wanting only to escape from him, But the dragon began to attack him. In that battle the hardy earl Saw Child Degare, and shouted, “Hey! Help! For charity’s sake!”
370	The dragoun seth the child com; He laft the Erl and to him nom Blowinde and yeniend also Als he him wolde swolewe tho. Ac Degarre was ful strong; He tok his bat, gret and long, And in the forehefd he him batereth That al the forehefd he tospatereth. He fil adoun anon right, And frapte his tail with gret might Upon Degarres side,	The dragon saw Degare coming. He left the earl and turned to him, Blowing and gaping as well, ¹³ Wishing to swallow him there. But Degare was very powerful. He took his club, great and long, And battered him on the forehead So that he shattered his skull. The dragon fell down at once And slapped his tail with great force Upon Degare’s side,
380	That up-so-doun he gan to glide; Ac he stert up ase a man And with his bat leide upan, And al tofrusst him ech a bon, That he lai ded, stille as a ston. Therl knelede adoun bilive And thonked the child of his live,	So that he was thrown upside down. But Degare leaped up like a man And laid on with his club, And crushed each bone of his So that he lay dead, as still as a stone. The earl knelt down humbly And thanked the youth for his life,

¹³ *Yeniend*: Yawning, not in boredom but in stretching his mouth to swallow Degare. TEAMS cites French & Hale, who state that “monsters usually could not be injured with manmade weapons; they had to be fought with their own (see also the sword in *Beowulf*) or with primitive things like the club here, or even with bare hands” (299). Degare’s choice of an oak is providential.

390	<p>And maked him with him gon To his castel right anon, And wel at hese he him made, And proferd him al that he hade, Rentes, tresor, an eke lond, For to holden in his hond. Thanne answerede Degarre, “Lat come ferst bifor me Thi levedi and other wimmen bold, Maidenes and widues, yonge and olde, And other damoiseles swete. Yif mine gloven beth to hem mete</p>	<p>And had him go with him To his castle straightaway, And made him well at ease. He offered him all that he had, Incomes, treasures, and lands as well, To hold in his hand.</p>
400	<p>For to done upon here honde, Thanne ich wil take thi londe; And yif thai ben nowt so, Iich wille take me leve and go.” Alle wimman were forht ibrowt In wide cuntries and forth isowt: Ech the gloven assaie bigan, Ac non ne mighte don hem on. He tok his gloven and up hem dede, And nam his leve in that stede. The Erl was gentil man of blod,</p>	<p>Degare answered then, “First let your lady come before me, With other noble women, Maidens and widows, young and old, And other sweet damsels. If my glove is proper To fit on their hands, Then I will accept your lands. And if it is not so, I will take my leave and go.” All the women were brought forth, Sought from lands far and wide. Each attempted to try on the gloves, But none could put them on. He took his gloves and put them away And made his goodbye in that hall.</p>
410	<p>And gaf him a stede ful god And noble armure, riche and fin, When he wolde armen him therin, And a palefrai to riden an, And a knave to ben his man, And yaf him a swerd bright, And dubbed him ther to knyght, And swor bi God Almighty That he was better worthi</p>	<p>The earl was a well-bred man of courtesy, And gave him a very fine steed And noble armor, rich and strong, For when he wished to arm himself, And a palfrey to ride on, And a servant to be his man. He gave him a shining sword, And dubbed him a knight there, And swore by God Almighty That he was far more worthy</p>
420	<p>To usen hors and armes also Than with his bat aboute to go. Sire Degarre was wel blithe, And thanked the Erl mani a sithe, And lep upon hiis palefrai, And doht him forth in his wai; Upon his stede righte his man, And ledde his armes als he wel can; Mani a jorné thai ride and sette. So on a dai gret folk thei mette, Erles and barouns of renoun,</p>	<p>To have a horse and arms as well Than to walk about with his club.¹⁴ Sir Degare was well pleased, And thanked the earl many times. He leaped upon his palfrey And went forth on his way. His squire rode upon his steed, And carried his arms as he knew well to. They rode and set upon many a journey. One day they met a great crowd, With earls and barons of renown, Who came from a fortress city.</p>
430	<p>That come fram a cité toun. He asked a seriaunt what tiding, And whennes hii come and what is this thing? “Sire,” he seide, “verraiment, We come framward a parlement.</p>	<p>He asked an officer for news, where They came from, and what was happening. “Sir,” he said, “in truth, We are returning from a parliament.</p>

¹⁴ *Go*: *go* in romance often has the modern nuance of general action, but here the regular ME meaning *walk* is likely intended. Compare Chaucer’s plea “go, litel bok, go” (*Troilus* V.1786). For general *go* OE also had *wendan*, indirectly leading to PDE past simple *went*.

<p>440</p> <p>450</p> <p>460</p> <p>470</p> <p>480</p>	<p>The King a gret counseil made For nedes that he to don hade. Whan the parlement was plener, He lette crie fer and ner, Yif ani man were of armes so bold That with the King justi wold, He sscholde have in mariage His dowter and his heritage, That is kingdom god and fair, For he had non other hair. Ac no man ne dar graunte therto, For mani hit assaieth and mai nowt do: Mani erl and mani baroun, Knightes and squiers of renoun; Ac ech man, that him justeth with, tit Hath of him a foul despit: Some he breketh the nekke anon, And of some the rig-bon; Some thourgh the bodi he girt, Ech is maimed other ihirt; Ac no man mai don him no thing Swich wonder chaunce hath the King. Sire Degarre thous thenche gan: "Ich am a staleworht man, And of min owen ich have a stede, Swerd and spere and riche wede; And yif ich felle the Kyng adoun, Evere ich have wonnen renoun; And thei that he me herte sore, No man wot wer ich was bore. Whether deth other lif me bitide, Agen the King ich wille ride!" In the cité his in he taketh, And resteth him and meri maketh. On a dai with the King he mette, And knelede adoun and him grette: "Sire King," he saide, "of muchel might, Mi loverd me sende hider anon right For to warne you that he Bi thi leve wolde juste with the, And winne thi dowter, yif he mai; As the cri was this ender dai, Justes he had to the inome." "De par Deus!" quath the King, "he is welcome. Be he baroun, be he erl, Be he burgeis, be he cherl, No man wil I forsake. He that winneth al sschal take." Amorewe the justes was iset; The King him purveid wel the bet, And Degarre ne knew no man, Ac al his trust is God upon. Erliche to churche than wente he; The masse he herde of the Trinité.</p>	<p>The king called a great council For needs he had to fulfill. When the assembly was in full session, He had it proclaimed, near and far, That if any man were so bold in arms That he would joust with the king, He would have his daughter In marriage, his heritage, And his kingdom, fair and clear, For he has no other heir. But no man dared accept the challenge, For many have tried and could not do it, Many earls and many barons, And knights and squires of renown. But each man who jousted with him Has quickly been disgraced by him. With some he broke their neck at once, And some their back-bone. Some he thrusts through their body. Each is maimed or hurt. But the king has such miraculous fortune That no man can do him any harm." Sir Degare began to think to himself, "I am a sturdy man, And I have a steed of my own, Sword and spear, and rich armor. And if I take down the king, I will have won fame for ever. And if he hurts me badly, No man knows where I was born. Whether life or death awaits me, I will ride against the king!" He took lodging in the town And rested and amused himself. One day he met with the king, And knelt down and greeted him. "Sire king," he said, "of great might, My lord has sent me here directly To notify you that, with your permission, He wishes to joust with you, And win your daughter, if he may. In answer to the call the other day, He will prepare to joust with you." "By God," exclaimed the king, "he is welcome! Whether he is a baron or earl, Or townsman or peasant, I will overlook no man. He that wins shall take all." The joust was set for the morning. The king outfitted himself in the best manner While Degare had no man's support; But all his trust was in God. He went early to church And heard the mass of the Trinity.</p>
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490	<p>To the Fader he offreth hon florine, And to the Sone another al so fine, And to the Holi Gost the thridde; The prest for him ful yerne gan bidde. And tho the servise was idon, To his in he wente wel son And let him armi wel afin, In god armes to justu in. His gode stede he gan bistrude; His squier bar his sschaft biside; In the feld the King he abide gan,</p>	<p>To the Father he offered one gold coin, And to the Son another just as fine, And to the Holy Ghost the third. The priest prayed for him fervently. And when the service was done, He went at once to his inn And had himself well-armed With good armor to joust in. He mounted his fine steed, And his squire carried his lance alongside. On the field he waited for the king, Who came riding with determination, Coming out of the town with many men, With many a lord of great reputation. But everyone who was on the field Who saw the joust Said that they had never before seen With their eyes so distinguished a man As this noble Degare was, But no man knew where he came from. Both of them began to battle then, Though Degare did not know how to joust. The king had the larger lance And knew the craft in full; He intended to break Degare's neck, And landed his blow in the helmet So that the shaft splintered apart. But Degare was so strong That he sat still in the saddle And held his feet in the stirrups. I tell the truth, without a lie, He know no more about jousting. "Alas," cried the king, "alas! Such a thing has never happened to me, That any man I might hit Would sit there after my blow!" He seized a much greater lance And swore that he would succeed. "If his neck will not be broken, His backbone will, before I leave here!" He rode again with great abandon And thought to throw him down, And struck Degare at once, Right against the breast-bone. The shaft was firm and wondrously strong, But Degare reared up his horse, And as before he rose up high. And although Degare was nearly fallen, As God Almighty wished, The shaft broke and would not hold. Degare altered his course And was angered beyond control. "Alas," he said, "for the unfairness! The king has struck me twice,</p>
500	<p>As he com ridend with mani a man, Stoutliche out of the cité toun, With mani a lord of gret renoun; Ac al that in the felde beth That the justes iseth Seide that hi never yit iseghe So pert a man with here egye As was this gentil Degarre, Ac no man wiste whennes was he.</p>	
510	<p>Bothe thai gonne to justu than, Ac Degarre can nowt theron. The King hath the gretter schaft And kan inowgh of the craft. To breke his nekke he had iment: In the helm he set his dent, That the schaft al tosprong; Ac Degarre was so strong That in the sadel stille he set, And in the stiropes held his fet; For sothe I seie, withoute lesing,</p>	
520	<p>He ne couthe nammore of justing. "Alas!" quath the King, "allas! Me ne fil nevere swich a cas, That man that ich mighte hitte After mi strok mighte sitte!" He taketh a wel gretter tre And swor so he moste ithe, "Yif his nekke nel nowt atwo, His rigg schal, ar ich hennes go!" He rod eft with gret raundoun</p>	
530	<p>And thought to beren him adoun, And girt Degarre anon Right agein the brest-bon The schaft was stef and wonder god, And Degarre stede astod, And al biforen he ros on heghth, And tho was he ifallen neghth; But as God Almighty wold, The schaft brak and might nowt hold, And Degarre his cours out ritte,</p>	
540	<p>And was agramed out of his witte. "Alas!" quath he, "for vilaynie! The King me hath ismiten twie,</p>	

<p>550</p> <p>560</p> <p>570</p> <p>580</p>	<p>And I ne touchede him nowt yete. Nou I schal avise me bette!” He turned his stede with herte grim, And rod to the King, and he to him, And togider thai gert ful right, And in the scheldes here strokes pight That the speres al toriveth And up right to here honde sliveth, That alle the lordings that ther ben That the justing mighte sen Seiden hi ne seghe never with egye Man that mighte so longe dreghe, In wraththe for nothing, Sitten a strok of here King; “Ac he his doughti for the nones, A strong man of bodi and bones.” The King with egre mod gan speke: “Do bring me a schaft that wil nowt breke! A, be mi trewth, he sschal adoun! Thai he be strengere than Sampson; And thei he be the bare qued, He sschal adoun, maugré his heved!” He tok a schaft was gret and long, The schild another al so strong; And to the King wel evene he rit; The King failleth, and he him smit; His schaft was strong and god withal, And wel scharped the coronal. He smot the Kyng in the lainer: He might flit nother fer ne ner. The King was strong and harde sat; The stede ros up biforn with that, And Sire Degarre so thriste him than That, maugré whoso grochche bigan, Out of the sadel he him cast, Tail over top, right ate last. Than was ther long houting and cri; The King was sor asschamed forthi; The lordinges comen with might and mein And broughte the King on horse agein, An seide with o criing, iwis, “Child Degarre hath wonne the pris!” Than was the damaisele sori, For hi wist wel forwhi: That hi scholde ispoused ben</p>	<p>And I have not touched him at all yet. Now I will take a better course!” He turned his steed with a fierce heart And rode to the king, and he did to him, And they crashed directly together, And blows were struck on shields So that the spears were broken apart And split right up to their hands. All the lords who were there And could see the jousting Said they never saw with their eyes A man who could endure so long, Who could in combat, for anything, Withstand a blow from their king. “But he shows courage for the occasion, A mighty man in flesh and bones!” The king was in furious spirits and said, “Go, bring me a shaft that will not break! Now, by my word, he will go down! Even if he is stronger than Sampson, Or if he is the naked devil himself,¹⁵ He will fall, in spite of his might!” He took a shaft that was huge and long, And Degare took another just as strong, And he met the king in mid-course. The king wavered, and Degare struck him. His shaft was strong and firm throughout, And the spear head was well-sharpened. He stabbed the king in the armor straps; He could not flee, neither near or far. Yet the king was strong and sat firmly. With that his steed reared before him, And Sir Degare thrust at him, So that despite whoever began the grudge, He threw the king out of the saddle, And finally, head over feet. There was a long shouting and crying then, And the king was sorely ashamed for it. The lords came in force with their company And brought the king to his horse again, And said with one shout, in truth, “Child Degare has won the prize!”¹⁶ Then the princess was sorry, For she knew well what had happened, That she had been promised</p>
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¹⁵ *The bare qued*: ‘Naked evil.’ TEAMS explains that this is a euphemism for the devil, who cannot be named for fear of attracting him: “Speak of the devil!” The *Havelock* poet does not seem to share these qualms and compares both Godrich and Godard to *Sathanas* (1135, 2512).

¹⁶ *Child Degarre*: Though Degare has already been knighted (416), for him to be called *child* (knight-in-training) even as a young adult is commonplace and not an insult. The lords may also see Degare’s youth and inexperience and do not know his full rank.

590	<p>To a knight that sche never had sen, And lede here lif with swich a man That sche ne wot who him wan, No in what londe he was ibore; Carful was the levedi therefore.</p>	<p>To a knight that she had never seen, To lead her life with such a man That she did not know who had fathered him, Nor in what land he had been born. And so the lady was miserable.</p>
600	<p>Than seide the King to Degarre, “Min hende sone, com hider to me: And thou were al so gentil a man As thou semest with sight upan, And ase wel coutheest wisdomes do As thou art staleworht man therto, Me thouwte mi kingdoms wel biset:</p>	<p>Then the king said to Degare, “My noble son, come here to me.¹⁷ If you are as decent a man As you seem to our sight, And as skilful in wise deeds As you are rugged and manly, I think my kingdom will be well served.</p>
610	<p>Ac be thou werse, be thou bet, Covenaut ich wille the holde. Lo, her biforn mi barons bolde, Mi douwter I take the bi the hond, And seise the her in al mi lond. King thou scalt ben after me: God graunte the god man for to be!” Than was the child glad and blithe, And thonked the Kyng mani a sithe. Gret perveaunce than was ther iwrount:</p>	<p>But whether you are better or worse, I will hold my agreement with you. See, here before my brave barons, I give you my daughter’s hand, And award her to you with all my land. You will be king after me. God grant that you be a good man!” Then Degare was glad and joyful, And thanked the king many times. Great preparations were made.</p>
620	<p>To churche thai were togidere ibrount, And spoused that levedi verraiment, Under Holi Sacrement. Lo, what chaunse and wonder strong Bitideth mani a man with wrong, That cometh into an uncouthe thede And spouseth wif for ani mede And knowes nothing of hire kin, Ne sche of his, neither more ne min, And beth iwedded togider to libbe</p>	<p>They were brought together to church, And he married that lady, truly, Under the holy sacrament. See what fate and great wonder it is, That misfortune should befall a man Who comes into an unknown land, And takes a wife for whatever reward, Knowing nothing of her family, Nor she of his, neither more nor less, And to be wedded to live together, And by chance to be close kin!</p>
630	<p>Par aventure, and beth negth sibbe! So dede Sire Degarre the bold Spoused ther is moder And that hende levedi also Here owene sone was spoused to, That sche upon here bodi bar. Lo, what aventure fil hem thar! But God, that alle thingge mai stere, Wolde nowt that thai sinned ifere: To chirche thai wente with barouns bolde;</p>	<p>Thus did Sir Degare the valiant Wed his own mother there, And that gracious lady as well Was married to her own son, Whom she bore from her own body. See what chance brought them there! But God, who can guide all matters, Did not wish for them to sin together. They went to church with noble barons, And a rich feast was held for them.</p>
	<p>A riche feste thai gonne to holde; And wan was wel ipassed non And the dai was al idon, To bedde thai sscholde wende, that fre, The dammaisele and Sire Degarre. He stod stille and bithouwte him than Hou the hermite, the holi man,</p>	<p>And when the afternoon had long passed And the day was all done, They wanted to go to bed, that noble pair, The princess and Sir Degare. But he stood still and thought to himself How the hermit, the holy man,</p>

¹⁷ *Min hende sone*: Calling a young man *son* is an unusual address in romance, and the audience might know or later realize the irony that Degare is the king’s grandson.

<p>640</p> <p>650</p> <p>660</p> <p>670</p> <p>680</p>	<p>Bad he scholde no womman take For faired ne for riches sake But she mighte this gloves two Lightliche on hire hondes do. “Allas, allas!” than saide he, “What meschaunce is comen to me? A wai! witles wrechche ich am! Iich hadde levere than this kingdam That is iseised into min hond That ich ware faire out of this lond!” He wrang his hondes and was sori, Ac no man wiste therefore wi. The King parceyved and saide tho, “Sire Degarre, wi farest thou so? Is ther ani thing don ille, Spoken or seid agen thi wille?” “Ya, sire,” he saide, “bi Hevene King!” “I chal never, for no spousing, Therwhiles I live, with wimman dele, Widue ne wif ne dammeisele, But she this gloves mai take and fonde And lightlich drawen upon hire honde.” His yonge bride that gan here, And al for thout chaunged hire chere And ate laste gan to turne here mod: Here visage wex ase red ase blod: She knew tho gloves that were hire. “Schewe hem hider, leve sire.” Sche tok the gloves in that stede And lightliche on hire hondes dede, And fil adoun, with revli crie, And seide, “God, mercy, mercie! Thou art mi sone hast spoused me her, And ich am, sone, thi moder der. Ich hadde the loren, ich have the founde; Blessed be Jhesu Crist that stounde!” Sire Degarre tok his moder tho And helde here in his armes two. Keste and clepte here mani a sithe; That hit was sche, he was ful blithe. Than the Kyng gret wonder hadde Why that noise that thai made, And mervailed of hire crying, And seide, “Doughter, what is this thing?” “Fader,” she seide, “thou schalt ihere: Thou wenest that ich a maiden were, Ac certes, nay, sire, ich am non: Twenti winter nou hit is gon That mi maidenhed I les</p>	<p>Ordered that he should take no wife, For beauty or for riches, Unless she might put these two gloves Lightly on her hands. “Alas, alas!” he said then, “What misfortune has come to me? Oh, woe! I am a witless wretch! I would rather be gone from this land, Than have this kingdom That was given into my hand!” He wrung his hands and was miserable, But no man knew why. The king took notice and so he said, “Sir Degare, why do you behave so? Has anything wrong been done, Spoken, or said against your will?” “Yes, Sire,” he said, “by Heaven’s king! While I live I can never consort With a woman in marriage,¹⁸ Not a widow or wife or damsel, Unless she takes and tries these gloves And draws them lightly on her hands.” His young bride overheard that, And in realization her expression changed, And at last her mood turned. Her face blushed as red as blood. She knew those gloves were hers. “Show them here, dear sir.” She took the gloves in that moment And put them easily on her hands, And fell down in a doleful cry, And said, “God have mercy, mercy! You are my boy who has married me here, And I am, son, your dear mother. I had lost you, I have found you. May Jesus Christ be blessed that moment!” Then Sir Degare took his mother And held her in his two arms, Kissing and embracing her many times. He was joyful, for it was her. The king had great puzzlement then Over the fuss that they made, And wondered about her crying And said, “Daughter, what is going on?” “Father,” she said, “you will hear all. You thought that I was a maiden, But for sure, Sire, I am not. Twenty years have passed now Since I lost my virginity</p>
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¹⁸ *With wimman dele*: The MED states that *dele with* can mean sexual intercourse. While it fits the situation, Degare is probably not saying this to the king about his daughter.

690	<p>In a forest as I wes, And this is mi sone, God hit wot: Bi this gloves wel ich wot.” She told him al that sothe ther, Hou the child was geten and wher; And hou that he was boren also, To the hermitage yhe sente him tho, And seththen herd of him nothing; “But thanked be Jhesu, Hevene King, lich have ifounde him alive! Ich am his moder and ek his wive!” ”Leve moder,” seide Sire Degarre, “Telle me the sothe, par charité:</p>	<p>When I was in a forest. And this is my son, God knows. By these gloves I know it well.” She told him all the truth there, How the child was fathered, and where, And how he was born as well, How she sent him to the hermitage, And after then heard nothing of him. “But Jesus be thanked, Heaven’s king, I have found him alive! I am his mother and also his wife!”¹⁹ “Dear mother,” said Sir Degare, “Tell me the truth, for charity’s sake.</p>
700	<p>Into what londe I mai terne To seke mi fader, swithe and yerne?” “Sone,” she saide, “bi Hevene Kyng, I can the of him telle nothing But tho that he fram me raught, His owen swerd he me bitaught, And bad ich sholde take hit the forthan Yif thou livedest and were a man.” The swerd sche fet forht anon right, And Degarre hit out plight.</p>	<p>What land must I turn to, Swiftly and readily, to find my father?” “Son,” she said, “by Heaven’s king, I can tell you nothing of him, Except that when he departed from me, He entrusted me with his own sword, And ordered that I should give it to you If you lived to become a man.” She fetched the sword right away, And Degare pulled it out.</p>
710	<p>Brod and long and hevi hit wes: In that kyngdom no swich nes. Than seide Degarre forthan, “Whoso hit aught, he was a man! Nou ich have that ikepe, Night ne dai nel ich slepe Til that I mi fader see, Yif God wile that hit so be.” In the cité he reste al night. Amorewe, whan hit was dai-lit,</p>	<p>It was broad and long and heavy. No such sword was known in that kingdom. With that, Degare said, “Whoever owned it, he was a man! Now that I have it in my possession, I will not rest day or night Until I see my father, If God wills that it be so.” He slept all night in the fortress. In the morning when it was daylight,</p>
720	<p>He aros and herde his masse; He dighte him and forth gan passe. Of al that cité than moste non Neither with him riden ne gon But his knave, to take hede To his armour and his stede. Forth he rod in his wai Mani a pas and mani jurnai; So longe he passede into west That he com into theld forest</p>	<p>He rose and heard mass. He prepared himself and went forth. In all the city there was no one Who might ride or go with him, Except his servant, to take care Of his armor and his steed. He rode forth on his way through Many a pass and many a journey. He traveled into the west a long time, Until he came into the ancient forest Where he was conceived before.</p>
730	<p>Therinne he rideth mani a mile; Mani a dai he ride gan;</p>	<p>He rode in it many a mile, And went on for many a day,</p>

¹⁹ *Ich am his moder and ek his wive*: Again, while this line seems disturbing to the point of risible for a modern reader, the important point for a medieval audience is that the marriage was not consummated. This permits the quick annulment at the end (1092-3). TEAMS points out that *The Legend of Pope Gregory*, an Auchinleck text and a possible influence on *Degare*, also features a hero set adrift at birth who returns home to unwittingly marry his mother. Both stories suggest the Oedipal myth, but neither are tragedies.

740	<p>No quik best he fond of man, Ac mani wilde bestes he seghth And foules singen on heghth. So longe hit drouwth to the night, The sonne was adoune right. Toward toun he wolde ride, But he nist never bi wiche side. Thenne he segh a water cler, And amidde a river,</p>	<p>Meeting no living beast that was tame. But he saw many wild animals, And birds singing from on high. It continued until the fall of night, When the sun had gone down. He wanted to ride toward town, But he did not know which way to go. Then he saw clear waters, And alongside the river,</p>
750	<p>A fair castel of lim and ston: Other wonyng was ther non. To his knave he seide, "Tide wat tide, O fote forther nel I ride, Ac here abide wille we, And aske herberewe par charité, Yif ani quik man be here on live." To the water thai come als swithe; The bregge was adoune tho,</p>	<p>A stately castle of lime and mortar. There was no other dwelling. He said to his servant, "Come what may, I will not ride one foot farther, But we will stay here And ask for harbor for charity's sake, If there is anyone alive staying here." They came to the water as quickly. The bridge was down, And the gate was open as well, And they sped into the castle.</p>
760	<p>And into the castel he gan spede. First he stabled up his stede; He taiede up his palefrai. Inough he fond of hote and hai; He bad his grom on heying Kepen wel al here thing. He passed up into the halle, Biheld aboute, and gan to calle; Ac neither on lond ne on hegh No quik man he ne segh.</p>	<p>First he stabled his horse And tied up his palfrey. They found plenty of oats and hay. He asked his servant in haste To keep all their things well. He passed into the hall, Looked around, and began to call. But he saw no living person, Either on the ground floor or higher. In the middle of the hall floor A fire was raised, strong and blazing.</p>
770	<p>Amidde the halle flore A fir was bet, stark an store, "Par fai," he saide, "ich am al sure He that bette that fure Wil comen hom yit tonight; Abiden ich wille a litel wight." He sat adoun upon the dais, And warmed him wel eche wais, And he biheld and undernam Hou in at the dore cam</p>	<p>"By my faith," he said, "I am sure That whoever made that fire Will come home tonight yet. I will wait a little while." He sat down on the platform, And warmed himself well all over. Then he perceived and saw Coming in through the door Four ladies, noble and elegant. Each was bare-legged from the knees down. Two carried bows and arrows, And the others were laden With venison, rich and fine.</p>
780	<p>Four dammaiseles, gent and fre; Ech was itakked to the kne. The two bowen an arewen bere, The other two icharged were With venesoun, riche and god. And Sire Degarre upstod And gret hem wel fair aflight, Ac thai answerede no wight, But yede into chaumbre anon And barred the dore after son.</p>	<p>Sir Degare stood up And greeted them very courteously, But they did not answer at all. They only advanced into their chamber And barred the door soon after. Following that, in a little while A dwarf came into the hall. His body was four feet tall. His appearance was firm and severe; Both his beard and his hair</p>
	<p>Sone thereafter withalle Ther com a dwerw into the halle. Four fet of lengthe was in him; His visage was stout and grim; Bothe his berd and his fax</p>	

790	<p>Was crisp an yhalew as wax; Grete sscholdres and quarré; Right stoutliche loked he; Mochele were hise fet and honde Ase the meste man of the londe; He was iclothed wel aright, His sschon icouped as a knight; He hadde on a sorcot overt, Iforred with blaundeuer apert. Sire Degarre him biheld and lowggh, And gret him fair inowggh, Ac he ne answerede nevere a word, But sette trestles and laid the bord, And torches in the halle he lighte,</p>	<p>Were crisp and yellow like wax. With large, square shoulders, He looked very rugged. His feet and hands were as huge As the biggest men in the land. He was clothed very finely, With his shoes scored like a knight's.²⁰ He had on an open overcoat, Trimmed with white fur. Sir Degare saw him and laughed, And greeted him politely enough, But he did not answer a word. He only set supports and laid the table, And lit torches in the hall,</p>
800	<p>And redi to the soper dighte. Than ther com out of the bour A dammeisele of gret honour; In the lond non fairer nas; In a diapre clothed she was With hire come maidenenes tene, Some in scarlet, some in grene, Gent of bodi, of semblaunt swete, And Degarre hem gan grete; Ac hi ne answerede no wight,</p>	<p>And prepared to make supper. Then there came out of the rooms A young lady of great honor. There was no one fairer in the land. She was dressed in patterned clothes, And ten maidens came with her, Some in scarlet, some in green,²¹ Delicate in body and sweet in appearance. Degare began to greet them, But they answered no man</p>
810	<p>But yede to the soper anon right. “Certes,” quath Sire Degarre, “Ich have hem gret, and hi nowt me; But thai be domb, bi and bi Thai schul speke first ar I.” The levedi that was of rode so bright, Amidde she sat anon right, And on aither half maidenenes five. The dwerw hem servede al so blive With riche metes and wel idight;</p>	<p>And only went right to their supper. “For certain,” said Sir Degare, “I have greeted them, and they ignored me. Unless they are mute, by and by, They shall speak first before I do!” The lady who had so bright a complexion Sat right down in the middle, With five maidens on either side. The dwarf served them swiftly With rich foods, sumptuously prepared.</p>
820	<p>The coppe he filleth with alle his might. Sire Degarre couthe of curteisie: He set a chaier bifore the levedie, And therin himselve set, And tok a knif and carf his met; At the soper litel at he, But biheld the levedi fre,</p>	<p>He filled the cup with all his attention. Sir Degare knew court manners. He set a chair before the lady And sat himself there, And took a knife and carved his meat. He ate lightly of the supper, But beheld the gracious lady,</p>

²⁰ *His sschon icouped as a knight*: TEAMS cites both French & Hall, who state that this was a fashion where the upper part of shoes were scored to show the bright colors of the stockings underneath (311), and Laing, who notes that early editors dated the poem to the early thirteenth century from this style. David Laing, ed., *Sire Degarre, a Metrical Romance of the End of the Thirteenth Century* (Edinburgh: Abbotsford Club, 1849).

²¹ *Some in scarlet, some in grene*: Scarlet could refer either to a type of woolen cloth or to the hue, though both had connotations of luxury or authority, being the color of cardinals' robes. Green was an ominous color suggesting untamed nature, and devils were depicted not as red but green. Medieval clothing, even for peasants, was not as drab as the modern stereotype suggests, but there is a special air of mystique to the attire here.

830	<p>And segh ase feir a wimman Als he hevere loked an, That al his herte and his thout Hire to love was ibrowt. And tho thai hadde souped anowgh, The drew com, and the cloth he drough; The levedis wessche everichon And yede to chaumbre quik anon. Into the chaumbre he com ful sone. The levedi on here bed set, And a maide at here fet, And harpede notes gode and fine; Another broughte spices and wine.</p>	<p>Seeing as beautiful a woman As he had ever looked upon, So that all his heart and his mind Were moved to love for her. And when they had eaten enough, The dwarf came and withdrew the tablecloth. Each one of the ladies washed And went right away to her chamber. Degare quickly followed into the room. The lady sat on her bed With a maid at her feet, Who played music on a harp, sweet and fine. Another brought spices and wine.</p>
840	<p>Upon the bedde he set adoun To here of the harpe soun. For murthe of notes so sschille, He fel adoun on slepe stille; So he slep al that night. The levedi wreith him warm aflight, And a pilewe under his heved dede, And yede to bedde in that stede. Amorewe whan hit was dai-light, Sche was uppe and redi dight.</p>	<p>He sat down upon the bed To listen to the harp's sound. From enjoyment of the beautiful music, He fell down into a sound sleep, And so he slept all that night. The lady tucked him in warmly, I know, And placed a pillow under his head, And went to bed in that place. In the morning, when it was daylight, She was up and already dressed.</p>
850	<p>Faire sche waked him tho: "Aris!" she seide, "graith the, an go!" And saide thus in here game: "Thou art worth to suffri schame, That al night as a best sleptest, And non of mine maidenenes ne keptest." "O gentil levedi," seide Degarre, "For Godes love, forgif hit me! Certes the murie harpe hit made, Elles misdo nowt I ne hade;</p>	<p>Then she woke him up gently. "Get up," she said, "dress yourself and go." And she added playfully, "You deserve to suffer shame, For sleeping like a beast all night And not protecting any of my maidens."²² "Oh, gracious lady," said Degare, "For the love of God, forgive me! For sure, the merry harping caused it. Otherwise I would not have behaved so.</p>
860	<p>Ac tel me, levedi so hende, Ar ich out of thi chaumbre wende, Who is louerd of this lond? And who this castel hath in hond? Wether thou be widue or wif, Or maiden yit of clene lif? And whi her be so fele wimman Allone, withouten ani man?" The dameisele sore sighte, And bigan to wepen anon righte,</p>	<p>But tell me, noble lady, Before I go out of this room, Who is lord of this land? And who has this castle in hand? Are you a widow or a wife, Or still a maiden, pure in body? And why are there so many women here, Alone, without any man?" The damsel sighed sorely, And immediately began to cry.</p>
870	<p>"Sire, wel fain ich telle the wolde, Yif evere the better be me sscholde. Mi fader was a riche baroun, And hadde mani a tour and toun. He ne hadde no child but me;</p>	<p>"Sir, I would gladly tell you If it might ever do me any good. My father was a rich baron And had many a tower and town. He had no children but me.</p>

²² TEAMS cites Brewer, who feels that the lady is gently mocking Degare's virility for having "paid no attention to the ladies" (253). Derek Brewer, "Medieval Literature, Folk Tale, and Traditional Literature," *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters* 11:4 (1981): 243-56.

<p>880</p> <p>890</p> <p>900</p> <p>910</p> <p>920</p>	<p>Ich was his air of his cuntré. In mené ich hadde mani a knight And squiers that were gode and light, An staleworht men of mester, To serve in court fer and ner; Ac thanne is thar here biside A sterne knight, iknawe ful wide. Ich wene in Bretaine ther be non So strong a man so he is on. He had ilove me ful yore; Ac in herte nevere more Ne mighte ich lovie him agein; But whenne he seghye ther was no gein, He was aboute with maistri For to ravisse me awai. Mine knightes wolde defende me, And ofte fowghten hi an he; The beste he slowgh the firste dai, And sethen an other, par ma fai, And sethen the thridde and the ferthe, - The beste that mighte gon on erthe! Mine squiers that weren so stoute, Bi foure, bi five, thai riden oute, On hors armed wel anowgh: His houen bodi he hem slough. Mine men of mester he slough alle, And other pages of mine halle. Therefore ich am sore agast Lest he wyne me ate last.” With this word sche fil to grounde, And lai aswone a wel gret stounde. Hire maidenenes to hire come And in hire armes up hire nome. He beheld the levedi with gret pité. “Loveli madame,” quath he, “On of thine ich am here: Ich wille the help, be mi pouere.” “Yhe, sire,” she saide, “than al mi lond Ich wil the give into thin hond, And at thi wille bodi mine, Yif thou might wreke me of hine.” Tho was he glad al for to fighte, And wel gladere that he mighte Have the levedi so bright Yif he slough that other knight. And als thai stod and spak ifere, A maiden cried, with reuful chere, “Her cometh oure enemi, faste us ate! Drauwe the bregge and sschet the gate, Or he wil slen ous everichone!” Sire Degarre stirt up anon And at a window him segh, Wel i-armed on hors hegh; A fairer bodi than he was on</p>	<p>I was the heir of his country. In my company I had many knights, And squires who were good and able, And sturdy men of skill, To serve the court near and far. But then there came around here A cruel knight who is widely known. I believe there is no one in Brittany So strong a man as he is. He had loved me for a long time, But I could never in my heart Love him in return. But when he saw there was no use, He was ready to ravish Me away with force. My knights attempted to defend me, And they continually fought with him. He slaughtered the best the first day, And then a second, by my faith, And then the third and fourth, The best that might walk on earth! My squires who were so strong, Rode out, by four, by five, On horses, armed well enough. He destroyed them by his own hand. He killed all of my skilled men And other pages in my hall. For this I am sorely afraid That he might finally conquer me.” With these words she fell to the ground And lay in a faint for a good while. Her maidens came to her And took her up in their arms. He looked at the lady with great pity. “Lovely madam,” he said, “I am here as one of yours. I will help you by my own power.” “Sir, yes,” she said, “then I will give you All of my land into your hand, As well as my body, at your will, If you can avenge me of him.” Then he was glad to be able to fight, And even gladder that he might Have the lady so bright If he destroyed that other knight. And as they stood and spoke together, A maiden cried, with a doleful voice, “Here comes our enemy toward us fast! Raise the bridge and shut the gate, Or he will slay every one of us!” Sir Degare started up at once And saw him through a window, Well armed and high on his horse. He never saw a fairer body</p>
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<p>930</p> <p>940</p> <p>950</p> <p>960</p> <p>970</p> <p>980</p>	<p>In armes ne segh he never non. Sire Degarre armed him blive And on a stede gan out drive. With a spere gret of gayn, To the knight he rit agein. The knighte spere al tosprong, Ac Degarre was so strong And so harde to him thrast, But the knight sat so fast, That the stede rigge tobrek And fel to grounde, and he ek; But anon stirt up the knight And drough out his swerd bright. “Alight,” he saide, “adoun anon; To fight thou sschalt afote gon. For thou hast slawe mi stede, Deth-dint schal be thi mede; Ac thine stede sle I nille, Ac on fote fighte ich wille.” Than on fote thai toke the fight, And hewe togidere with brondes bright. The knight gaf Sire Degarre Sterne strokes gret plenté, And he him agen also, That helm and scheld cleve atwo. The knight was agreved sore That his armour toburste thore: A strok he gaf Sire Degarre, That to grounde fallen is he; But he stirt up anon right, And swich a strok he gaf the knight Upon his heved so harde iset Thurh helm and heved and bacinet That ate brest stod the dent; Ded he fil doun, verraiment. The levedi lai in o kernel, And biheld the batail everi del. She ne was never er so blithe: Sche thankede God fele sithe. Sire Degarre com into castel; Agein him com the dammaisel, And thonked him swithe of that dede. Into chaumber sche gan him lede, And unarmed him anon, And set him hire bed upon, And saide, “Sire, par charité, I the prai dwel with me, And al mi lond ich wil the give, And miselve, whil that I live.” “Grant merci, dame,” saide Degarre, “Of the gode thou bedest me: Wende ich wille into other londe, More of haventours for to fonde; And be this twelve moneth be go,</p>	<p>In arms than he was. Sir Degare armed himself swiftly And drove out on his steed. With a spear of great force He rode toward the knight. The knight broke the spear into pieces; But Degare was so strong And thrust on him so hard, That because the knight sat so firmly, The horse’s backbone was broken And it fell to the ground with him. But the knight jumped up at once And drew out his bright sword. “Get down,” he said, “dismount right now. To fight me you must go on foot. Because you have slain my steed, A death blow will be your reward. I do not want to slay your horse; I will fight you on foot.” Then they took the fight to the ground, And clashed together with shining blades. The knight gave Sir Degare Harsh blows in great plenty, And he struck him in return as well, So that helmet and shield were cut in two. The knight was sorely angered That his armor was broken there. He gave Sir Degare a stroke That brought him to the ground. But he stood up right away And gave the knight such a blow, So powerfully set upon his head, Through helmet and steel cap and head, That the stroke only stopped at the breast. He fell down dead, in truth. The lady stayed in the barricade And saw every moment of the battle. She was never before so happy And thanked God many times. Sir Degare came into the castle And the damsel came to him And thanked him swiftly for his deeds. She led him into her chamber And unarmed him at once, And set him upon her bed And said, “Sir, for charity’s sake, I beg that you stay with me, And I will give you all my land, And myself, while I live.” “Many thanks, my lady,” said Degare, “For all the goods that you offer me. But I will travel to other lands, To find more adventures. And after twelve months have passed,</p>
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	Agein ich wil come the to.” The levedi made moche mourning For the knightes departing, And gaf him a stede, god and sur, Gold and silver an god armur, And bitaught him Jhesu, Hevene King. And sore thei wepen at here parting.	I will come back again to you.” The lady made great sadness Over the knight’s departing, And gave him a steed, fine and sure, Gold and silver, and strong armor, And entrusted him to Jesus, Heaven’s king. They wept bitterly at their parting.
990	Forht wente Sire Degarre Thurh mani a divers cuntré; Ever mor he rod west. So in a dale of o forest He mette with a doughti knight Upon a stede, god and light, In armes that were riche and sur, With the sscheld of asur And thre bor-hevedes therin Wel ipainted with gold fin.	Sir Degare went forth Through many different lands, Always riding west. And so one day in a forest valley He met with a rugged knight On a steed, strong and lively, In arms that were rich and sturdy, With a shield of azure With three boars’ heads on them, ²³ Finely painted with costly gold.
1000	Sire Degarre anon right Hendeliche grette the knight, And saide, “Sire, God with the be;” And thous agein answered he: “Velaun, wat dost thou here, In mi forest to chase mi dere?” Degarre answerede with wordes meke: “Sire, thine der nougt I ne seke: Ich am an aunterous knight, For to seche werre and fight.”	At once Sir Degare Politely greeted the knight And said, “God be with you, sir.” He answered in return, “Villain, what are you doing here In my forest, chasing my deer? Degare replied with gentle words, “Sir, I do not want any of your deer. I am a faithful knight, Out to seek adventure and combat.”
1010	The knight saide, withouten fail, “Yif thou comest to seke batail, Here thou hast thi per ifounde: Arme the swithe in this stounde!” Sire Degarre and his squier Armed him in riche atir, With an helm riche for the nones, Was ful of precious stones That the maide him gaf, saun fail, For whom he did rather batail.	The knight said, without doubt, “If you’ve come to seek battle, You’ve found your match here! Arm yourself fast in this place!” Sir Degare, with his squier, Armed himself in rich clothing, With a fine helmet for the occasion. It was full of precious stones That the maiden gave him, without doubt, For whom he battled earlier.
1020	A sscheld he kest aboute his swere That was of armes riche and dere, With thre maidenes hevedes of silver bright, With crounes of gold precious of sight. A sschaft he tok that was nowt smal, With a kene coronal. His squier tok another spere; Bi his louerd he gan hit bere. Lo, swich aventure ther gan bitide - The sone agein the fader gan ride,	He put a shield about his neck Which had rich and precious ornaments, With three maidens’ heads of bright silver, And with costly-looking crowns of gold. He took a shaft which was not small, With a keen point. His squire took another spear And carried it alongside his lord. See what fortune awaited them! The son began to ride against the father, And neither knew who the other was!
1030	And noither ne knew other no wight! Nou biginneth the firste fight.	And neither knew who the other was! Now the first charge began.

²³ *Thre bor-hevedes*: Having boars’ heads on a crest was common in Celtic heraldry and in many other nations, perhaps suggesting either the fierceness of the boar or a hunter who had defeated them.

	<p>Sire Degarre tok his cours thare; Agen his fader a sschaft he bare; To bere him doun he hadde imint. Right in the sscheld he set his dint; The sschaft brak to peces al, And in the sscheld lat the coronal. Another cours thai gonne take; The fader tok, for the sones sake, 1040 A sschaft that was gret and long, And he another also strong. Togider thai riden with gret raundoun, And aither bar other adoun. With dintes that thai smiten there, Here stede rigges toborsten were. Afote thai gonne fight ifere And laiden on with swerdes clere. The fader amerveiled wes Whi his swerd was pointles, 1050 And seide to his sone aplight, “Herkne to me a litel wight: Wher were thou boren, in what lond?” “In Litel Bretagne, ich understand: Kingges doughter sone, witouten les, Ac I not wo mi fader wes.” “What is thi name?” than saide he. “Certes, men clepeth me Degarre.” “O Degarre, sone mine! Certes ich am fader thine! 1060 And bi thi swerd I knowe hit here: The point is in min aumenere.” He tok the point and set therto; Degarre fel iswone tho, And his fader, sikerli, Also he gan swony; And whan he of swone arisen were, The sone cride merci there His owen fader of his misdede, And he him to his castel gan lede, 1070 And bad him dwelle with him ai. “Certes, sire,” he saide, “nai; Ac yif hit youre wille were, To mi moder we wende ifere, For she is in gret mourning.” “Blethelich,” quath he, “bi Hevene Kyng.” Syr Degaré and hys father dere, Into Ynglond they went in fere. They were armyd and well dyghtt. As sone as the lady saw that knyght, 1080 Wonther wel sche knew the knyght;</p>	<p>Sir Degare took his course there, Bearing a lance against his father. He intended to bear him down And set his aim right on the shield. The shaft broke into pieces, And left the point in the shield. They began to take another charge. To attack the son, the father seized A lance which was great and long, And Degare took another just as strong. They rode together with great violence, But neither bore the other down. With the blows that they struck there, Their horses’ backs were broken. They started to battle on foot, And laid on with shining swords. The father was puzzled As to why Degare’s sword was pointless, And said to his son, fittingly, “Listen to me for a moment. Where were you born, in what land?” “In Brittany, as I understand. I am a king’s daughter’s son, without a lie, But I do not know who my father was.” “What is your name?” he then asked. “For certain, men call me Degare.” “Oh, Degare, my son! Truly, I am your father. And I know it by your sword here. The point is in my pouch.” He took the point and set it on. Degare was overcome then, And his father, certainly, Also began to faint. And when they rose from their shock, The son asked for forgiveness there For his offence from his father, Who invited Degare to his castle And asked him to stay with him forever. “For certain, no sir,” Degare said. “But if it is your will, We will go together to my mother, For she is in great anxiousness.” “Gladly,” he said, “by Heaven’s king.” Sir Degare and his dear father²⁴ Went together into Brittany. They were armed and finely dressed. As soon as the lady saw that knight, She knew him very well.</p>
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²⁴ At line 1076 Auchinleck stops, as a final page is missing. Editors generally use Bodleian Rawlinson Poetry 34 for the ending, although Bodleian transfers the setting to England (line 1077).

	<p>Anon sche chaungyd hur colowr aryght, And seyde, "My dere sun, Degaré, Now thou hast broughtt thy father wyth the!" "Ye, madame, sekyr thow be! Now well y wot that yt ys he." "I thank, by God," seyde the kyng, "Now y wot, wythowtt lesyng, Who Syr Degaré his father was!" The lady swounyd in that plass. 1090 Then afterward, now sykyrly, The knyghtt weddyd the lady. Sche and hur sun were partyd atwynn, For they were to nyghe off kyn. Now went forth Syr Degaré; Wyth the kyng and his meyné, His father and his mother dere. Unto that castel thei went infere Wher that wonnyd that lady bryght 1100 That he hadd wonne in gret fyght, And weddyd hur wyth gret solempnité Byfor all the lordis in that cuntré. Thus cam the knyght outt of his care; God yff us grace well to fare. Amen</p> <p>The lyff of Syr Degaré 1106 Both curteys and fre.</p>	<p>At once her color changed entirely And she said, "My dear son, Degare, You have brought your father with you!" "Yes, madam, you may be sure! Now I know well that it is him." "I am thankful, by God," added the king. "Now I know, without a lie, Who Sir Degare's father was." The lady fell faint at that moment. Then afterwards, now in certainty, The knight wedded the lady. She and her son's marriage was annulled, For they were too close of kin. Now Sir Degare went forth With the king and his retinue, And his father and dear mother. They went together into the castle Where that shining lady lived That he had won in fierce combat, And he married her with great ceremony In front of all the lords in that country. Thus the knight came out of his troubles. May God give us grace to fare as well! Amen.</p> <p>The life of Sir Degare, Both courteous and noble.</p>
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Sir Orfeo

Sir Orfeo survives in three manuscripts: Auchinleck (c. 1330), British Library MS Harley 3810 (c. 1400), and Caius College Library, MS 175 (c. 1500). I take as my text source Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury, eds. *Sir Orfeo. The Middle English Breton Lays*. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995.

<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/orfeofrm.htm>. Laskaya *et al.* use mainly Auchinleck. Among the many modern editions of *Orfeo* are Thomas J. Garbáty, ed., *Medieval English Literature* (1984) and French & Hale (1930).

1	We redeth oft and findeth y-write, And this clerkes wele it wite, Layes that ben in harping Ben y-founde of ferli thing: Sum bethe of wer and sum of wo, And sum of joie and mirthe also, And sum of trecherie and of gile, Of old aventours that fel while; And sum of bourdes and ribaudy, 10 And mani ther beth of fairy. Of al thinges that men seth, Mest o love, forsothe, they beth. In Breteyne this layes were wrought, First y-founde and forth y-brought, Of aventours that fel bi dayes, Wherof Bretouns maked her layes. When kinges might our y-here Of ani mervailles that ther were, Thai token an harp in gle and game 20 And maked a lay and gaf it name. Now of this aventours that weren y-falle Y can tel sum, ac nought alle. Ac herkneth, lordinges that ben trewe, Ichil you telle of "Sir Orfewe." Orfeo mest of ani thing Lovede the gle of harping.	We often read and find written, ¹ And these clerks know them well, Lays set to harping, Composed about marvelous things. Some are about war and some woe, Some are about joy and fun as well, And some are about treachery and deceit, About old adventures that happened before. Some are about bawdy jokes and games, And many are about fairies. And of all things that men relate, Most, in truth, are about love. These lays were crafted in Brittany, First found and then brought forth, About adventures from the old times, For which Bretons made them into lays. When kings would hear somewhere Of any wonders that were there, They took a harp in pleasure and fun And made a lay and gave it a name. Now of these adventures that took place, I can tell of some, but not all. But listen, lordings that are true, And I will tell you the tale of <i>Sir Orfeo</i> . Orfeo, more than any thing, Loved the joys of harping.
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¹ The first thirty-nine lines are reconstructed from the Bodleian Library Ashmole 61 and Harley 3810 manuscripts, as a page is missing from Auchinleck. The introduction closely follows the *Lay de Freine*, also in Auchinleck.

30	<p>Siker was everi gode harpour Of him to have miche honour. Himself he lerned forto harp, And leyd theron his wittes scharp; He lerned so ther nothing was A better harpour in no plas. In al the warld was no man bore That ones Orfeo sat bifore - And he might of his harping here - Bot he schuld thenche that he were In on of the joies of Paradis, Swiche melody in his harping is.</p>	<p>For certain, every good musician Held him in great honor. He taught himself to play the harp And then set his sharp wits to it. He learned so there was in no way A better harpist anywhere. In all the world there was no man born, Who having once sat before Orfeo And heard his harping, Did not think himself Among the joys of Paradise, Such melody was in his playing.</p>
40	<p>Orfeo was a king, In Ingland an heighe lording, A stalworth man and hardi bo; Large and curteys he was also. His fader was comen of King Pluto, And his moder of King Juno, That sum time were as godes yhold For aventours that thai dede and told. This king sojournd in Traciens, That was a cité of noble defens - For Winchester was cleped tho</p>	<p>Orfeo was a king, A great lord in England, And both sturdy and brave. He was generous and courteous as well. His father was a descendant of King Pluto, And his mother one of King Juno,² Who were once considered gods For the adventures they had and told of. King Orfeo dwelled in Thrace, Which was a great and fortified city, For Winchester was then called Thrace, without any denying.³</p>
50	<p>Traciens, withouten no. The king hadde a quen of priis That was y-cleped Dame Heurodis, The fairest levedi, for the nones, That might gon on bodi and bones, Ful of love and godenisse - Ac no man may telle hir fairnise. Bifel so in the comessing of May When miri and hot is the day, And oway beth winter schours,</p>	<p>The king had a queen of great renown Who was called Lady Herodis, The fairest lady at that time Who might walk in flesh and bones, Full of love and goodness. No man could describe her beauty! It so happened at the coming of May When the day is warm and pleasant, And winter showers have gone away, And every field is full of flowers, And blossoms appear on every bough, Growing everywhere merrily enough, That this queen, Lady Herodis, Took two maidens of noble worth And went one late morning To play by the side of an orchard, To see the flowers spring and blossom, And to hear the birds sing.</p>
60	<p>And everi feld is ful of flours, And blosme breme on everi bough Over al wexeth miri anought, This ich quen, Dame Heurodis Tok to maidens of priis, And went in an undrentide To play bi an orchardside, To se the floures sprede and spring And to here the foules sing. Thai sett hem down al thre</p>	<p>They set themselves down together Under a fine orchard tree,⁴</p>
70	<p>Under a fair ympe-tre,</p>	

² *King Juno*: Pluto was god of the underworld and Juno was not a king but a goddess, Jupiter's wife. The poet rather clumsily tries to establish a mythical and pre-Christian setting for the main characters, complete with medieval armor and feudal social conventions.

³ The poet again conflates the Greek myth of Orpheus with an English setting, and the audience would likely have cheerfully accepted this mythical reality where Winchester was once called *Thrace*, modern Bulgaria and northern Greece! Nevertheless, in Layamon's *Brut* Winchester is one of Arthur's main cities, and Geoffrey of Monmouth claims that the kings of Briton descend from Aeneas.

80	<p>And wel sone this fair quene Fel on slepe opon the grene. The maidens durst hir nought awake, Bot lete hir ligge and rest take. So sche slepe til after none, That undertide was al y-done. Ac, as sone as sche gan awake, Sche crid, and lothli bere gan make; Sche froted hir honden and hir fete, And crached hir visage - it bled wete - Hir riche robe hye al to-rett And was reveyd out of hir wit. The two maidens hir biside No durst with hir no leng abide, Bot ourn to the palays ful right And told bothe squier and knight That her quen awede wold, And bad hem go and hir at-hold.</p>	<p>And soon this fair queen Fell asleep upon the green.⁵ The maidens did not dare wake her, But let her lie and take her rest. So she slept until after noon, When the morning tide had passed. But as soon as she began to awaken, She cried out, making a hideous face. She wrung her hands and her feet, And clawed her face until it bled. She tore apart her rich robes And was driven out of her wits. The two maidens beside her Did not dare to stay with her But ran to the palace straightaway And told both squire and knight That their queen was going mad, And begged them to go and take hold of her.</p>
90	<p>Knights urn and levedis also, Damsisels sexti and mo. In the orchard to the quen hye come, And her up in her armes nome, And brought hir to bed atte last, And held hir there fine fast. Ac ever she held in o cri And wold up and owy. When Orfeo herd that tiding Never him nas wers for nothing. He come with knightes tene</p>	<p>Knights ran, and ladies with them, Damsels numbering sixty and more. They came to the queen in the orchard And took her up in their arms, And finally brought her to bed And bound her there tightly. But she continually made one cry And strained to rise and get away. When Orfeo heard the news, He was never so grieved by anything. He came with ten knights</p>
100	<p>To chaumber, right bifer the quene, And bi-held, and seyde with grete pité, “O lef liif, what is te, That ever yete hast ben so stille And now gredest wonder schille? Thy bodi, that was so white y-core, With thine nailes is all to-tore. Allas! thy rode, that was so red, Is al wan, as thou were ded; And also thine fingres smale</p>	<p>To the chamber, right by the queen, And beheld her and said with great pity, “Oh, dear one, what is wrong? You have always been so mild, And now your voice is strange and shrill. Your body, which was so beautifully fair, Is clawed to pieces by your nails. Alas! Your face, which was so bright,⁶ Is all ashen, as if you were dead. And your delicate fingers as well</p>

⁴ *Ympe-tre*: English gardens were highly sculpted versions of nature, and one of the gardener’s arts were trees grafted from two species. The blurring of two tree-types also perhaps symbolizes the meeting of the real and fairy worlds. Seth Lerer, “Artifice and Artistry in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Speculum* 60:1 (1985): 95-6.

⁵ Sleeping under a tree in the morning asks for trouble in romance as “it openly invited the intervention of fairies and placed one in their power.” Thomas J. Garbaty, *Sir Orfeo, Medieval English Literature* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), note to lines 69-72. See also *Sir Launfal* for a similar occurrence. One of the jokes of *Sir Thopas* is that Thopas intentionally sleeps outside in order to meet the fairy queen but nothing happens.

⁶ *Thy rode, that was so red*: Red cheeks with a white complexion was a sign of medieval beauty, as it marked a woman aristocratic enough to not need to labor outside. Nevertheless, Sir Orfeo evidently sees that the queen is unhealthily pale from shock.

110	Beth al blodi and al pale. Allas! thy lovesum eyyen to Loketh so man doth on his fo! A, dame, ich biseche, merci! Lete ben al this reweful cri, And tel me what the is, and hou, And what thing may the help now.” Tho lay sche stille atte last And gan to wepe swithe fast, And seyde thus the King to:	Are all bloody and pale. Alas! Your two lovely eyes Look like a man does on his enemy. Oh, lady, have mercy on us! Let go all this pitiful crying And tell me what troubles you, and how, And what thing will help you now.” At last she lay still And immediately began to sob, And said this to the king:
120	“Allas, mi lord, Sir Orfeo! Sethen we first togider were, Ones wroth never we nere; Bot ever ich have yloved the As mi liif and so thou me; Ac now we mot delen ato; Do thi best, for y mot go.” “Allas!” quath he, “forlorn icham! Whider wiltow go, and to whom? Whider thou gost, ichil with the,	“Alas, my lord, Sir Orfeo! Since we were first together, we have Never once been angry with each other, But I have always loved you As much as my life, and you the same. But now we must be split apart. Do your best, for I must go!” “Alas!” he shouted. “I am lost! Where will you go, and to who? Wherever you go, I will follow, And wherever I go, you will be with me.” ⁷
130	And whider y go, thou schalt with me.” “Nay, nay, Sir, that nought nis! Ichil the telle al hou it is: As ich lay this undertide And slepe under our orchardside, Ther come to me to fair knightes, Wele y-armed al to rightes, And bad me comen an heighing And speke with her lord the king. And ich answerd at wordes bold,	“No, no, sir, it cannot be! I will tell you all about it. As I lay down this morning And slept under the shade of our orchard, Two noble knights came to me, Well-armed, as was proper, And requested that I come in haste To speak with their lord, the king. I answered with bold words That I did not dare to, nor did I want to. They rode away as fast as they could. Then their king came, just as quickly, With a hundred knights and more, And a hundred damsels as well, All on snow-white steeds, With their clothes as white as milk. I never before saw Such perfectly fair creatures! The king had a crown on his head. It was not silver, nor red gold, But of a precious stone. It shone as bright as the sun! And as soon as he came to me, Whether I liked it or not, he took me, And made me ride with him Upon a palfrey by his side. He brought me to his palace, Which was well-decorated in every way,
140	Y durst nought, no y nold. Thai priked oyain as thai might drive; Tho com her king, also blive, With an hundred knightes and mo, And damisels an hundred also, Al on snowe-white stedes; As white as milke were her wedes. Y no seighe never yete bfore So fair creatours y-core. The king hadde a croun on hed;	
150	It nas of silver, no of gold red, Ac it was of a precious ston - As bright as the sonne it schon. And as son as he to me cam, Wold ich, nold ich, he me nam, And made me with him ride Opon a palfray bi his side; And brought me to his palays, Wele atird in ich ways,	

⁷ Sir Orfeo repeats Ruth 1:16. TEAMS notes that although Ruth is speaking to her mother-in-law Naomi, “the lines were frequently associated with holy matrimony.”

160	<p>And schewed me castels and tours, Rivers, forestes, frith with flours, And his riche stedes ichon. And sethen me brought oyain hom Into our owen orchard, And said to me thus afterward, ““Loke, dame, tomorwe thatow be Right here under this ympe-tre, And than thou schalt with ous go And live with ous evermo. And yif thou makest ous y-let, 170 Whar thou be, thou worst y-fet, And totore thine limes al That nothing help the no schal; And thei thou best so totorn, Yete thou worst with ous y-born.”“ When King Orfeo herd this cas, “O we!” quath he, “Allas, allas! Lever me were to lete mi liif Than thus to lese the quen, mi wiif!” He asked conseyl at ich man, 180 Ac no man him help no can. Amorwe the undertide is come And Orfeo hath his armes y-nome, And wele ten hundred knightes with him, Ich y-armed, stout and grim; And with the quen wenten he Right unto that ympe-tre. Thai made scheltrom in ich a side And sayd thai wold there abide And dye ther everichon, 190 Er the quen schuld fram hem gon. Ac yete amiddes hem ful right The quen was oway y-twight, With fairi forth y-nome. Men wist never wher sche was bicomē. Tho was ther criing, wepe and wo! The king into his chaumber is go, And oft swoned opon the ston, And made swiche diol and swiche mon That neighe his liif was y-spent - 200 Ther was non amendement. He cleped togider his barouns, Erls, lordes of renouns, And when thai al y-comen were, “Lordinges,” he said, “bifor you here Ich ordainy min heighe steward To wite mi kingdom afterward; In mi stede ben he schal</p>	<p>And showed me castles and towers, Rivers, forests, woods with flowers, And each one of his fine steeds. And after he brought me back home Into our own orchard, And said this to me after: ‘See to it, madam, that tomorrow You are right here under this tree, And then you will go with us And live with us forever. And if you make difficulties for us, Wherever you are, you will be fetched, And your limbs all ripped apart, So that nothing will help you at all. And even if you are so torn, You will still be carried away with us.’” When King Orfeo had heard this matter, “Oh, woe,” he exclaimed, “alas, alas! I would rather lose my life Than lose the queen, my wife, in this way!” He asked for counsel from each man, But no one could help him. The next day, when morning had come, Orfeo took up his arms And a good thousand knights with him, Each well-armed, strong, and fierce. And with the queen he went Right under that orchard tree. They made a shield wall on each side⁸ And said they would stand there And die to the last man Before the queen would go from them. But yet from right in the middle of them, The queen was snatched away, Taken from them by fairies. Men did not know where she had gone. Then there was crying, weeping, and woe! The king went to his chamber And continually fell on the floor, And made such mourning and moaning That his life seemed nearly spent, For there was no remedy. He called together his barons, Earls, and lords of renown, And when they had all arrived, “Lordinges,” he said, “before you all here, I appoint my high steward To rule my kingdom from here on. In my place he will have authority</p>
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⁸ *Scheltrom*: A “shield wall,” the defense tactic of the Anglo-Saxon forces used at Hastings (Garbaty, note to 187).

210	<p>To kepe mi londes overal. For now ichave mi quen y-lore, The fairest levedi that ever was bore, Never eft y nil no woman se. Into wildernes ichil te And live ther evermore With wilde bestes in holtes hore; And when ye understond that y be spent, Make you than a parlement, And chese you a neue king. Now doth your best with al mi thing.”</p>	<p>To manage all my lands. For now I have lost my queen, The fairest lady who was ever born. Never again will I see a woman! I will go into the wilderness And live there forevermore, With wild beasts in dark forests. And when you learn that I am dead, Then call a parliament And choose yourselves a new king. Now do your best with all my affairs.”</p>
220	<p>Tho was ther wepeing in the halle And grete cri among hem alle; Unnethe might old or yong For wepeing speke a word with tong. Thai kneled adoun al y-ferre And praid him, yif his wille were, That he no schuld nought fram hem go. “Do way!” quath he, “It schal be so!”</p>	<p>There was weeping in the hall, And a great cry among them all. Young and old could hardly speak A word with their tongue for weeping. They kneeled down all together, And pleaded with him, if it were his will, That he would not desert them. “Enough!” he said, “It shall be so!”</p>
230	<p>Al his kingdom he forsoke; Bot a sclavin on him he toke. He no hadde kirtel no hode, Schert, ne no nother gode, Bot his harp he tok algate And dede him barfot out atte gate; No man most with him go. O way! What ther was wepe and wo, When he that hadde ben king with croun Went so poverlich out of toun! Thurth wode and over heth Into the wildernes he geth.</p>	<p>He abandoned all his kingdom, Taking only a pilgrim’s cloak. He had neither tunic nor hood, Nor a shirt, nor any other goods. He continually held only his harp And passed barefoot by the gate. No man might go with him. Alas! What weeping and woe there was When he, who had been a king with a crown, Went out of town in such poverty. He walked through woods and bushes Into the wilderness.⁹</p>
240	<p>Nothing he fint that him is ays, Bot ever he liveth in gret malais. He that hadde y-werd the fowe and griis, And on bed the purper biis, Now on hard hethe he lith, With leves and gresse he him writh. He that hadde had castels and tours, River, forest, frith with flours, Now, thei it comenci to snewe and frese, This king mot make his bed in mese.</p>	<p>He found nothing that would comfort him, But always lived in great hardship. He who had worn rich and colorful furs,¹⁰ And slept on purple sheets in bed, Now slept on the hard brush, With leaves and grass to cover himself. He who had castles and towers, now had Rivers, forests, and woods with flowers. Now that it began to snow and freeze, This king had to make his bed in moss.</p>
250	<p>He that had y-had knightes of priis Bifor him kneland, and levedis,</p>	<p>He who had knights of great estate, Kneeling before him with ladies,</p>

⁹ Why Orfeo enters an ascetic life in the woods is disputed. It may be an act of despair, atonement, or an expression of love for his wife. Gros Louis argues that Orfeo is not searching for Herodis: “The ten years he spends in the wilderness constitute a kind of penance, and because of it, Orfeo receives a gift of grace - Herodis is returned to him” (247). Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, “The Significance of Sir Orfeo’s Self-Exile,” *Review of English Studies* 18 (1967): 245-52. But see lines 129-30.

¹⁰ *The fowe and griis*: The MED defines *fowe* as a “parti-colored fur” and *griis* as possibly fur from “the Russian grey squirrel in winter.” The phrase shows up in numerous texts and evidently suggests warm and luxurious clothing.

260	<p>Now seth he nothing that him liketh, Bot wilde wormes bi him striketh. He that had y-had plenté Of mete and drink, of ich deynté, Now may he al day digge and wrote Er he finde his fille of rote. In somer he liveth bi wild frut, And berien bot gode lite; In winter may he nothing finde</p>	<p>Now saw nothing he liked But wild serpents slithering past him. He who had plenty Of food and drink, of each delicacy, Now had to dig and grub all day Before he could find his fill of roots. In summer he lived on wild fruit And almost worthless berries. In winter he could find nothing</p>
270	<p>Bot rote, grasses, and the rinde. Al his bodi was oway dwine For missays, and al to-chine. Lord! who may telle the sore This king sufferd ten yere and more? His here of his berd, blac and rowe, To his girdel-stede was growe. His harp, whereon was al his gle, He hidde in an holwe tre; And when the weder was clere and bright,</p>	<p>But roots, grass, and bark. All of his body dwindled away From hardship, and was all chapped. Lord, who could tell of the sorrow This king suffered for ten years and more? The hair on his beard, dark and rough, Had grown down to his waist. His harp, which was his only pleasure, He hid in a hollow tree. And when the weather was clear and bright, He immediately took up his harp</p>
280	<p>He toke his harp to him wel right And harped at his owen wille. Into alle the wode the soun gan schille, That alle the wilde bestes that ther beth For joie abouten him thai teth, And alle the foules that ther were Come and sete on ich a brere To here his harping a-fine - So miche melody was therin; And when he his harping lete wold,</p>	<p>And played at his own will. The music resounded into the woods So that all the wild beasts that were there Gathered around him for joy, And all the birds that were there came, And each sat on a branch To hear his fine harping, For there was so much melody there. And when he would stop playing, No beast would remain with him.</p>
290	<p>No best bi him abide nold. He might se him bisides, Oft in hot undertides, The king o fairy with his rout Com to hunt him al about With dim cri and bloweing, And houndes also with him berking; Ac no best thai no nome, No never he nist whider they bicom And other while he might him se</p>	<p>He seemed to see him nearby— Often on warm mornings— The king of fairyland with his company, Who had come to hunt around him, With distant cries and blowing of horns, And barking hounds also with him. But they took no game, Nor did he ever know where they went. And at other times Orfeo might see him As a great army passed by,</p>
300	<p>As a gret ost bi him te, Wele atourned, ten hundred knightes, Ich y-armed to his rightes, Of cuntenaunce stout and fers, With mani desplaid baners, And ich his swerd y-drawe hold - Ac never he nist whider thai wold. And otherwile he seighe other thing: Knightes and levedis com daunceing In queynt atire, gisely,</p>	<p>Well equipped, with a thousand knights, Each armed according to rights, With a stout and fierce appearance, Each holding his drawn sword, And with many banners unfurled. But he never knew where they were going. And sometimes he saw other things, Knights and ladies who came dancing In strange attire, elegantly And softly, with skilful steps.</p>
300	<p>Queynt pas and softly; Tabours and trunpes yede hem bi, And al maner menstraci. And on a day he seighe him beside Sexti levedis on hors ride,</p>	<p>Drums and trumpets went by them, And all types of musicians. And on one day he saw beside him Sixty ladies riding on horses,</p>

310	<p>Gentil and jolif as brid on ris; Nought o man amonges hem ther nis; And ich a faucoun on hond bere, And riden on haukin bi o rivere. Of game thai founde wel gode haunt - Maulardes, hayroun, and cormeraunt; The foules of the water ariseth, The faucouns hem wele deviseth; Ich faucoun his pray slough - That seigh Orfeo, and lough: “Parfay!” quath he, “ther is fair game; Thider ichil, bi Godes name; Ich was y-won swiche werk to se!” He aros, and thider gan te. To a levedi he was y-come,</p>	<p>As joyful and fair as birds on boughs. Not one man was among them. And each bore a falcon on her hand, And rode on, hawking by a river. They found game in great plenty, Mallards, herons, and cormorants. The birds of the water rose up, And the falcons marked them precisely. Each falcon killed its prey. Orfeo saw that and laughed. “By my faith,” he said, “there’s good sporting! I’ll go there, by God’s name. I would like to see such skill!” He got up, and went toward them. He came up to a lady, Beheld her, and realized clearly, And saw, by all things, that it was His own queen, Lady Herodis. He gazed at her earnestly, and she did also. But neither said a word to the other.¹¹ For the sadness that she saw in him, Who had been so rich and so exalted, The tears fell out of her eyes. The other ladies saw this And made her ride away. She could no longer stay with him. “Alas!” he said, “now woe is me! Why will death not take me? Alas, wretch, that I do not Die now after this sight! Alas! My life lasts too long When I dare not do anything with my wife, Nor her with me, nor speak a word. Alas! Why does my heart not break! By my faith,” he cried, “come what may, Wherever these ladies are riding, I will hurry the same way. I do not care about life or death.” He threw on his cloak as quickly, And hung his harp on his back, And was fully set on going. He spared neither stump nor stone.¹² The ladies rode into a cliffside, And he followed and did not wait. When he had gone into the cave Well over three miles,</p>
320	<p>Biheld, and hath wele undernome, And seth bi al thing that it is His owen quen, Dam Heurodis. Yern he biheld hir, and sche him eke, Ac noither to other a word no speke; For messais that sche on him seighe, That had ben so riche and so heighe, The teres fel out of her eighe. The other levedis this y-seighe And maked hir oway to ride -</p>	
330	<p>Sche most with him no lenger abide. “Allas!” quath he, “now me is wo!” Whi nil deth now me slo? Allas, wreche, that y no might Dye now after this sight! Allas! to long last mi liif, When y no dar nought with mi wiif, No hye to me, o word speke. Allas! Whi nil min hert breke! Parfay!” quath he, “tide wat bitide,</p>	
340	<p>Whiderso this levedis ride, The selve way ichil streche - Of liif no deth me no reche.” His sclavain he dede on also spac And henge his harp opon his bac, And had wel gode wil to gon - He no spard noither stub no ston. In at a roche the levedis rideth, And he after, and nought abideth. When he was in the roche y-go,</p>	
350	<p>Wele thre mile other mo,</p>	

¹¹ *Ac noither to other a word no speke*: Garbaty suggests an echo of the original Orpheus-Eurydice story in this “magic communication ban,” but adds that in folklore mortals could not address fairies or they might disappear (note to 324).

¹² *He no spard noither stub no ston*: He did not spare his foot from hitting stump or stone, i.e. he ran with abandon. Compare *Havelock* (899), “Spared he neyther tos ne heles.”

	<p>He com into a fair cuntray As bright so sonne on somers day, Smothe and plain and al grene - Hille no dale nas ther non y-sene. Amidde the lond a castel he sighe, Riche and real and wonder heighe. Al the utmast wal Was clere and schine as cristal; An hundred tours ther were about, 360 Degiselich and bataild stout. The butras com out of the diche Of rede gold y-arched riche. The vousour was avowed al Of ich maner divers aumal. Within ther wer wide wones, Al of precious stones; The werst piler on to biholde Was al of burnist gold. Al that lond was ever light, 370 For when it schuld be therk and night, The riche stones light gonne As bright as doth at none the sonne. No man may telle, no thenche in thought, The riche werk that ther was wrought. Bi al thing him think that it is The proude court of Paradis. In this castel the levedis alight; He wold in after, yif he might. Orfeo knokketh atte gate; 380 The porter was redi therate And asked what he wold hav y-do. “Parfay!” quath he, “icham a minstrel, lo! To solas thi lord with mi gle, Yif his swete wille be.” The porter undede the gate anon And lete him into the castel gon. Than he gan bihold about al, And seighe liggeand within the wal Of folk that were thider y-brought 390 And thought dede, and nare nought. Sum stode withouten hade, And sum non armes nade, And sum thurth the bodi hadde wounde,</p>	<p>He came into a fair country, As bright as the sun on a summer’s day, Smooth and flat and all green. Neither hill nor dale was to be seen. In the middle of the land he saw a castle, Rich and royal and incredibly high. All of the outside wall Was as clear and shining as crystal. A hundred towers surrounded it, With wondrous and firm battlements.¹³ The supports rising out of the moat Were richly arched with red gold. The vaulted roofs were all adorned With every kind of different finish.¹⁴ There were spacious chambers inside, All of precious stones. The least pillar to look upon Was all of burnished gold. All the land was always light, For when it should have been dark and night, The rich stones shone As bright as the sun at noon. No man could describe, nor imagine in thought, The rich work that was crafted there. All these things made him believe that it was The proud court of Paradise. The ladies dismounted in this castle, And he wished to follow in, if he might. Orfeo knocked on the gate. The porter was ready there And asked what he wanted. “By my faith,” he said, “see, I am a minstrel. I am here to entertain your lord with music, If it is his sweet will.” The porter undid the gate at once And let him go into the castle. Then he began to look all about, And saw lying within the walls People who were brought there, Who were thought dead, but were not. Some stood without a head, And some had no arms, And some had wounds through their bodies,</p>
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¹³ *Bataild*: The towers had battlements, parapets, or other military or ornamental indentations in the walls (TEAMS and MED). *Degiselich*, perhaps “strange or wonderful,” has no other citation besides *Orfeo* in the MED.

¹⁴ *Divers aumal*: Probably *enamel*. Garbaty reads *animal*, suggesting painted creatures. The Auchinleck scribe does not dot *i*’s and so on the page it is a maddening *annual*. Lerer argues that an enamel-like look achieved by painting on glass or foil was popular in late medieval architecture and calls the rendering *animal* “nonsensical.” Lerer 99-100 and E. W. Tristram, *English Medieval Wall Painting: The Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: University Press, 1950), 407.

<p>400</p> <p>410</p> <p>420</p> <p>430</p> <p>440</p>	<p>And sum lay wode, y-bounde, And sum armed on hors sete, And sum astrangled as thai ete; And sum were in water adreynt, And sum with fire alforschreynt. Wives ther lay on childe bedde, Sum ded and sum awedde, And wonder fele ther lay bisides Right as thai slepe her undertides; Eche was thus in this warld y-nome, With fairi thider y-come. Ther he seighe his owen wiif, Dame Heurodis, his lef liif, Slepe under an ympe-tre - Bi her clothes he knewe that it was he. And when he hadde bihold this mervails alle, He went into the kinges halle. Than seighe he ther a semly sight, A tabernacle blisseful and bright, Therin her maister king sete And her quen, fair and swete. Her crounes, her clothes schine so bright That unnethe bihold he him might. When he hadde biholden al that thing, He kneled adoun bifor the king: “O lord,” he seyde, “yif it thi wille were, Mi menstraci thou schust y-here.” The king answered, “What man artow, That art hider y-comen now? Ich, no non that is with me, No sent never after the. Sethen that ich here regni gan, Y no fond never so folehardi man That hider to ous durst wende Bot that ic him wald ofsende.” “Lord,” quath he, “trowe ful wel, Y nam bot a pover menstrel; And, sir, it is the maner of ous To seche mani a lordes hous - Thei we nought welcom no be, Yete we mot proferi forth our gle.” Bifor the king he sat adoun And tok his harp so miri of soun, And tempreth his harp, as he wele can, And blisseful notes he ther gan, That al that in the palays were Com to him forto here, And liggeth adoun to his fete - Hem thenketh his melody so swete. The king herkneth and sitt ful stille; To here his gle he hath gode wille. Gode bourde he hadde of his gle; The riche quen also hadde he. When he hadde stint his harping,</p>	<p>And some lay crazed in restraints, And some sat armed on horses, And some choked as they ate, And some were drowned in water, And some were burned up in fire. Wives lay there in childbirth, Some of them dead and others driven mad, And an incredible number lay nearby, Just as if they were sleeping in the morning. Each was taken into this world, Brought there by fairies. There he saw his own wife, Lady Herodis, his dear one, Sleeping under an orchard tree. He knew by her clothes that it was she. And when he had seen all these marvels, He went into the king’s hall. There he saw a stately sight, A beautiful and bright canopy, Which their master the king sat under With their queen, fair and sweet. Her crown and her clothes shone so bright That he could scarcely look upon her. When he had seen all these things, He knelt down before the king. “O lord,” he said, “if it is your will, I would like you to hear my music.” The king answered, “What sort of man Are you who has come here now? Neither I nor anyone who is with me Ever sent for you! Since the time I began my reign, I never met such a foolhardy man Who dared to come to us, Unless I wished him sent.” “Lord,” he answered, “believe me well, I am only a poor minstrel. And sir, it is our practice To seek many lord’s houses. Even if we are not welcomed, We must still offer our entertainment.” He sat down before the king And took his harp, of such merry sound, And tuned it, as he could skillfully, And began to play blissful notes, So that all who were in the palace Came to hear him And lay down by his feet, For they thought his melody so sweet. The king listened and sat quietly. He was very attentive to hear his playing And took great pleasure in his music. The rich queen did as well. When he had stopped his harping,</p>
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450	<p>Than seyde to him the king, “Menstrel, me liketh wel thi gle. Now aske of me what it be, Largelich ichil the pay; Now speke, and tow might asay.” “Sir,” he seyde, “ich biseche the Thatow woldest give me That ich levedi, bright on ble, That slepeth under the ympe-tree.” “Nay!” quath the king, “that nought nere! A sori couple of you it were, For thou art lene, rowe and blac,</p>	<p>The king said to him, “Minstrel, I’m well pleased with your songs. Now ask me for whatever you wish, And I will reward you generously. Now speak, if you wish to prove it.” “Sire,” he said, “I beg of you That you would give me That lady with the shining face, Who sleeps under the orchard tree.” “No,” said the king, “that could never be! You would make a sorry couple. For you are haggard, rough, and dirty, And she is lovely, without blemish. It would be a loathsome thing To see her in your company!” “Oh, sire,” he said, “gracious king, It would be a much fouler thing To hear a falsehood from your mouth! For sire, as you said just now, I should ask for what I desire, And by necessity you must keep your word.”¹⁵</p>
460	<p>And sche is lovesum, withouten lac; A lothlich thing it were, forthi, To sen hir in thi compayni.” “O sir!” he seyde, “gentil king, Yete were it a wele fouler thing To here a lesing of thi mouthe! So, sir, as ye seyde nouthe, What ich wold aski, have y schold, And nedes thou most thi word hold.”</p>	<p>The king sighed, “Since it is so, Take her by the hand and go. I hope that you will be pleased with her.” He knelt down and thanked him quickly. He took his wife by the hand, And swiftly took himself out of that land, And left that country. He returned the same way he came. He made his way Until they came to Winchester, Which was his own city. But no man knew that it was him. To avoid being recognized, he did not Dare go further than the edge of town, But took his lodging In a beggar’s home, built shabbily, For him and his own wife, Posing as a minstrel with a poor living. He asked for news of that land, And about who held the kingdom in hand. The poor beggar in his cottage Told him every detail, How their queen was stolen away By fairies ten years earlier, And how their king went into self-exile,</p>
470	<p>The king seyde, “Sethen it is so, Take hir bi the hond and go; Of hir ichil thatow be blithe.” He kneled adoun and thonked him swithe. His wiif he tok bi the hond, And dede him swithe out of that lond, And went him out of that thede - Right as he come, the way he yede. So long he hath the way y-nome To Winchester he is y-come, That was his owen cité;</p>	<p>But no man knew that it was him. To avoid being recognized, he did not Dare go further than the edge of town, But took his lodging In a beggar’s home, built shabbily, For him and his own wife, Posing as a minstrel with a poor living. He asked for news of that land, And about who held the kingdom in hand. The poor beggar in his cottage Told him every detail, How their queen was stolen away By fairies ten years earlier, And how their king went into self-exile,</p>
480	<p>Ac no man knewe that it was he. No forther than the tounes ende For knoweleche no durst he wende, Bot with a begger, y-bilt ful narwe, Ther he tok his herbarwe To him and to his owen wiif As a minstrel of pover liif, And asked tidinges of that lond, And who the kingdom held in hond. The pover begger in his cote</p>	<p>The poor beggar in his cottage Told him every detail, How their queen was stolen away By fairies ten years earlier, And how their king went into self-exile,</p>
490	<p>Told him everich a grot: Hou her quen was stole owy, Ten yer gon, with fairy, And hou her king en exile yede,</p>	<p>And how their king went into self-exile,</p>

¹⁵ As TEAMS notes, a promise must be kept, especially by a king, as “fairyland abides by the customs of the ideal medieval court.” The Rash Promise is common in folklore and even exists in scripture: in Mark 6:22-28 Herod makes a similar blank cheque to Herodias, who asks for John the Baptist’s head. Herod grieves but consents. Orpheo’s wiliness is especially ‘Greek’ here as he maneuvers the king into the bargain and then quickly leaves.

500	<p>But no man nist in wiche thede; And how the steward the lond gan hold, And other mani thinges him told. Amorwe, oyain nonetide, He maked his wiif ther abide; The beggers clothes he borwed anon And heng his harp his rigge opon, And went him into that cité That men might him bihold and se. Erls and barouns bold, Buriays and levedis him gun bihold. “Lo!” thai seyde, “swiche a man! Hou long the here hongeth him opan! Lo! Hou his berd hongeth to his kne! He is y-clongen also a tre!”</p>	<p>But no man knew in which country; And how the steward had managed the land, And many other things. The next morning, near noon, Orfeo had his wife stay there. He borrowed the beggar’s clothes And hung his harp on his back, And went into the city So that men might behold him and see. Earls and bold barons, townsmen and Ladies, all began to notice him. “Look,” they said, “at such a man! See how long the hair hangs on him! Look how his beard comes to his knee! He is as gnarled as a tree!”</p>
510	<p>And, as he yede in the strete, With his steward he gan mete, And loude he sett on him a crie: “Sir steward!” he seyde, “merci! Icham an harpoure of hethenisse; Help me now in this destresse!” The steward seyde, “Com with me, come; Of that ichave, thou schalt have some. Everich gode harpoure is welcom me to For mi lordes love, Sir Orfeo.”</p>	<p>And then, as he walked in the street, He met up with his steward, And he cried out to him loudly, “Sir steward,” he said, “have pity! I am a harpist from heathen lands. Help me now in my distress!” The steward said, “Come with me, come. I will share with you from what I have. Every good harpist is welcome here For the love of my lord, Sir Orfeo.”¹⁶</p>
520	<p>In the castel the steward sat atte mete, And mani lording was bi him sete; Ther were trompours and tabourers, Harpours fele, and crouders - Miche melody thai maked alle. And Orfeo sat stille in the halle And herkneht; when thai ben al stille, He toke his harp and tempred schille; The blissefulest notes he harped there That ever ani man y-herd with ere - Ich man liked wele his gle.</p>	<p>The steward sat in the castle at dinner, And many lords were seated by him. There were trumpet players and drummers, Lute players, and many harpists. They all made a rich melody, And Orfeo sat quietly in the hall And listened. When they were all still, He took his harp and tuned it firmly. There he harped the most beautiful notes That any man ever heard with his ears. Each man was pleased with his music.</p>
530	<p>The steward biheld and gan y-se, And knewe the harp als blive. “Menstrel!” he seyde, “so mot thou thrive, Where hadestow this harp, and hou? Y pray that thou me telle now.” “Lord,” quath he, “in uncouthe thede Thurth a wildernes as y yede, Ther y founde in a dale With lyouns a man totorn smale, And wolves him frete with teth so scharp.</p>	<p>The steward watched and began to notice And recognized the harp at once. “Minstrel,” he said, “as you live and die, Where did you get this harp, and how? I ask that you tell me now.” “My lord,” he answered, “as I wandered Through the wilderness in a strange land, There I saw in a valley A man torn to tiny pieces by a lion, And gobbled by wolves with teeth so sharp!</p>
540	<p>Bi him y fond this ich harp;</p>	<p>Beside him I found this same harp.</p>

¹⁶ Rather than the usual “false steward” motif of romance, here the steward is loyal and upright. TEAMS notes the resemblance to the faithful servant of Luke 12:35-46. In the fragments of the analogous Scottish *King Orphius* the steward is the king’s nephew. Felicity Riddy, “The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 6 (1976): 7.

	<p>Wele ten yere it is y-go.” “O!” quath the steward, “now me is wo! That was mi lord, Sir Orfeo! Allas, wreche, what schal y do, That have swiche a lord y-lore? A, way that ich was y-bore! That him was so hard grace y-yarked, And so vile deth y-marked!” Adoun he fel aswon to grounde; 550 His barouns him tok up in that stounde And telleth him how it geth - “It is no bot of mannes deth!” King Orfeo knewe wele bi than His steward was a trewe man And loved him as he aught to do, And stont up, and seyt thus, “Lo, Steward, herkne now this thing: Yif ich were Orfeo the king, And hadde y-suffred ful yore 560 In wildernisse miche sore, And hadde ywon mi quen o-wy Out of the lond of fairy, And hadde y-brought the levedi hende Right here to the tounes ende, And with a begger her in y-nome, And were mi-self hider y-come Poverlich to the, thus stille, For to asay thi gode wille, And ich founde the thus trewe, 570 Thou no schust it never rewe. Sikerlich, for love or ay, Thou schust be king after mi day; And yif thou of mi deth hadest ben blithe, Thou schust have voided, also swithe.” Tho all tho that therin sete That it was King Orfeo underyete, And the steward him wele knewe - Over and over the bord he threwe, And fel adoun to his fet; 580 So dede everich lord that ther sete, And all thai seyde at o criing: “Ye beth our lord, sir, and our king!” Glad thai were of his live; To chaumber thai ladde him als belive And bathed him and schaved his berd, And tired him as a king apert; And sethen, with gret processioune, Thai brought the quen into the toun With al maner menstraci -</p>	<p>It was a good ten years ago.” “Oh,” exclaimed the steward, “now I am in Misery! That was my lord, Sir Orfeo! Alas, wretch, what shall I do Now that I have lost such a lord! Oh, woe that I was ever born, That such hard grace was fated for him And such a vile death ordained!” He fell faint to the ground. His barons lifted him up at that instant And said it was the way of the world. “There is no remedy for man’s death!” By this King Orfeo knew well That his steward was a true man Who loved him as he ought to do, And he stood up and said, “Look, Steward, listen now to my words: If I were Orfeo the king, And had suffered long ago In the wilderness with great sorrow, And had won back my queen Out of the land of fairies, And had brought the gracious lady Right here to the town’s borders, And had left her with a beggar, And had come here myself, In poverty to you, in that way still, In order to test your good will, And I found you so faithful, You would never regret it. For certain, for love or fear, You would be king after my day! But if you were pleased with my death, You would as quickly be banished.” When all those sitting there Realized that he was King Orfeo, And the steward recognized him in full, He turned over the table boards¹⁷ And fell down to his feet. Every lord that sat there did the same, And they all said in one voice, “You are our lord, sire, and our king!” They were glad of him being alive. They brought him at once to a chamber And bathed him and shaved his beard, And clothed him as a proper king. And then, with great ceremony, They brought the queen into town With all kinds of music.</p>
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¹⁷ *Over and over the bord he threwe*: the poet likely wishes to emphasize that rather than walking around a long row of tables, the steward instantly throws aside the boards to rush across the stands to Orfeo.

590	<p>Lord! ther was grete melody! For joie thai wepe with her eithe That hem so sounde y-comen seighe. Now King Orfeo newe coround is, And his quen, Dame Heurodis, And lived long afterward, And sethen was king the steward. Harpours in Bretaine after than Herd hou this mervaile bigan, And made herof a lay of gode likeing, 600 And nempned it after the king. That lay "Orfeo" is y-hote; Gode is the lay, swete is the note. Thus com Sir Orfeo out of his care: God graunt ous alle wele to fare! Amen!</p>	<p>Lord, there was a great melody! Whoever saw them come back safe Wept with their eyes for joy. Now King Orfeo was newly crowned With his queen, Dame Herodis, And they lived long afterward, And later the steward was king. After then the harpists in Brittany Heard about this marvelous story, And made a lay of great delight from it, And named it after the king. That lay is called <i>Sir Orfeo</i>. The tale is good, and the notes are sweet. Thus Sir Orfeo came out of his troubles. May God grant that we fare as well! Amen.</p>
605	Explicit	The End

Sex and Consequences in *Sir Degare* and *Sir Orfeo*

Despite the harsh post-Reformation and modern belief that the medieval Catholic church could do no good, there were no doubt capable and well-intentioned administrators in holy offices and honest servants such as Chaucer's Parson. Although most of our written knowledge comes filtered through the lens of clerics, it was an age of general belief which permeated medieval values and culture. Throughout these chapters I have at times endeavored to show how such works as *Amis and Amiloun* or *Bevis of Hampton* symbolize, depict, or reflect religious themes. Yet other subject matters were available, and poets did not at least in practice have the strictures operant in the Muslim world. Directly anti-religious texts were not an option, though constructively critical depictions of the church such as *Piers Plowman* or *Gamelyn* were, and stories non-religious but still set in a Christian (or Christianized) milieu such as bawdy riddles and fabliaux also circulated with reasonable liberty.

In interpreting *Sir Orfeo* Doob sees Orfeo as a sort of holy wild man and reads the poem as "shaped by the Christian pattern of Fall, Redemption, and Judgment,"¹ though not strictly as direct allegory. The story has non-Christian roots in Ovid and Virgil, perhaps filtered through translations of its summary in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (III.Metr. xii). Yet the poet takes the usual romance liberties in recasting Orpheus into a medieval realm, ending with a benediction. *Sir Degare* also has hagiographic hints in depicting Degare as a foundling raised by hermits, with possible

¹ Penelope B.R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 168.

origins in the *vita* of Pope Gregory the Great.² Both stories reside in Auchinleck alongside homiletic texts and *Degare* follows *The Paternoster* and *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*. But our conceptions of printed books as unified verbal units is modern, and manuscripts showed less concern for genre uniformity than printed books do.³ The Auchinleck manuscript has also been explained as separate booklets which were later gathered. In their treatment of the main narrative event of the poems, the sexual assault or abduction of the heroines by fairies, *Sir Degare* and *Sir Orfeo* are non-religious texts in mode and theme. In both poems the ravishing does not suggest evil in the antagonist or sin in the heroine, and the concluding restoration is a secular one.

Claims that medieval romances were salacious often betray the romanticism of critics more than the texts. English romances seldom conform to the prescriptive definition of courtly love as adulterous, and sex usually reflects traditional morality in its (non) depiction. A wide stylistic divide separates most medieval romances from *Dame Sirith*. Yet *Degare* has the queasy subthemes of incest and rape, with *Orfeo*'s plot vehicle an equally ominous ravishing scene. Herodis explains the fairy king's physical confrontation in the language of sexual force—"wold ich, nold ich, he me nam" (154)—much like the fairy knight's words to the princess, "thou best mi lemman ar thou go / wether the liketh wel or wo" (107-8). While actual sexual assault was rare in romance,

² George Patterson Faust, *Sir Degare: A Study of the Texts and Narrative Structure* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1935), 45.

³ Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 10.

“rape frequently overlaps with abduction.”⁴ Chaucer shunned incest as a theme and the Man of Laws refuses to discuss “swiche unkynde abhomynacions” (II.88).⁵ Yet the Wife of Bath’s “lusty bachelor” rapes a maiden and in return receives “a bath of blisse” (III.1253) with a beautiful bride.⁶ Despite the fairy-tale scenario the reward for his crime seems outrageously undeserved.

In the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* the offended community demands execution for the knight, who “sholde han lost his heed” (II.892), but the reader knows the extreme sentence will not be carried out and only appears for dramatic effect. In *Havelock*, under Athelwold anyone “wo so dide maydne shame” (84) has limbs cut off, but such severity was rare in fact and prosecution was difficult. Penalties in medieval Europe were situational depending on the extremity of the act, but in broad principle rape was “both a sexual crime and a crime against property and family interests,”⁷ and thus a virgin’s violation was considerably more serious than a married woman’s. As unpleasant as such realities are to modern ears, “the punishment for rape tended to be less severe than for other crimes, such as stealing.”⁸ Medieval romance often seems less concerned with sexual assault than with men falsely accused of the crime by spurned women. Belisaunt threatens Amis (632-6) and the queen in *Sir Launfal* accuses the hero only to have the

⁴ Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 187.

⁵ R.H. Nicholson, “*Sir Orfeo*: A ‘Kynges Noote,’” *Review of English Studies* 36:142 (1985): 175.

⁶ For arguments that Chaucer might have used the *Degare* rape in writing the Wife of Bath’s tale see Laura Hibbard Loomis, “Chaucer and the Breton Lays of the Auchinleck,” *Studies in Philology* 38:1 (1941): 30-1.

⁷ Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: University Press, 1994), 124.

⁸ Peter G. Beidler, “Rape and Prostitution,” *Backgrounds to Chaucer, ORB*, accessed 4 December 2010 at <http://the-orb.net/textbooks/anthology/beidler/rape.html>

fairy Dame Tryamour avenge him by blowing on her “swych a breþ / þat never eft myzt sche se” (*Launfal* 1007-8).⁹

We want to see the fairy king and fairy knight punished or at least damned by the narrator for their respective violations, but neither happens. The knight in *Degare* is a strangely well-mannered rapist who speaks kindly and reassuringly to the princess, announcing “damaisele, welcome mote thou be!” (98) before taking her maidenhead by force. He then “stands before her as if nothing has happened and speaks to her as a courtly gentleman might speak.”¹⁰ The scene ends with an affectionate dictum, “‘lemman,’ he seide, ‘gent and fre / mid schilde I wot that thou schalt be’” (115-6) and a breezy “have god dai.” The poet makes no moral comment on the event, and later when the son meets the father Degare even apologizes for fighting him: “the sone cride merci there / his owen fader of his misdede” (1067-8). Degare and the knight then return to the castle where the princess happily marries him. The king has no objections to the man who has given him a bastard grandson, in English law a state irremediable *post hoc* by marriage. No one in the poem has assigned any stain of sin or wrongdoing to the fairy knight for his actions.

Equally with the *Orfeo* poet, “nowhere in fact does he betray an attitude towards the fairies that is anything other than approving or awed”¹¹ despite the fairy king threatening to “totore thine limes al” (“rip off all your limbs,” 171) to the queen, who

⁹ *Sir Launfal*, in Thomas J. Garbaty, ed., *Medieval English Literature* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), 365-95.

¹⁰ Cheryl Colopy, “*Sir Degare*: A Fairy Tale Oedipus,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 17:1/2 (1982): 32.

¹¹ Felicity Riddy, “The Uses of the Past in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Yearbook of English Studies* 6 (1976): 5.

claws her face with her nails in crazed terror before her forced abduction the next morning. The poet seems oblivious that Orfeo's tender promise that "whider thou gost, ichil with the" (129), in juxtaposition with the fairy king's ultimatum to "with ous go / and live with ous evermo" (167-8), makes the latter sound "like a prison sentence."¹² As with *Degare's* knight, the fairy king has a curious mix of transcendent gentility and brutality. The queen's rapturous narration that the fairies rode "al on snowe-white stedes / as white as milke were her wedes / Y no seighe never yete bifore / so fair creatours" (145-8) is followed by the fairy king's thuggish threat, "and yif thou makest ous y-let / whar thou be, thou worst y-fet" ("and if you make difficulties for us, wherever you are, you will be found," 169-70). No one in either poem attaches normative Christian valuations of sin or evil to these criminal actions, and no scenes of petition or prayer follow for mercy or guidance.

The fairy otherworld which Orfeo infiltrates to find Herodis has been given traditional identifications with Hell or Purgatory, but neither fits. Orfeo beholds a grim spectacle of tormented deaths, but no one actively suffers in a manner suggesting punitive or restorative justice. The overwhelming emotion of the tableau is frozen stasis: "wonder fele ther lay bisides / right as thai slepe her undertides" (401-2). Davies finds a purgatorial reference here in that all "died suddenly and unshriven."¹³ Yet the otherworld lacks any movement, unlike Dante's vision where souls run impotently from winds and fire or slowly ameliorate and journey in penitence with thankful grace. Despite her horse ride earlier Herodis still sleeps under the tree (407). The souls are not necessarily *souls*

¹² Seth Lerer, "Artifice and Artistry in *Sir Orfeo*," *Speculum* 60:1 (1985): 97.

¹³ Constance Davies, "Classical Threads in *Orfeo*," *Modern Language Review* 56:2 (1961): 165.

but apparently bodies, as they are “thought dede, and nare nought” (390). The spirits are shocked by Dante when he casts a shadow (*Purg.* III.88-90), but Orfeo brings Herodis back to Winchester alive and in fully physical form without losing her by making the mistake of looking back.

Though the frame of the story operates in a Christian world, the otherworld occupies a reality unconnected to it. The poet drew upon traditions of Orpheus’ visit to Hades but also perhaps Gaelic folklore in which the *daoine maithe*, the “Good People,” take away the bodies of those dying in violent or unnatural ways.¹⁴ In many ways the fairy otherworld simply perfects Orfeo’s harmonious court. Both Orfeo and the narrator are awed by the fairy palaces: “al the utmast wal / was clere and schine as cristal,” (357-8) and “no man may telle, no thenche in thought / the riche werk that ther was wrought” (373-4). Yet Lerer notes that “romance often portrays the hero’s encounter with palaces of illusory splendor,”¹⁵ and like the emir’s garden in *Floris and Blancheflor* the beautiful vistas deceptively mask their danger or moral torpidity. Despite its glittering charms the castle imprisons its occupants, and though the fairy king is no devil—he keeps his word and seems remarkably human in his surprise at Orfeo’s audacity and his enthusiastic but rash promise¹⁶—the king also attempts a prevarication and only grudgingly awards

¹⁴ For more see Dorena Allen, “Orpheus and Orfeo: the Dead and the ‘Taken,’” *Medium Aevum* 33 (1964): 102-11. Jirsa also notes Jacob Grimm’s *Deutsche Mythologie* (Göttingen, 1835), 918-20, which discusses similar traditions. Curtis R.H. Jirsa, “In the Shadow of the Ympe-tre: Arboreal Folklore in Sir Orfeo,” *English Studies* 89:2 (2008): 148. Such fairies stem from pagan traditions although some explanations claim they are fallen angels. In Irish folklore such a troublesome or mischievous fairy is a *púca*, giving English Shakespeare’s Puck and *puckish*.

¹⁵ Lerer, 93.

¹⁶ Mary Hynes-Berry, “Cohesion in *King Horn* and *Sir Orfeo*,” *Speculum* 50:4 (1975): 669.

Herodis to Orfeo, who hurries “swithe out of that lond” (474) before the king has time or opportunity to change his mind.

Yet *Degare* and *Orfeo* do not see Christian sin in the fairy knight and king’s rape-abduction, nor do they attach religious meaning to the heroines’ experience of the actions. The narratives intimate neither a retributive or restorative purpose for the trials faced by the protagonists. Colopy sees *Degare* as a highly Oedipal piece where the princess launders her desire for her father through his representative in the fairy knight,¹⁷ but such a reading also finds no moral dimension in the sexual assault. Colopy posits that the princess ambivalently craves and avoids her father by hiding in the forest, yet the narrative plainly has the ladies needing to “don here nedes” (54), to go to the bathroom. The princess’ rape seems to lack any moral justification as punishment. The occasion of her journey, to hear a mass for her mother and “poure men fede, and naked clothe” (44), hardly suggests sin or lasciviousness on her part.

Falk sees an identification between *Orfeo* and Edward II, and suggests that the maids who see Herodis and “durst hir nought awake” (73) and then rush away to embarrass the king with her madness¹⁸ reflect English antipathy towards the incompetent Edward and scheming Isabella. But the argument reads a spiteful tone into *durst*, “dared,” unsupported by the poem, where Herodis also “durst nought” (140) accompany the fairy king and Orfeo “no durst” (482) enter Winchester without a disguise, and poorly fits the mood and events of the poem. The real Edward and Isabella waged war over England,

¹⁷ Colopy, 33.

¹⁸ Oren Falk, “The Son of Orfeo: Kingship and Compromise in a Middle English Romance,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 30:2 (2000): 249-51.

whereas when Orfeo and Herodis return to the townspeople, “for joie thai wepe with her eithe” (591). Critics have puzzled over why Herodis deserves her fate with recourse to the usual misogynist identification that she shares an Eve-like sensuality and idleness in her orchard nap which precipitates her fall.¹⁹ The charge seems a mean-spirited stretch, and the narrator imputes no such blame to her actions. Moreover, she returns to wedded joy at the poem’s close.

Medieval lore might better explain Herodis’ fortune. In numerous romances falling asleep under trees at *undertide* brings fairies, and Jirsa notes that in medieval lore the shadows of some trees such as the yew, walnut, and juniper were considered noxious or dangerous.²⁰ Scholars from Pliny to Bartholomaeus Anglicus warn of headaches or other ailments, and as late as the fourteenth century John Trevisa writes of the yew that “þe schadowe þerof is grevous and slee hem þat slepiþ þerunder.”²¹ The ladies protecting the princess in *Degare* similarly fall asleep under a chestnut tree (74) as if enchanted, leaving her vulnerable. English gardens were highly sculpted affairs meant to exclude the chaos of the forest, and the artifice of the grafted (*ympe*) tree was particularly attractive to aristocratic sentiments.²² Yet the *ympe-tree* also contains two species unnaturally blended, just as the fairy and real world ominously intersect for Herodis.²³

¹⁹ Doob, 174.

²⁰ Jirsa, 143-6.

²¹ 17.161; “De taxo,” M. C. Seymour, et al., ed., *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa’s Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum: A Critical Text*. Vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), quoted in Jirsa, 145.

²² Lerer, 95-6.

²³ Alice E. Lasater, “Under the Ympe-tre or: Where the Action is in *Sir Orfeo*,” *Southern Quarterly* 12 (1974): 355. Lasater argues that the *ympe* is a grafted apple tree. The word also etymologically links to *imp*, a mischievous demon.

Christian theology mitigates against the idea of unexplainable randomness, but it formed an important part of Germanic *wyrd*. When the dragon attacks his kingdom, Beowulf believes in anguish that “he wealdende / ofer ealde riht ecean dryhtne / bitre gebulge” (“he had violated the old law, and had severely offended the Ruler, the eternal Lord,” 2329-31).²⁴ But the terror of *Beowulf* lies in the existential unpredictability of its world, for the dragon or other monsters have no apparent cause to exist. Fate brings them and men must show fortitude regardless of risk. Similarly in *Orfeo*, albeit at a less epic level, the abduction simply happens and allows Orfeo to demonstrate nobility by repairing the breach of harmony in his kingdom wrought by the troublesome fairies. The arbitrary and random nature of the fairy king’s attack intensifies both its drama and Orfeo’s surmounting of fate.

Medieval theologians explained human misfortune through a complex mesh, interpreting it as God’s retributive or correcting punishment or as a Job-like testing such as Amiloun undergoes. The *Ancren Riwle* (c. 1200) sermonizes that “alse þe goldsmið censed þet gold iðe fure, al so deð God þe soule iðe fure of fondunge” (“as the goldsmith cleans the gold in the fire, so does God purify the soul in the fire of trials”).²⁵ The princess in *Degare* laments her secret pregnancy but otherwise endures no apparent adversity after a maid discreetly removes the newborn Degare. When the hermit adopts him out to his sister, Degare “wende wel that the gode man / had ben his fader that him wan / and the wif his moder also / and the hermite his unkel” (279-82). As an older boy Degare receives security and a clerical education before taking on the trappings of a

²⁴ Lines from Howell D. Chickering, Jr., ed. and trans., *Beowulf* (Toronto: Anchor Books, 1977).

²⁵ James Morton, trans., *The Ancren Riwle* (London: Camden Society, 1853), 236.

knight. Degare has a deservedly tearful reunion with his mother, but the poem does not pretend that Degare's upbringing has been tragic or a transformative spiritual experience. For a noble boy to be fostered by a maternal uncle would not have been in any way unusual in a medieval court.

Orfeo's self-exile presents a more difficult problem. Narratively, Herodis' vanishing poses no existential crisis for the kingdom as does *Beowulf's* dragon; if heirs are an issue Orfeo can remarry. Doob asserts that the wild man in exile was associated with divine punishment but "if the acts of penance are viewed as voluntary... the wild man is holy."²⁶ Yet neither Orfeo nor Herodis has especially sinned or requires expiation. Orfeo instead explains his departure in mourning terms: "for now ichave mi quen y-lore / the fairest levedi that ever was bore / never eft y nil no woman se" (209-11). Critics have suggested that Orfeo has a rather effeminate nature for a king as he is lost without his wife and uses music and not arms to regain her.²⁷ Yet the *scheltroms* have proven useless where Orfeo's eloquence and musicianship do not. Gros-Louis also argues that Orfeo does not actually seek his wife but chooses self-exile to honor her memory. He makes provisions for his kingdom and leaves civilization, and "not once, in all these years, does he look for Heurodis"²⁸ until meeting her by chance. Yet whatever his goals regarding Herodis, Orfeo's motivation is love rather than a desire for spiritual aims.

²⁶ Doob, 159.

²⁷ Joanne Charbonneau and Désirée Cromwell, "Gender and Identity in the Popular Romance," in *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance*, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu, and Cory James Rushton, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 105.

²⁸ R.R. Gros Louis, "The Significance of Sir Orfeo's Self-Exile," *Review of English Studies* 18:71 (1967): 246.

Both *Degare* and *Orfeo* feature unorthodox endings somewhat different from the usual exile-and-return narratives. *Degare* ends with reconciliation and a double wedding, validating the aristocratic values of a knight who is “both curteys and fre” (1106). Colopy calls the poem “the story of an Oedipus with a happy ending who marries his mother, fights with his father and wins the princess in the end.”²⁹ These psychological undercurrents may operate in *Degare* as they may in *Floris and Blancheflor* as well. Yet both readings are essentially secular. Though the narrator gives a benediction, none of the characters has learned anything resembling saintly virtue. *Orfeo* similarly ends with Herodis having no lines at all. Orfeo returns to his kingdom with a deeper and richer appreciation of the limits of his power and of the qualities he finds in his steward.³⁰ Oren reads a dark note at the close as Orfeo and Herodis apparently leave no heir,³¹ but the celebratory mood clearly shows otherwise. Orfeo rejoins his wife and reassumes his kingdom and the two actions dovetail in harmony. He is “newe coround” (593), and with his wife he “lived long afterward” (595). Narratively the ceremony “stands in for the marriage which so commonly ends *lais*”³² and romances generally.

Degare receives land, a wife, and family reconciliation at the poem’s denouement. *Orfeo* enjoys the fruits of a newly repaired and restored kingdom and marriage along with a faithful steward. In their endings both poems conform to standard romantic conventions of narrative structure, but neither story has them buried in monastic houses with monks to

²⁹ Colopy, 32.

³⁰ Gros Louis, 251.

³¹ Oren, 248.

³² Nicholson, 170.

pray for them, and their benedictions are especially automatic. *Degare* has a rather odd structure in making the chief heroine the hero's mother but the poem resolves the issue concisely. *Orfeo* has a richer personality, imbued with the exotic Celtic flavors of music, fairies, and otherworldly adventures. The poem's qualities as a "swete" (602) tale of music and eloquence organically circle back to refer to the teller's own *swete* skill in creating the lay. Although its identity as a *lai* places it in question as a genre, in one aspect *Sir Orfeo* is the most romantic, in the modern sense, of all these ten romances—a poem about a man who already has a kingdom and gives it up for the wife he loves, and receives both as a reward.

CHAPTER 10

Sir Thopas

The Tale of Sir Thopas appears among the eighty-two extant manuscripts of *The Canterbury Tales*, most or all postdating Chaucer. Editors have generally used the Ellesmere manuscript (c. 1400), now held in the Huntington Library. As a source text I use Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987). There are innumerable versions and popular translations but few approach Benson's as the standard edition of Chaucer.

	The Prologue to the Tale of Sir Thopas	The Prologue to the <i>Tale of Sir Topaz</i>
689	<p>Whan seyde was al this miracle, every man As sobre was that wonder was to se, Til that oure Hooste japen tho bigan, And thanne at erst he looked upon me, And seyde thus: "What man artow?" quod he; "Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare, For evere upon the ground I se thee stare.</p>	<p>When this miraculous tale was all finished,¹ It was a sight to see everyone so serious, Until our Host² began to joke around, And then at last he stared at me And spoke. "What kind of man are you?" he said. "You look like you are trying to catch a rabbit, For I always see you staring at the ground.</p>
700	<p>"Approche neer, and looke up murily. Now war yow, sires, and lat this man have place! He in the waast is shape as wel as I; This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace For any womman, small and fair of face. He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce, For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce.</p> <p>"Sey now somewhat, syn oother folk han sayd; Telle us a tale of myrthe, and that anon." "Hooste," quod I, "ne beth nat yvele apayd, For oother tale certes kan I noon, But of a rym I lerned longe agoon."</p>	<p>Come near, and look up with merriness! Now make way, sirs, and let this man have space! He is shaped in the waist as well as I am. This would be a doll, with a small and pretty face, For any woman to embrace in her arms! He seems elvish by his behavior, For he has no conversation with anyone.</p> <p>Now say something, since the others have spoken. Tell us a tale of fun, and do it right away!" "Host," I said, "Do not feel badly rewarded. For sure, I know no other tale Except for a rhyme I learned long ago."</p>

¹ The pilgrims have just heard the Prioress' tale, a pious and sentimental story about a Christian boy whose throat is cut by the Jews and whose body is found when he miraculously sings out hymns. The sissyish depiction of the "litel child" with "his litel book" may be Chaucer the pilgrim's link to the effeminate Sir Thopas, who is also described as *Childe*, a young knight-in-training.

² Harry Bailly, the owner of the Tabard Inn, where the pilgrims begin their travel. The Host has a coarse and blunt humor and by this point in the *Canterbury Tales* has been drinking heavily.

710	“Ye, that is good,” quod he; “now shul we heere Som deyntee thyng, me thynketh by his cheere.”	“Yes, that is fine,” he said. “Now we will hear Some dainty thing, I think, by his expression.”
	The Tale of Sir Thopas	The Tale of Sir Topaz
	The First Fit	Chapter 1
712	Listeth, lordes, in good entent, And I wol telle verrayment Of myrthe and of solas, Al of a knyght was fair and gent In bataille and in tourneyment; His name was sire Thopas.	Listen, lords, in good faith, And I will tell you, truly, Something amusing and entertaining, All about a knight who was fair and elegant In battle and in tournament. His name was Sir Topaz.
720	Yborn he was in fer contree, In Flaundres, al biyonde the see, At Poperyng, in the place. His fader was a man ful free, And lord he was of that contree, As it was Goddes grace.	He was born in a faraway country, In Flanders, far beyond the sea, In Poperinge, in that place. ³ His father was a very noble man And he was lord of that country, As it was God’s grace.
	Sire Thopas wax a doghty swayn; Whit was his face as payndemayn, His lippes rede as rose; His rode is lyk scarlet in grayn, And I yow telle in good certayn He hadde a semely nose.	Sir Topaz grew to be a rugged youth. His face was as fair as fine white bread, ⁴ His lips were as red as a rose. His complexion was like dyed scarlet, And I tell you with good certainty, He had a decorous nose.
730	His heer, his berd was lyk saffroun, That to his girdel raughte adoun; His shoon of cordewane. Of Brugges were his hosen broun, His robe was of syklatoun, That coste many a jane.	His hair—his beard—was like saffron, Which ran down to his waist. His shoes were of Spanish leather; ⁵ His brown hose were from Bruges. His robe was silk woven with gold, Which cost a pretty penny.
740	He koude hunte at wilde deer, And ride an haukyng for river With grey goshauk on honde; Therto he was a good archeer; Of wrastlyng was ther noon his peer Ther any ram shal stonde.	He could hunt for wild deer, And ride with hawks for waterfowl With a grey eagle on his hand. Moreover, he was a good archer. In wrestling there was no one his equal Where any ram would be contested. ⁶

³ Poperinge is a Belgian town slightly west of Ypres, famous for linen. The gag is that, rather than being an exotic, faraway locale, the town is nearby and mundane: “Grendel returned to the accursed mere, just outside Winnipeg on Route 4.” Some critics disagree, arguing the poem mocks the Flemish generally, but this is the only Flemish reference besides the Bruges hose (733).

⁴ Pandemain is a fine, delicate white bread, hardly fitting for a rugged knight. Compare this to the earthy Wife of Bath, who calls herself ‘barley bread.’

⁵ *Cordovan* is expensive burgundy-colored leather from Cordoba, Spain.

⁶ *Ther any ram shal stoned*: A ram was the traditional prize in wrestling matches, which were enormously popular in the medieval English countryside. Some critics feel that wrestling and archery were undignified

	<p>Ful many a mayde, bright in bour, They moorne for hym paramour, Whan hem were bet to slepe; But he was chaast and no lechour, And sweete as is the brembul flour That bereth the rede hepe.</p>	<p>Many a maiden, beautiful in her bower, Yearned for him passionately When it was better for her to sleep. But he was chaste and no libertine, And was as sweet as the blackberry bush That bears the red fruit.</p>
750	<p>And so bifel upon a day, For sothe, as I yow telle may, Sire Thopas wolde out ride. He worth upon his steede gray, And in his hand a launcegay, A long swerd by his side.</p>	<p>And so it happened one day, In truth, as I may tell you, Sir Topaz wished to go out riding. He mounted his grey steed, With a light spear in his hand And a long sword by his side.</p>
	<p>He priketh thurgh a fair forest, Therinne is many a wilde best, Ye, bothe bukke and hare; And as he priketh north and est, I telle it yow, hym hadde almost Bitid a sory care.</p>	<p>He spurred through a fair forest Where there were many wild beasts inside, Yes, both deer and rabbits! And as he rode north and east, I will tell you, he almost Happened into grievous trouble.</p>
760	<p>Ther spryngen herbes grete and smale, The lycorys and the cetewale, And many a clowe-gylofre; And notemuge to putte in ale, Wheither it be moyste or stale, Or for to leye in cofre.</p>	<p>There were herbs springing, great and small, The licorice and the ginger spice, And many a clove flower; And nutmeg to put in ale, Whether it is fresh or stale, Or to lay in a coffer chest.⁷</p>
770	<p>The briddes synge, it is no nay, The sparhawk and the papejay, That joye it was to heere; The thrustelcok made eek hir lay, The wodedowve upon the spray She sang ful loude and cleere.</p>	<p>The birds sang, it could not be denied— The sparrow-hawk and the parrot, Which was a joy to hear. The thrush also made her song; The wood-pigeon upon her branch Sang very loudly and clear.</p>
	<p>Sire Thopas fil in love-longynge, Al whan he herde the thrustel synge, And pryked as he were wood. His faire steede in his prikyng So swatte that men myghte him wrynge; His sydes were al blood.</p>	<p>Sir Topaz fell into lovesickness When he heard the thrush sing, And spurred as if he were mad.⁸ His fair steed, from his spurring, Sweated so that men could wring him! His sides were all bloody.</p>

pursuits for knights in this period, adding to the joke of Thopas' faux-elegance. Chaucer's boorish, drunken Miller also enjoys wrestling: "At wrastlyng he wolde have alwey the ram" (*CT* I.547).

⁷ Nutmeg is placed in a chest, possibly to add a pleasant scent to clothes. J.A. Burrow, in Larry D. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, third ed., 1987), 214.

⁸ *Pryked*: By constantly re-using the verb, Chaucer may intend a gentle joke on the limited vocabulary of romances like *Guy of Warwick*, which uses some form of *prick* 40 times. He probably does not mean the modern sexual double entendre, first recorded in 1450 (MED). See note 31 in the essay on *Sir Thopas*.

780	<p>Sire Thopas eek so wery was For prikyng on the softe gras, So fiers was his corage, That doun he leyde him in that plas To make his steede som solas, And yaf hym good forage.</p>	<p>Sir Topaz was so tired as well From riding on the soft grass— So fierce was his courage!— That he laid himself down in that spot To give his steed some rest And gave him good foraging.</p>
	<p>“O Seinte Marie, benedicite! What eyleth this love at me To bynde me so soore? Me dremed al this nyght, pardee, An elf-queene shal my lemman be And slepe under my goore.</p>	<p>“Oh, Sainted Mary, bless me! What does love have against me To bind me so sorely? I dreamed all this night, by God, That an elf-queen would be my lover And would sleep under my coat.</p>
790	<p>“An elf-queene wol I love, ywis, For in this world no womman is Worthy to be my make In towne; Alle othere wommen I forsake, And to an elf-queene I me take By dale and eek by downe!”</p>	<p>I will love an elf-queen, for sure! For in all this world there is no woman Worthy to be my mate In the town.⁹ All other women I leave behind And I will search for an elf-queen for me By hill and by valley as well!”</p>
800	<p>Into his sadel he clamb anon, And priketh over stile and stoon An elf-queene for t’ espye, Til he so longe hath riden and goon That he foond, in a pryve woon, The contree of Fairye So wilde; For in that contree was ther noon That to him durste ride or goon, Neither wyf ne childe;</p>	<p>He climbed into his saddle at once And rode over fence and stone To spy out an elf-queen, Until he had ridden and traveled so far That he found, in a secluded place, The country of Fairyland, So wild. For in that country there was no one Who dared to ride to or confront him, Neither woman or child;</p>
810	<p>Til that ther cam a greet geaunt, His name was sire Olifaunt, A perilous man of dede. He seyde, “Child, by Termagaunt, But if thou prike out of myn haunt, Anon I sle thy steede With mace. Heere is the queene of Fayerye, With harpe and pipe and symphonye,</p>	<p>Until there appeared a great giant. His name was Sir Elephant, A perilous man of deeds. He said, “Child, by Termagaunt,¹⁰ Unless you spur out of my territory, I will kill your horse at once With my mace! The queen of Fairyland is here, With harp and pipe and fiddle,¹¹</p>

⁹ Chaucer imitates the tail-rhyme romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with its formulaic and regular two-syllable lines (‘bobs’).

¹⁰ *Termagaunt*: Termagant is a deity incorrectly claimed to be worshipped by Muslims in medieval romance, both English and French. Muslims are typically depicted as pagans who worship both Mohammad and various heathen gods such as Apollo. The origins of *Termagant* are unclear and he is usually invoked in romance simply as an idiomatic oath. See also the translation of *Bevis of Hampton*, line 500.

	Dwellynge in this place.”	Dwelling in this place.”
820	The child seyde, “Also moote I thee, Tomorwe wol I meete with thee, Whan I have myn armour; And yet I hope, <i>par ma fay</i> , That thou shalt with this launcegay Abyen it ful sowre. Thy mawe Shal I percen, if I may, Er it be fully pryde of day, For heere thou shalt be slawe.”	The child said, “As I live and breathe, ¹² Tomorrow I will meet with you When I have my armor. And then I expect, by my faith, That you will pay for it very painfully With this parade-spear! I will pierce Your mouth, if I can, Before it is mid-morning, For you will be slain here!”
830	Sire Thopas drow abak ful faste; This geant at hym stones caste Out of a fel staf-slynge. But faire escapeth child Thopas, And al it was thurgh Goddes gras, And thurgh his fair berynge.	Sir Topaz pulled back quickly; The giant flung stones at him Out of a formidable wooden sling. But Child Topaz nobly ran away, And it was all through God’s grace, And through his fair bearing.
	The Second Fit	Part 2 ¹³
	Yet listeth, lordes, to my tale Murier than the nightyngale, For now I wol yow rowne How sir Thopas, with sydes smale, Prikyng over hill and dale, Is comen agayn to towne.	Yet listen, gentlemen, to my tale; It is merrier than the nightingale. For now I will reveal to you How Sir Topaz, with his slender waist, Spurring over hill and valley, Came back to town.
840	His myrie men comanded he To make hym bothe game and glee, For nedes moste he fighte With a geaunt with hevedes three, For paramour and jolitee Of oon that shoon ful brighte.	He commanded his merry men To make song and entertainment for him, For he needed to fight With a giant who had three heads, ¹⁴ For love and for the delight Of one who shone very brightly.
	“Do come,” he seyde, “my mynstrales, And geestours for to tellen tales, Anon in myn armynge,	“Summon,” he said, “my minstrels, And storytellers to tell tales, Later as I am arming—

¹¹ *Symphonye*: Not the modern symphony but “probably a hurdy-gurdy, a sort of mechanized fiddle,” according to Benson (920, note to line 815). Like a blues harmonica now, by Chaucer’s time it is more a street instrument than courtly accompaniment for a fairy-queen.

¹² *Child* refers to the feudal rank of young knight-in-training in lines 830 and 898 but here may simply mean “little boy.” The term’s ambiguity in the poem might be humorously intentional.

¹³ The tale has textual divisions in the MSS, but are only called *fits* by modern editors. Burrow notes that the chapter divisions, like the plot, seem to peter out as each is half the size of its previous one: Fit 1 is 18 stanzas, Fit 2 is 9, and Fit 3 is 4½. John A. Burrow, “*Sir Thopas*: An Agony in Three Fits,” *Review of English Studies* 22:85 (1971): 57.

¹⁴ *Hevedes three*: For comic effect, Sir Thopas is evidently excusing his cowardice by exaggerating the giant, who is never indicated as having three heads.

850	Of romances that been roiales, Of popes and of cardinales, And eek of love-likynge.”	Of romances that are royal, Of popes and of cardinals, And of love-longing as well.”
	They fette hym first the sweete wyn, And mede eek in a mazelyn, And roial spicerye Of gyngbreed that was ful fyn, And lycorys, and eek comyn, With sugre that is trye.	They brought him first the sweet wine, And mead as well in a maple bowl, And royal delicacies, And gingerbread that was very fine, And licorice, and cumin as well, With sugar that was proven in trial.
860	He dide next his white leere Of cloth of lake fyn and cleere, A breech and eek a sherte; And next his sherte an aketoun, And over that an haubergeoun For Percyng of his herte;	He put next to his white flesh Clothes of linen, fine and unspotted, A pair of pants and also a shirt; And, next to his shirt, a quilted jacket, And over that a coat of mail To ward off piercing of his heart.
	And over that a fyn hawberk, Was al ywroght of Jewes werk, Ful strong it was of plate; And over that his cote-armour As whit as is a lilye flour, In which he wol debate.	And over all that fine plate armor Which was all crafted with Jews’ work; ¹⁵ It was of strong iron plate. And over all that went his overcoat, As white as a lily flower, In which he would face challenge.
870	His sheeld was al of gold so reed, And therinne was a bores heed, A charbocle bisyde; And there he swoor on ale and breed How that the geaunt shal be deed, Bityde what bityde!	His shield was all of gold, so red, And on it was a boar’s head, With a carbuncle stone beside. And there he swore on bread and ale That the giant would be dead, Come what may!
880	His jambeux were of quyrboilly, His swerdes shethe of yvory, His helm of latoun bright; His sadel was of rewel boon, His brydel as the sonne shoon, Or as the moone light.	His leg guards were of hard leather, His sword’s sheath of ivory, And his helmet was shining brass. His saddle was of polished bone; His bridle shone like the sun Or like the moonlight.
	His spere was of fyn ciprees, That bodeth werre, and nothyng pees, The heed ful sharpe ygrounde; His steede was al dappull gray, It gooth an ambil in the way	His spear was of fine cypress, ¹⁶ Which foretold war, and nothing peaceful, And the point was sharply ground. His steed was all spotted grey; It went ambling on the way,

¹⁵ *Jewes werk*: a puzzling reference as *Jew* and *jewelry* have no etymological connection, although the medieval Jews did work and trade jewelry. Burrow lists some speculations, noting that “A fine Saracen hauberk in one French chanson de geste is said to have been forged by ‘Ysac de Barceloigne,’ presumably a Spanish Jew” (*Riverside Chaucer*, note to 864, page 921).

¹⁶ Cypress is a softwood and unsuitable for making spears. It hardly “bodeth werre.” For more on Thopas’ weapons, see Joanne A. Charbonneau, “*Sir Thopas*,” in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 693-4.

890	<p>Ful softely and rounde In londe. Loo, lordes myne, heere is a fit! If ye wol any moore of it, To telle it wol I fonde.</p>	<p>Very softly and easily On the land. Now, my lords, here is the next part! If you want any more of it, I will try to tell it.</p>
	<p>The Third Fit</p>	<p>Part 3</p>
	<p>Now holde youre mouth, <i>par charitee</i>, Bothe knyght and lady free, And herkneth to my spelle; Of bataille and of chivalry, And of ladyes love-drury Anon I wol yow telle.</p>	<p>Now hold your tongue, for charity's sake, Both knights and gracious ladies, And listen to my story Of battle and of chivalry And of ladies' love-longing. I will tell it to you right away.</p>
900	<p>Men speken of romances of prys, Of Horn child and of Ypotys, Of Beves and sir Gy, Of sir Lybeux and Pleyndamour— But sir Thopas, he bereth the flour Of roial chivalry!</p>	<p>Men talk about famous romances, Of Child Horn and of Ypotis, Of Bevis and of Sir Guy, Of Sir Lybeaux and Plendamour.¹⁷ But Sir Topaz, he bears the flower Of royal chivalry!</p>
	<p>His goode steede al he bistrood, And forth upon his wey he glood As sparcle out of the bronde; Upon his creest he bar a tour, And therinne stiked a lilie flour— God shilde his cors fro shonde!</p>	<p>He mounted his trusted steed And he went forth on his way, glowing Like a spark out of the burning log. On his helmet's crest he bore a spike And on it he stuck a lily flower; God shield his body from harm!</p>
910	<p>And for he was a knyght auntrous, He nolde slepen in noon hous, But ligger in his hoode; His brighte helm was his wonger, And by hym baiteth his dextrer Of herbes fyne and goode.</p>	<p>And because he was a wandering knight, He would not sleep in anyone's house, But lay in his hood. His shining helmet was his pillow, And by him his war-steed grazed On herbs, fine and good.</p>
	<p>Hymself drank water of the well, As dide the knyght sire Percyvell So worly under wede, Til on a day —</p>	<p>He himself drank water from the well, As did the knight Sir Percival,¹⁸ So noble in his attire! Until one day—</p>
	<p>Heere the Hoost stynteth Chaucer of his Tale of Thopas.</p>	<p>Here the Host interrupted Chaucer in his <i>Tale of Topaz</i>.</p>

¹⁷ *Plendamour*: No story or MS has been found by this name, though Skeat found a minor character named Pleyn de Amours in Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (IX.7). Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, "Sir Thopas," in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales*, ed. W.F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York: Humanities Press, 1958), 487.

¹⁸ Possibly a reference to *Sir Percival of Galles*. The only MS known is the Thornton (Lincoln Cathedral MS 91) from about 1440. See Mary Flowers Braswell, ed., *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/percint.htm>.

920	<p>“Namore of this, for Goddes dignitee,” Quod oure Hooste, “for thou makest me So wery of thy verray lewednesse That, also wisly God my soule blesse, Myne eres aken of thy drasty speche. Now swich a rym the devel I biteche! This may wel be rym dogerel,” quod he. “Why so?” quod I, “why wiltow lette me Moore of my tale than another man, Syn that it is the beste rym I kan?”</p>	<p>“No more of this, for God’s sake!” Bellowed our Host. “For you make me So worn-out from your outright foolishness That, as surely as God blesses my soul, My ears are aching from your ridiculous story. Now such a rhyme I give to the devil. This may well be hack rhyming!” he said. “Why so?” I protested. “Why do you stop me From telling more of my tale like the other men, Since it is the best story I know?”</p>
930	<p>“By God,” quod he, “for pleyedly, at a word, Thy drasty rymyng is nat worth a toord! Thou doost noght elles but despendest tyme. Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme. Lat se wher thou kanst tellen aught in geeste, Or telle in prose somewhat, at the leeste, In which ther be som murthe or som doctrine.” “Gladly,” quod I, “by Goddes sweete pyne! I wol yow telle a litel thing in prose That oghte liken yow, as I suppose, Or elles, certes, ye been to daungerous.</p>	<p>“By God!” he said, “Because plainly, in short, Your rotten rhyming is not worth a crap! You do nothing more than waste time. Sir, in one word, you will no longer rhyme. Let’s see if you can say something in other verse, Or speak something in prose, at least, Which has some amusement or lesson in it!” “Gladly,” I said, “By Christ’s sweet pains! I will tell you a little story in prose¹⁹ That ought to satisfy you, I think, Or else, for sure, you are too hard to please.</p>
940	<p>It is a moral tale virtuous, Al be it told somtyme in sondry wyse</p>	<p>It is a moral tale of virtue, Although it is sometimes told in various ways</p>
942	<p>Of sondry folk, as I shal yow devyse...</p>	<p>By different people, as I will explain to you.”</p>
	<p>.....</p>	<p>.....</p>

¹⁹ Chaucer may be making another joke on “litel” here, as he segues from *Sir Thopas* into *The Tale of Melibee*, a ponderous, weighty morality tale which is anything but little at 1888 lines.

English Romances and Festive Parody in *The Tale of Sir Thopas*

“The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there,”¹ when applied to medieval England, is both a benign and harmful statement. Recognizing the basic dissimilarities of the period does warn against ‘false friends,’ against assuming Chaucer means the same thing a twenty-first century writer does in calling someone *gentle*, but it can also serve the agendas of classicists and modernists who wish to emphasize the irretrievably peculiar and perverse alterity of the medieval age. Burrow expresses discomfort with the spacial analogy of considering the past a different *place*,² as such a binary totalizes and simplifies. A Catholic graduate student at Notre Dame may be disconnected from the rhythms of daily street life in Chaucer’s London but may see the era’s religious traditions clearly.

Mitchell and Robinson begin a discussion of daily life in Anglo-Saxon England by reminding us that its people “were human beings like yourself, subject to weariness and pain, and prey to the same emotions as you are.”³ Yet the customs and assumptions which reflected these human needs have shifted. My father attended school but also received a farm boy’s education, and so where I simply see birds, trees, and clouds, he sees robins, aspens, and fair weather. Going back further generations, the experiences and practices of my ancestors would seem both familiar and increasingly alien. The difficult task for understanding the medieval period involves recognizing such cultural and

¹ John A. Burrow, “‘Alterity’ and Middle English Literature,” *Review of English Studies* 50:200 (1999): 483. Burrow quotes L.P. Hartley from his novel *The Go-Between* (1953).

² Burrow, “Alterity,” 484.

³ Bruce Mitchell and Fred C. Robinson, ed., *A Guide to Old English*, fifth ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 127.

psychological differences, not in order to indulge in the current fetish of English departments to use *other* as a verb incessantly but to understand their significances. Incidents of bowing and kneeling in medieval romance seem not only foreign now but are judged as sentimental and affected clichés of chivalry typical of the “extreme exaggerations”⁴ of the genre. Yet when such customs are understood as normal displays of greeting or respect predating handshakes,⁵ the acts and the literature they appear in are cast in a new light.

Similar problems apply in taxonomizing what effect Chaucer intends in *Sir Thopas*. Satire, a “full dish,” is not specifically medieval but comes from the Roman world with its connotations of dinnertime recreation. *Parody* as a term is first used in English by Ben Jonson, and with its related synonyms *burlesque* and *lampoon*, it enters the French lexicon of literary criticism in the seventeenth century and becomes as systematized as any other genre of poetry.⁶ Parody certainly operates in *Thopas* regardless of labels, and Chaucer’s pilgrims like to “laughe and pleye” (CT VI.967) as much as any other culture. Few critics have disputed the basic idea that the poem is meant to be humorous. Nevertheless, while Chaucer may have had French exemplars, he “could not have written *Sir Thopas* as a ‘parody,’ ‘burlesque,’ or ‘travesty’ if these words and the generic categories which these words tend to create did not exist.”⁷ These

⁴ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, “Sir Thopas,” in *Sources and Analogues of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales*, ed. Bryan, W.F. and Germaine Dempster (New York: Humanities Press, 1958), 491.

⁵ Burrow, “Alterity,” 488. Burrow believes the gesture of shaking hands to be unknown in medieval England, finding its first OED usage in Coverdale’s Bible of 1535 (489).

⁶ Joseph A. Dane, “Genre and Authority: The Eighteenth-Century Creation of Chaucerian Burlesque,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 48:4 (1985): 348.

⁷ Dane, 347.

identifications lack both consensus and critical analysis, and thus I would like to examine Chaucer's possible parodic intentions in *Thopas* and their relationship to medieval English romance.

A variety of readings have attempted to explain the point of *Sir Thopas*, some more credible than others. Much early criticism asserted that *Thopas* satirizes contemporary political targets. The Flemish were a perennial xenophobic target for their claimed low morals, and Manly asserted that Chaucer mocks the Flemish bourgeoisie for their aristocratic pretensions.⁸ Some scholars have adduced historical personages as the object of satire. Winstanley claimed that Sir Thopas is Philip van Artevelde, son of a Flemish burgher,⁹ and Richard II's purported effeminacy has also been suggested as a model. Textual credence for the Flemish argument seems slim, as Sir Thopas is born in Popering but there are no other explicit Flemish references. Chaucer was normally careful about antagonizing the powerful and was unlikely to mock the king's masculinity, although he does have the "foppish clerk"¹⁰ Absolom, whose blonde hair is long and parted like Richard's.

Other interpretations are more oblique, such as the reading following Terry Jones' work on the *Knight's Tale* that Chaucer satirizes knights generally in *Thopas*. Jones'

⁸ John Matthews Manly, "Sir Thopas: A Satire," *Essays and Studies* 13 (1928): 60, quoted in Joanne A. Charbonneau, "Sir Thopas," in *Sources and Analogues of the Canterbury Tales*, ed. Robert M. Correale and Mary Hamel (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 650.

⁹ William Witherle Lawrence, "Satire in Sir Thopas," *PMLA* 50:1 (1935): 81. Lawrence references Lilian Winstanley on the van Artevelde theory. See also John A. Burrow, "Chaucer's *Sir Thopas* and *La Prise de Nueville*," *Yearbook of English Studies* 14 (1984): 52.

¹⁰ John M. Bowers, "Chaste Marriage: Fashion and Texts at the Court of Richard II," *Pacific Coast Philology* 30:1 (1995): 21.

views have been widely challenged.¹¹ Moreover, many of Chaucer's friends and possible readers were knights who might not have enjoyed the barb, though Jones does believe that the refined knights in Chaucer's circle would have been able to distinguish themselves from the soldier-of-fortune knight.¹² Haskell suggests that the poem is an extended joke where Thopas is metaphorically and literally a wooden puppet, as his saffron hair (VII.730) is compared to a dye, he rides "as he were wood" (774), and *Popering* sounds like *puppet*.¹³ Cohen posits that Sir Thopas is a harmless, sexually neutered avatar expiating Chaucer's guilt over raping Cecily Champagne.¹⁴ Like many psychoanalytical readings, evidence sometimes seems a superfluous detail.

Nevertheless, any of these readings could indicate valid background influences. Mitchell and Robinson politely comment on theories of interpretation regarding "The Wife's Lament" that "the only available curb to ever more ingenious speculations" is common sense.¹⁵ The difficulty in applying such advice to Chaucer is determining common sense while lacking the circumstances of *Thopas*' composition. Early critics concerned themselves with *Troilus and Criseyde* and not Chaucer's humor. At best, by the Restoration a sort of patronizing indulgence of his coarse wit prevailed, the sentiment that would move Matthew Arnold to praise him but accuse him of lacking "high

¹¹ Pearsall in particular feels that Chaucer views his Knight sympathetically, arguing that "it is an anachronistic modernism that makes of Chaucer's Knight a ruthless and cold-blooded mercenary killer." Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1992), 44.

¹² Terry Jones, *Chaucer's Knight: The Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary* (London: Methuen, 1980), 11.

¹³ Ann S. Haskell, "Sir Thopas: The Puppet's Puppet," *Chaucer Review* 9:3 (1975): 253-261.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Diminishing Masculinity in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*," in *Masculinities in Chaucer*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 153.

¹⁵ Mitchell and Robinson, 249.

seriousness.”¹⁶ Chaucer’s near-contemporaries saw *Thopas* as silly, but not as a “meta-romance” satirizing a specific literary form.¹⁷ French aristocrat Jean of Angoulême called it a *valde absurdum*, “an absurd quarrel.”¹⁸ Skelton writes in 1523, “But hyde the, sir Thopas, Nowe into the castell of Bas, And lurke there, like an as.” Olivia’s clown in *Twelfth Night* impersonates “Sir Topas the curate” (IV.iv.2), and another poet in 1611 refers to *Thopas* as “Chaucers jest.”¹⁹ Academics do not apply the term *burlesque* to the poem until the 1760s, and Sir Walter Scott is the first to call the poem a parody in his *Essay on Romance* in 1824.²⁰

Dane goes further to assert that eighteenth century critics did not so much develop the idea that *Sir Thopas* is a satire on medieval English romance as create it. Thomas Warton’s *History of English Poetry* (1774) locates the focus of Chaucer’s parody in *Thopas* in “discerning improprieties in books.”²¹ Chaucer’s intentions were “to ridicule the frivolous descriptions and other tedious impertinences”²² of the popular romances, and editors through Skeat generally assented to such an interpretation. Twentieth-century scholarship came to appreciate Chaucer’s humor but generally continued Warton’s

¹⁶ Matthew Arnold, “The Study of Poetry” (1880), in *Criticism: The Major Statements*, ed. Charles Kaplan (New York: St. Martin’s, 1986), 370.

¹⁷ Dane, 355.

¹⁸ Paul Strohm, “Jean of Angoulême: A Fifteenth-Century Reader of Chaucer,” *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72 (1971): 69-76.

¹⁹ Dane, 355.

²⁰ Hurd, 349.

²¹ Thomas Warton, *History of English Poetry* (1774), quoted in Dane, 345.

²² Warton quotes Richard Hurd, in a letter written in 1765. Quoted in Dane, 353.

argument that Chaucer parodies “the endless Middle English tail rhyme romances”²³ and mocks their “plot[s], characters, jog-trot rhythm, and verbal clichés.”²⁴ The emphasis switches entirely from Sir Thopas as a comic character to Chaucer’s satirical technique through his calculated sabotage of his own failed romance as an “explicit assessment of the genre.”²⁵ Pearsall calls the poem “brilliantly bad.”²⁶ Presumably, *Bevis* and *Guy* are cited to serve as representative examples of the romances’ hack writing.

Nevertheless, some recent scholarship has reappraised Chaucer’s tone. C.S. Lewis was prescient in 1936 in looking alarmingly at the tendency to assume parodic intent in an increasing number of tales and segments. *The Squire’s Tale* had long been read by some as ironic, but within the same century works as seemingly devout as *Melibee* and *The Knight’s Tale* would be given acerbic interpretations. Lewis fretted that “many of us now read into Chaucer all manner of ironies, slynesses, and archnesses, which are not there,”²⁷ much as Larry Benson has written in frustration about the tittering of critics who see every incidence of *queynte* as a sexual joke.²⁸ Chaucer likely intends some *myrthe* in the project, as ultimately a *Canterbury Tale* is ME slang for a lie.²⁹

²³ Thomas J. Garbaty, “Chaucer and Comedy,” in *Chaucer’s Humor: Critical Essays*, ed. Jean E. Jost (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), 93.

²⁴ Albert C. Baugh, *Chaucer’s Major Poetry* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 347, quoted in Dane, 346.

²⁵ Robert M. Jordan, “Chaucerian Romance?” *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974): 226.

²⁶ Pearsall, *Life*, 195.

²⁷ C.S. Lewis, “Chaucer,” in *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: University Press, 1936): 157-97.

²⁸ Larry D. Benson, “The ‘Queynte’ Punnings of Chaucer’s Critics,” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1984): 23-47.

²⁹ John Gardner, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (1978), quoted in John Michael Crafton, “Paradoxicum Semiotica,” in Jost, 163.

Nevertheless, he does not have “the waspish mind of Pope,”³⁰ and to view *The Canterbury Tales* as a cynical, nihilist joke offers the same lure the conspiracy theory does—it cannot be disproven—but it seems alien to what is known about Chaucer and his community. His biographical details and writings do not suggest the misanthropic bitterness of a Juvenal.

As some of the Victorian condescension toward humor and works lacking epic *gravitas* has faded, more recent studies have recaptured some of the fun of *Sir Thopas*. Jost sees in the poem “a birthday-party setting, jovial and childlike.”³¹ More sympathetic readings of oral and folkloric narrative have appeared, and there has been a stronger critical sentiment that Chaucer does not satirize English romances as a group but only bad ones. Both Manly and Loomis were careful to make the distinction that Chaucer is “not necessarily parodying romance as a thing in itself”³² or even specific texts, but creating a generalized comic depiction of the defects and extremes he saw in the format. Evidently Chaucer did not see all romantic tag-formulas as trite clichés, as otherwise questions rise about his own use of the “diction, formulaic conventions, and even compositional methods”³³ of romance in his ostensibly serious texts. There Chaucer appropriates phrases such as “sighed sore” (*Bevis* 1312, *Guy* 943, four times in the *Romaunt*, six times in *Troilus*) and “it befel upon a cas” (*Bevis* 1283, *CT* I.1074, *LGW* 1907).³⁴ Variations of

³⁰ Garbaty, “Chaucer and Comedy,” 81.

³¹ Jost, introduction to *Chaucer’s Humor*, xxv.

³² Loomis, “Sir Thopas,” 492.

³³ Charbonneau, 651.

³⁴ Edward R. Haymes, “Chaucer and the English Romance Tradition,” *South Atlantic Bulletin* 37:4 (1972): 38. Haymes believes it unlikely that Chaucer coincidentally translates these poetic formulas from French

the formula “leof ne looth” (“friend or foe”) appear in *CT* I.1837 and *BD* 8, but the expression goes back as far as *Beowulf*—“ne leof ne lað” (511).³⁵

The conclusion that Chaucer intends at least a gentle Horatian laugh on certain romances does seem unavoidable. Magoun identifies numerous narrative parallels between *Thopas* and *Lybeaus*,³⁶ but the parodic element shines most clearly in the many borrowings from *Guy of Warwick*, which are often narrative but are occasionally directly textual, as Strong cites:

Guy
In this world is man non
That ogaines him durst gon,
Herl, baroun, no knight (1771-3)

Thopas
For in that contree was ther noon
That to him dorste ryde or goon
Neither wyf ne childe (804-6)³⁷

The correspondence is close, but in the latter is made ridiculous by Sir Thopas being an object of fear only to women and children. Equally, Chaucer sees *Guy*'s repetition of equine terms such as *pricking*, used forty times in the text, and repeats it *ad nauseum* in *Thopas*, eight times in 84 lines.³⁸ Chaucer the pilgrim similarly beats down the adjective *fair* to joke at what Chaucer the poet perhaps sees as an impoverished romance lexicon, even employing it as Thopas runs away (830). Nevertheless, the parody seems scattershot, as Chaucer also borrows images and text from such un-romantic sources as biblical

sources as many are alliterative. See also Albert C. Baugh, “Improvisation in the Middle English Romance,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 103:3 (1959): 418-454.

³⁵ Haymes, 38-9.

³⁶ Francis P. Magoun, Jr., “The Source of Chaucer’s Rime of Sir Thopas,” *PMLA* 42:4 (1927).

³⁷ Caroline Strong, “Sir Thopas and Sir Guy II” *Modern Language Notes* 23:4 (1908): 108.

³⁸ Strong, “Sir Guy II,” 103. Whether Chaucer intends the modern double entendre on *prick* is unclear but improbable. Its first usage with a sexual meaning is recorded in 1450 (MED), and likely no one was laughing at the devotional *Prick of Conscience* (1340). See also Benson, “Queynte,” who notes that when the clerk John in the *Reeve’s Tale* “pricketh harde and depe” (4231) the word has a humorous sexual nuance only in context and not based on a recognized secondary meaning (26).

scripture. The giant slinging rocks comes straight from the David and Goliath narrative in I Samuel 17, although “staf-slynge” (829) is first recorded in *Richard Coeur de Lion* (5226), also in Auchinleck.³⁹

Yet still the only two critical choices are whether Chaucer pokes fun at English romance as a whole or merely the worst literary failings of substandard texts within the genre. Both arguments position works such as *Guy* and *Bevis* as negative examples against which the poem is a reaction, insisting that *Thopas* is knowingly and humorously bad because the English romances it parodies (or perhaps just *Guy* and *Bevis*) are also wretched. I would instead like to argue an opposite thesis: that Chaucer does not cite the worst romances but the best, in order to heighten the humorous effect when they are compared to the amusing failure of *Sir Thopas* as a romance. Thus the comic focus in the poem is on the knightly ineptness of Thopas and, by extension, Chaucer the pilgrim’s incompetence as a storyteller, and not on the romances cited, which serves to throw into greater and funnier contrast the difference between successful romances and the poverty of Chaucer’s attempt.

One of the chief impediments to this interpretation lies in the modern insistence that parody as a rule must be negative and to the object’s disadvantage. One avenue which may prove fruitful is Mikhail Bakhtin’s studies of carnival folk humor.⁴⁰ In *Rabelais and His World* (1965), Bakhtin asserts that public displays of comedy, from

³⁹ Laura A. Hibbard Loomis, “Sir Thopas and David and Goliath,” *Modern Language Notes* 51:5 (1936): 312.

⁴⁰ For a longer discussion of Chaucer and Bakhtin, see S.H. Rigby, *Chaucer in Context* (Manchester: University Press, 1996), 18-77, in Gillian Rudd, *The Complete Critical Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 169.

clowns and jugglers to oral and textual parodies of ceremonies and establishment values, are little documented but were a vital part of ecclesiastical and civic festivals in medieval Europe. Bakhtin sees an institution stretching from the Roman Saturnalias to modern holdovers such as Mardi Gras.⁴¹ While Punch and Judy do not appear in England until the Restoration, they continued a similar tradition of slapstick imbued with social commentary. Hanna similarly lists Maypole plays, Christmas mummings, and Corpus Christi pageants as celebrations in Chaucer's London,⁴² events which may have had informal and ephemeral components unrecorded by contemporary historians but permeated drama and secular literature.

A key attribute of Bakhtin's conception of folk humor is the sense of recreational and regenerative laughter. In contrast to Restoration and Victorian satire, "which was actually not laughter but rhetoric... No wonder it was compared to a whip or scourge,"⁴³ carnival humor was playful, often involving games where social rank was leveled or reversed, another inheritance from the Roman Saturnalias. A second is its inclusiveness. Like the angry partisan satire of American talk-show radio which derides the opposition, a Pope or Juvenal isolates and places himself above the object of scorn, whereas folk comedy also laughs at its author:

This is one of the essential differences of the people's festive laughter from the pure satire of modern times. The satirist whose laughter is negative places himself above the object of his mockery, he is opposed to it... The people's ambivalent

⁴¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press, 1984), 7-8.

⁴² Ralph Hanna, *London Literature 1300-1380* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 34-5.

⁴³ Bakhtin, 51.

laughter, on the other hand, expresses the point of view of the whole world; he who is laughing also belongs to it.⁴⁴

A third convention is that, while festive humor mocked state and ecclesiastical authority, it ironically “sanctioned the existing pattern of things and reinforced it,”⁴⁵ in effect reaffirming the dominant establishment by forming a tolerated inverse. Such bread-and-circus public expressions may have served as a useful safety valve for the grievances of the marginalized. The tradition also extended into clerical ranks. Bakhtin asserts that folk humor underlies “the entire recreational literature of the Middle Ages”⁴⁶ and he attributes considerable patience on the part of church and secular authorities, who indulged witty parodies of such artifacts as hymns and wills, council decrees, and debates, all “created and preserved under the auspices of the ‘Paschal laughter,’ or of the ‘Christmas laughter.’”⁴⁷ Bakhtin sees a line of humorous texts from ancient parodies of Latin grammar to Erasmus’ *In Praise of Folly* (1509) and such comic, earthy genres as the French fabliaux. Yet as an officially tolerated discourse it could be highly sophisticated and learned.

Bakhtin’s portrait of folk humor does suggest a certain amount of Marxist wish-fulfillment for the medieval era in Europe. His “carnival cult”⁴⁸ has been dismissed as a utopian simplification of the period. Comic wags who progressed from nonspecific tomfoolery into pointed criticism of individuals, or who shaded from theological

⁴⁴ Bakhtin, 12.

⁴⁵ Bakhtin, 9.

⁴⁶ Bakhtin, 13.

⁴⁷ Bakhtin, 14.

⁴⁸ Jennifer Wise, “Marginalizing Drama; Bakhtin’s Theory of Genre,” *Essays in Theatre* 8:1 (1989): 18.

playfulness into open heresy, might have seen their enterprise brought to a quick end. Rabelais himself would see his writings banned by church and state authorities. Jesters, the supposed epitome of festival comedy and foolishness, are depicted in literature with extraordinary liberties to buffoon even royalty, as does Lear's Fool who mockingly tells the king, "I am better / than thou art now: I am a fool, thou art nothing" (I.iv.715-6). Yet these are fictional characters, and Carlyon argues that the romantically subversive image of the jester "speaking truth to power" is an ahistorical fantasy: "Try to imagine Stalin, or Hitler honoring someone who attacked him with jokes."⁴⁹ The period did see Olivia's "allowed fool[s]" (I.v.94) in royal courts, but even Feste is careful to direct his sharpest barbs at those who are *not* in favor, such as Malvolio.⁵⁰

Yet this tradition of festive foolishness may have influenced English works as diverse as animal debate poems such as *The Owl and the Nightingale* (c. 1200) with its petty and comic quarreling and the *Tournament of Tottenham* (1400-30) with its slapstick humor and wedding finale. In Germany, Brand suffered no prosecution for his anticlerical satire *Ship of Fools* (1494). Even in the miracle and mystery plays of England, serious biblical narratives coexist with such stock comic types as Noah's henpecking wife who wants to leave the ark to put away the forks and knives (*Noah and His Wife*, 110) or *The Second Shepherd's Play* where a shepherd and his wife attempt to hide a stolen sheep in their crib for dinner, in a blasphemous parody of the Nativity, before viewing the newborn Christ child. No doubt the clergy intended some sugar with the homiletic

⁴⁹ David Carlyon, "The Trickster as Academic Comfort Food," *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 25:1/2 (2002): 14-15.

⁵⁰ Carlyon, 15.

medicine, but such scenes of alternating piety and lampoon were staged on church lofts and porches during festival occasions such as Corpus Christi Day,⁵¹ lending to their carnival moments.

If Chaucer can be seen as part of this literary tradition of festive humor, the import of *Thopas* is more easily recognized as laughing at Sir Thopas as a comic type. Chaucer's main joke is Thopas' foppish effeminacy, a fertile and ancient trope. The description of this "incredible shrinking knight"⁵² is hopelessly metrosexual with a face of *payndemayn*, dainty white bread, and lips like roses, everything that a "doughty swain" (*CT* VII.724-6) should not be. He rides out lightly armed, as "perhaps a full suit of armor would hide his good looks,"⁵³ and he must climb into his saddle (797) rather than mounting his steed. The woods forebode with wild beasts, "bothe bukke and hare" ("both deer and rabbits!" 756). Danger finally looms in the form of Olifaunt, who merely menaces Thopas' horse (812), threatening him with "the inconvenience of having to walk home."⁵⁴ Thopas' valiant response is to ask the giant if he can come back the next morning and then to flee, and that evening his preparation for battle consists mostly of music and "sweets for the sweet,"⁵⁵ gingerbread and licorice treats, rather than sober armament. On the field itself he has a warhorse which "gooth an ambil in the way / ful

⁵¹ Thomas J. Garbaty, *Medieval English Literature* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), 861.

⁵² Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Diminishing Masculinity in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*," in *Masculinities in Chaucer*, ed. Peter G. Beidler (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 144.

⁵³ Craig A. Berry, "Borrowed Armor/Free Grace: The Quest for Authority in *The Faerie Queene I* and Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*," *Studies in Philology* 91:2 (1994): 156.

⁵⁴ Cohen, 146.

⁵⁵ Alan T. Gaylord, "Chaucer's Dainty 'Dogerel': The 'Elvyssh' Prosody of *Sir Thopas*," in Jost, 279.

softely and rounde” (885-6). The joke barbs romances but chiefly plays on Thopas’ ridiculous unfitness as a knight.

Part of the comic element is Thopas’ implicit sexual inadequacy. Naming a knight after a pale gemstone certainly lacks the virile connotation of a *Hrothulf* or *Wulfgar*, but subtler meanings may also apply to Thopas’ appellation. Loomis posits that Chaucer borrows the name *Thopas* from a French poem by Watriquet de Couvin, who praises the Constable of France as “la jemme et la topase,”⁵⁶ but most critics agree that the name simply reflects medieval traditions identifying the topaz with chastity.⁵⁷ Thopas himself, like the “litel clergeon” whose tale precedes his, is as sexless as the popes and cardinals he asks for tales about (849), the last people who ought to be in romances. Seemingly unable to confront the maids who “moorne for hym paramour” (742), Thopas’ desire surfaces in his frothing steed which must be ‘pricked,’ but the scene ends with the horse exhausted and an erotic dream of an elf-queen who never appears.⁵⁸ Despite the over-elaborate details of his arming, Thopas seems to have nothing on (or in) his pants. There is a sheath (876) but no spurs or sword,⁵⁹ merely a *launegay*, a flaccid costume lance. His spear is made of cypress, a softwood which hardly “bodeth were” (882).

⁵⁶ Watriquet de Couvin, “Dit du Connestable de France,” quoted in Loomis, “*Sir Thopas*,” 493.

⁵⁷ Woodburn O. Ross, “A Possible Significance of the Name Thopas,” *Modern Language Notes* 45:3 (1930): 172-174. Not everyone agrees. For a discussion of alternative theories of the meaning of Thopas, see Charbonneau, 655. Charbonneau also notes that *Richard Couer de Lion* and *Il Filocolo* have characters named Topaz, but both are women (655).

⁵⁸ Berry, 155-6.

⁵⁹ In comparison, even the Wife of Bath wears sharp spurs (CTI.473). See also Irving Linn, “The Arming of Sir Thopas,” *Modern Language Notes* 51:5 (1936): 310. Linn notes that “in degrading an unworthy knight the symbolic action consisted in depriving him of sword and spurs” (310).

The role of the giant is additionally important. Giants often psychologically embody sexual menace, and in Monmouth's *Historia* the giant both symbolizes sexual assault and literally rapes the heroine.⁶⁰ The giant may also represent the hero's own moral temptations, and Cohen asserts that "the hero defeats the monster and decapitates him and then publicly displays the severed head in a ritual that announces to the world that he has conquered his own dark impulses."⁶¹ Here Thopas seemingly has no impulses at all, and any sexual drama is punctured by Olifaunt's easy comment that the elf-queen is not in prison in peril of ravishment but relaxing comfortably:⁶² "heere is the queene of Fayerye / with harpe and pipe and symphonye" (814-5). To make matters worse, Thopas still impotently fails to master the giant's shrunken threat.

Structurally, the arc of the joke lays in the audience's expectations of romance conventions which are repeatedly and comically disappointed. The stock structures of romance, such as the adventure quest, the love interest, the threatening monster, are all present and promising but collapse in laughter: "it is the non-functional display of rituals which generates the parodic humor, not simply the rituals themselves."⁶³ Thopas sleeps outside, a risky self-exposure to peril in both *Sir Orfeo* and *Launfal*, and expresses a yearning for adventure and action, but even danger ignores him. He wishes to appear

⁶⁰ Cohen, 150. For a fuller discussion of the sexual menace and gender implications of giants, see Cohen's introduction to his book *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University Press, 1997).

⁶¹ Cohen, "The Giant of Self-Figuration: Diminishing Masculinity in Chaucer's *Tale of Sir Thopas*," in *Giants*, 103. Cohen's chapter is an extension of the Beidler version.

⁶² Cohen, 149.

⁶³ John Finlayson, "Definitions of Middle English Romance I," *Chaucer Review* 15:1 (1980): 47.

aristocratic, but wears clothing priced in janes, an insignificant Genoese coin,⁶⁴ and he swears on bread and ale (872), humble fare lacking any elevated significance. His attempts to win love and *lof* through heroic deeds of courage take place without any community of family, ladies, or warriors to witness them, “stranding him on an empty stage where his rushing about looks absurdly autonomous.”⁶⁵ Nevertheless, *Sir Thopas* does not mock romances any more than the *Nun’s Priest’s Tale* mocks epics or medieval rhetoric. Rather, the poem amusingly violates the expectations of a poetic register. Chaucer dramatically builds the heroic tenor by saying that Thopas “koude hunte at wilde deer / and ride an haukyng for river” (736-7) and then collapses it with “therto he was a good archeer” (739), a pedestrian skill fit only for yeomen. The reader is led to expect wild beasts and gets rabbits.

In the same manner, Bevis, Guy, and Lybeaux are held up as ideals against whom Thopas looks ridiculously inadequate. Chaucer makes the comparison additionally risible by claiming that Thopas “bereth the flour / of roial chivalry!” (901-2) rather than those other heroes. The obvious incredibility of the praise makes both Thopas and the storyteller look foolish and produces laughter. Throughout the poem, Chaucer overlays an additional comic dimension in that the audience sees Chaucer the narrator’s “drasty rymyng” while being aware that the pilgrim-narrator also represents the master-poet writing the tale. The reader or auditor again expects something different and instead, to humorous effect, hears a story so intolerable to the other pilgrims that it is “marked as a

⁶⁴ Haskell, 255.

⁶⁵ Susan Crane, *Gender and Romance in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales* (Princeton: University Press, 1994), 29.

public failure, put down and shut off by that Master of High Seriousness, Harry Bailly,”⁶⁶ who tells his own creator, “Sire, at o word, thou shalt no lenger ryme” (932).

Such an identification depends on the problematic assumption that the narrator is Chaucer.⁶⁷ The Ellesmere manuscript places a portrait of Chaucer beside the ending of *Sir Thopas* (f. 153v), but this is a later artistic interpretation. The Man of Laws states that he has no tale that “Chaucer, thogh he kan but lewedly / on metres and on rymyng craftily” (CT II.47-8) has not already said. He adds that Chaucer has already told more tales of lovers than Ovid, breaking the fourth wall by referring to Chaucer the poet, but this is not necessarily Chaucer the pilgrim. Pearsall quotes Henry Miller, who once dispelled any mystery by saying about a critic, “If he means the narrator, then it’s me,” arguing that the performative Chaucer is concurrent with and fluidly shades into the man,⁶⁸ rendering such concerns misplaced. If the gap between Chaucer and his fictional representation is minimal or nonconsequential, *Thopas* also participates in the second aspect of Bakhtin’s folk humor, its self-inclusiveness. In the carnival atmosphere of general laughter everyone, including Chaucer, is part of the spectacle. As a subtle dig, Chaucer the poet even intensifies the Host’s condescension toward himself in the Prologue to the poem by sarcastically using the rarified stanza form of rime royal.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Gaylord, “Dogerel,” 271.

⁶⁷ Strohm reminds us that Chaucer’s addressed audience, let alone Chaucer’s representation of himself as narrator, are “ways of orienting discourse” and are constructed, fictional entities which may or may not correspond to real ones. Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 62.

⁶⁸ Henry Miller, quoted by Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1961), 367, in Pearsall, *Life*, 87.

⁶⁹ Martin Stevens, “The Royal Stanza in Early English Literature,” *PMLA*, 94 (1979): 73, quoted in Judith Tschann, “The Layout of *Sir Thopas* in the Ellesmere, Hengwrt, Cambridge Dd.4.24, and Cambridge Gg.4.27 Manuscripts,” *Chaucer Review* 20:1 (1985): 7.

Chaucer's self-deprecating portraits of himself serve multiple purposes. His physical depiction of himself as diminutive but "in the waast is shape as wel as I" (700) performs the comic type of the roly-poly short man. Such a portrayal also builds sympathy with an audience, just as Saint Paul, by tradition an unappealing man, calls his appearance "unimpressive" (2Cor. 10:10). Chaucer's protestations that he is a *lewed* man may be *pro forma* statements but additionally serve as poetic insurance, in that he can forestall audience criticism by positioning himself as a mere reporter and not responsible for flawed or morally dubious content. This limited omniscience where Chaucer can always back away by adding "I gesse" is a fictional guise not only humorous but consistent with Chaucer's real-life inclination to avoid provoking his more secure betters. But most significantly, there is a playful sense of absurdity in making Chaucer a put-upon victim, for wherever he goes he is

treated with impatience by the Black Knight, lectured to by an Egle, yanked out of bed and shoved hither and yon by the Noble Roman Africanus, condemned to talk about endlessly faithful women by the God of Love, and finally told to shut up by the Host of the Tabard Inn.⁷⁰

Yet the *Canterbury Tales* is different as Chaucer the narrator is not a detached dreamer-observer but shares in the communal humor of the pilgrim entourage, being bumped and verbally jostled as much as the others.

However, matters are still more complicated. Like Chinese boxes, Chaucer's seeming jokes-within-jokes can be fascinating and frustrating. Above the level of the humor of Thopas' foppish impotence and Chaucer the narrator-poet's self-deprecation is

⁷⁰ Garbaty, "Chaucer and Comedy," in Garbaty, 95.

his relationship to Harry Bailly. The storytelling in *Thopas* has been described as “a masterful display of incompetence,”⁷¹ in effect Chaucer’s parody on himself as a poet too inept to tell a satisfactory story. Kimpel asserts that *Thopas* loses force if the narrator is “deliberately rather than unintentionally funny,”⁷² yet the joke is perhaps not ruined but doubled if Chaucer actually teases the Host by giving him exactly what he asks for, “a tale of myrthe” (706) with no substance. Tschann notes that Chaucer the pilgrim follows *Thopas* with *Melibee*, a story of a dutiful and virtuous wife totally unlike Harry’s harridan Goodelief, a needling which he can only impotently grouse about,⁷³ as Chaucer has only followed orders in giving a prose story of no mirth, all sentence. Nevertheless, these are not vindictive flytings directed at Harry any more than Chaucer intends to savage the Prioress with a tale of her sissyish *litel clergeon* as an effeminate knight. No other lines suggest that he intends more than a gentle jest on the Host. Harry may be impolite, but he tends to be most rough and ready among those he feels most comfortable with as equals.⁷⁴

If the comic element is not Chaucer the narrator’s incompetence as a storyteller but rather his knowing and humorous reply to Harry’s demand for “som deyntee thyng” (711) to follow the somber mood after the Prioress’ tale, the dynamics of *Sir Thopas* change. The humorous effect no longer derives solely from the narrator’s bungling obliviousness to *Thopas*’ and his story’s vapid banality, but also in Chaucer’s subtle joke

⁷¹ Tschann, 7.

⁷² Ben Kimpel, “The Narrator of the Canterbury Tales,” *ELH* 20:2 (1953): 84.

⁷³ Lawrence, 90.

⁷⁴ Pearsall, *Life*, 247. Pearsall points out that Bailly is a tavern-owner but was also a member of parliament. Thus he perhaps is entitled to be more familiar with Chaucer the pilgrim (247).

on the Host. The poem's exposition returns full circle to the assertion that Chaucer tells a deliberately wretched tale. Yet the target is changed, as the intent is not a parody of romances but a mockery of Harry's glib request. The joke is driven home by Harry missing the point and responding angrily to the content and form of the tale rather than its intent. Chaucer the pilgrim thus joins in the holiday bantering of the others by exchanging another humorous requital. In effect Chaucer has his cake and eats it too, comically giving himself a self-deprecating portrait of a harassed *popet*, who can also banter back with a tale that turns out to be no ham-fisted pastiche, but the product of a skilled poet in firm control.

A final dimension of *Sir Thopas* which may serve to support this argument is the disconnect between its content and its metrical construction. Much of the earlier criticism of Thopas has assumed that the two were stylistically coterminous, that the muddle of rhyme schemes, lacking "any discernible principle of arrangement,"⁷⁵ is in keeping with the inanity of the narrative. Even the new *Sources and Analogues* (2005) of the *Canterbury Tales* simply assumes "paralyzingly bad meter."⁷⁶ A closer examination shows a more knowing and sophisticated touch. Chaucer draws attention to the stanza form by jumping from rime royal in the Prologue, the only link in *CT* not in rhymed couplets, to various couplet and tail-rhyme forms in the tale.⁷⁷

That Chaucer wants the audience to pay attention to the meter also seems clear from the unique arrangement of line groupings on early manuscripts of the poem such as

⁷⁵ John Matthews Manly, "The Stanza-Forms of *Sir Thopas*," *Modern Philology* 8:1 (1910): 144.

⁷⁶ Charbonneau, 712.

⁷⁷ Gaylord, "Dogerel," 272.

Ellesmere, where couplets are linked by brackets.⁷⁸ Chaucer displays some “careful mischief,”⁷⁹ varying the stanza form and employing bobs and filler lines for added comic effect: one line has Thopas vowing “how that the geaunt shal be deed / bityde what bityde!” (873-4), building drama and then crashing it down with an empty cliché.⁸⁰ The poetic art, often surprisingly elegant, comically contrasts Thopas’ banality and the tale’s inertia. Words suggesting immediacy and enjambed lines—“he dide next his white leere / of cloth of lake fyn and cleere” (857-8)— humorously give “the illusion of action where none is present.”⁸¹

The meaning of Chaucer’s poetic control here is to heighten the contrast between the elegiac tone of the poetry and the comically trivial story and protagonist. Harry not only misses the joke played on him but additionally fails to distinguish the two, complaining not about story but versification, the “rym dogerel.”⁸² Description and narrative reality are poetically and comically mismatched. The narrator’s insistence that Thopas’ clothes, armor, underwear, and gingerbread are universally *fyn*, and that his appearance, steed, and retreat from the giant all display “fair berynge” (832), is an implausibility only resolved in laughter.⁸³ The humor attains added poignancy from the

⁷⁸ For more detail, see Tschann, “Layout.” Tschann notes that this special bracketing layout is used in Ellesmere, Hengwrt, and Cambridge Dd.4.24 and Gg.4.27.

⁷⁹ Alan T. Gaylord, “The Moment of *Sir Thopas*: Towards a New Look at Chaucer’s Language,” *Chaucer Review* 16:4 (1982): 318.

⁸⁰ Gaylord, “Dogerel,” 280.

⁸¹ Walter Scheps, “Sir Thopas: The Bourgeois Knight, the Minstrel and the Critics,” *Tennessee Studies in Literature* 11 (1966): 37, quoted in Jost, introduction, xxv.

⁸² Gaylord, “Dogerel,” 273.

⁸³ Monty Python references come naturally to Chaucer, but the tale of Sir Robin in *Monty Python & the Holy Grail* (1975) comes closest to the same humorous effect of endlessly repeating counterfactual praise: “Brave Sir Robin ran away / Bravely ran away, away / When danger reared its ugly head / He bravely

sense that Chaucer the pilgrim intends the disparity, perhaps partly to goad the Host and partly to emphasize Thopas the character's comic failure to achieve anything fitting the poetic register. To return to the citations of *Guy*, *Bevis*, *Lybeaux*, and other romances, the narrator consciously creates a heroic, dramatic stage for added contrast against his humorously insipid hero. These English romances are not negative examples of a parodied genre but idealized ones casting the carnival frivolity of *Thopas*' mood into heightened relief.

To summarize, while Chaucer defies simplification in his objectives and motives, he likely used the Auchinleck manuscript as broad source materials for *The Tale of Sir Thopas*. While he may have intended a carnival burlesque of the English romance genre and was "no doubt aware of its insufficiencies as well as its virtues,"⁸⁴ he wrote within a culture which enjoyed and would continue to read romances, or at least for an audience familiar with its markings. The references to romance texts in *Thopas*—*Child Horn*, *Ypotis*, *Bevis*, *Guy*, *Lybeaux*, *Plendamour*, and *Perceval*—are not there for mocking parody or to serve as representatively bad examples of the genre. Rather, they are perhaps the best English romances Chaucer knows, and they humorously juxtapose against the comic failure of *Sir Thopas* to match such standards, in a deliberately vacuous narrative perhaps meant to requite the Host's request for "Som deyntee thyng" (711) to follow the Prioress' heavy tone.

turned his tail and fled / Yes, brave Sir Robin turned about / And gallantly he chickened out / Bravely taking to his feet / He beat a very brave retreat / Bravest of the brave, Sir Robin!" "Brave Sir Robin," *YouTube*, accessed 2 October 2010, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZwuTo7zKM8>. Terry Jones states he actually was researching Chaucer during the film's production. "An Interview With Terry Jones," *IGN*, accessed 2 October 2010, <http://movies.ign.com/articles/474/474005p5.html>.

⁸⁴ Pearsall, *Life*, 75.

How nice it would be if Chaucer had a Bosworth in Adam Pinkhurst, someone who committed to posterity all the daily minutiae of his life—or if Chaucer had a blog.⁸⁵ While scholars would certainly appreciate knowing more about the life behind Chaucer’s poetics, such details would not fully illuminate us on his audience’s context or on how it would have interpreted *Sir Thopas* during the first seconds of hearing or reading the text. Lengthy academic arguments have a way of diluting humor, and for new students of Middle English romance *Thopas* risks becoming “a joke explained to death.”⁸⁶ Chaucer’s friends, living in that foreign past, perhaps recognized instantly and with delight what now requires longer explication.

⁸⁵ Brantley L. Bryant does just such a thing with his parody website “Geoffrey Chaucer hath a Blog,” 2 Oct. 2010, <http://houseoffame.blogspot.com>. In a running spat with John Gower, Chaucer gossips, “that wankere Gowere... kan be a drama queene in thre languages.”

⁸⁶ Cory James Rushton, “Modern and Academic Reception of the Popular Romance,” in Raluca L. Radulescu, and Cory James Rushton, ed. *A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2009), 166.

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