MARGINAL ANNOTATION IN MEDIEVAL ROMANCE MANUSCRIPTS:
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF THE GENRE

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Abstract

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The extra-textual apparatus of a manuscript is an important aspect of the presentation and organization of the text itself. Marginal annotation is a vital part of this apparatus: written by both scribes and readers, in Latin and England’s two vernaculars (French and English). In laying out their manuscripts, book producers offer direction to subsequent readers as to the aspects of the text worthy of particular notice. Those readers, in contributing their own notes, both immortalized their reading of the text and adapted it for future readers by supplying apparatus they considered to be wanting. Marginal notes in the romance, therefore, illuminate the genre, defining the most important, most noteworthy aspects, and helping to define our expectations both of the normative in romances’ organizational apparatus, and of romance notes as a dependent genre.

Romances were not typically annotated, but when they were, the annotators have sought their model in the somewhat richer tradition of Brut chronicle annotation. The apparent straightforwardness of romance notes, often summarizing or even quoting the
text, is belied by the complexity of the choices made by annotators in deciding what aspects of the text require annotation. Annotators seem to have viewed note-making as an educated activity – notes are as likely to be in Latin as in the English or Anglo-Norman of the texts themselves – and they appealed to a standard form and constellation of interests in the notes’ content. Notes were not provided as navigational aids to organize the manuscript, but were designed as guides to the reading of smaller, more digestible sequences or episodes. Conspicuous in the margins are names, of people, places and objects. Marvels also form an important aspect of the notes, suggesting both the centrality of the marvelous in the romance genre, and its importance to the medieval representation of history.
For my parents, Ceil and Jim
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INTRODUCTION

All books, medieval and modern, are collective endeavors, the products of the combined efforts of not just authors, but editors, publishers, printing-press technicians – or, in the medieval period, compilers, scribes, rubricators, binders and other craftsmen. Nor does the process end with the existence of the physical codex. Reading audiences create the book, too, the expectations and desires of paying customers or patrons exerting influence on the book-producers, and the participatory act of reading itself transforming words seen on the page, or words read aloud, into an interior mental experience that is, necessarily, unique to every reading individual. Sometimes readers may reinscribe this experience onto the page itself, recreating the book as physical object by the addition of their own words – comments, corrections, marks of emphasis or organization. In the medieval period, when an age of mechanical reproduction had not yet created an illusory expectation of identity between individual copies of the same text, the line between text and additional, paratextual accretion can be a fine one indeed. Every manuscript is necessarily unique, sometimes, no doubt, to the despair of conscientious medieval copyists. As we in the modern period move away from our own expectations of a single, authoritative text, attention has been turned more and more to these paratexts, as well as on the other creators of books, in their own collaboration with the author – collaborations both more and less formal, and both more and less recoverable by our searching eyes.
Marginal annotation is a body of paratext still relatively visible, even if its meaning and motivation may sometimes remain frustratingly and elusively opaque, demanding a painstaking analysis of patterns over large numbers of notes. In their evidence, however, we discover the direct testimony of authorial collaborators of all kinds, in notes written by scribes and other physical book-producers, and in the notes added later by readers. In all these individuals, we find members of medieval romance’s first, contemporary audience. This study interrogates that early audience through the evidence of such notes. The romance manuscripts of late medieval England are varied indeed, and their contents embrace a spectrum of subject matter from King Arthur to Alexander the Great, as well as a linguistic spectrum that includes all three of late medieval England’s major languages: English, French and Latin. Here the evidence offered by England’s romance annotation is laid out and analyzed, and the first audience for these texts comments on them directly, guiding us sometimes past what we might find important in the genre, but directing our gaze instead on what was, in the medieval period, considered noteworthy in a romance.

When we fix our attention on the paratexts of the romance genre, one of the first questions to spring forward is what this new body of information, this testimony from witnesses as yet not fully interrogated, may tell us about romance as a genre. Medieval romance, after all, is genre literature *par excellence*, reveling in an aesthetic of repetition and adaptation. Yet romance is a genre notoriously difficult to define, even as it persists in displaying certain consistent characteristics, and as such asserting its continuity and identity *as* a genre. As Northrop Frye observes, “the conventions of prose romance show
little change over the course of centuries, and conservatism of this kind is the mark of a stable genre”¹, one crying out, therefore, for some sort of working definition.

**The Genre of Romance**

Generic descriptions may be either historically-situated (the genre exists over a finite period of time, responding to a certain socio-cultural milieu, and displaying characteristics particularly relevant to that milieu) or pan-historical and universalizing, sketching out a broader trajectory in terms of fundamentals of theme or structure, as opposed to the specifics of form and content. So, in the more universalist strain, W. R. J. Barron seeks to understand romance in terms of mode, rather than genre, appealing to a taxonomy in which romance finds itself contrasted with the realist and the mythic, dealing with a hero who is superior, but not divine.² Derek Brewer, on the other hand, while assigning to romance a certain typical subject matter (“love and adventure, [and] more specifically, love and fighting”),³ prefers also to list a number of structural and thematic characteristics that together distinguish the genre descriptively if not proscriptively. These include such characteristics as a repetitious structure, a quest, a happy ending, a focus on the supernatural, and an emphasis on the secular over the spiritual.⁴ Piero Boitani, meanwhile, sees romance as appearing along a generic continuum, exhibiting certain general tropes (the supernatural, the law of *aventure,*


⁴ Ibid., 27–37.
disguise, etc.), but coming into relief more in its contrast from and relationship to other
genres, such as epic and folktale. Frye himself, similarly universalizing, approaches the
question of genre from a number of angles, but seems finally to site the nature of
romance in the fundamental contrast between romance and realism. On the side of
realism is an interest in the displacement of archetypes – for Frye, the very stuff of fiction
itself – onto particulars, in explaining these building blocks of fiction as the result of
natural events, of “logical” cause and effect. Romance, by contrast, finds its propulsion
in the movement upward from the plane of the ordinary to that of the universal, where the
problems of the individual are writ large as melodrama, “angels of light” versus “giants
of the dark.”

Such pan-historical views of genre are by no means, however, the only way of
approaching the question. In examining, for example, one of romance’s significant sub-
genres, the Breton lay, critics are invited by the more limited set of available examples, as
well as the regional specificity of that elusive word “Breton,” to fix the genre within a
more tightly circumscribed historical ground. Laura Hibbard Loomis launches the effort,
with her identification of the Auchinleck manuscript as the locus classicus of the lay
genre for Geoffrey Chaucer, perhaps the English Middle Ages’ most tantalizingly
slippery generic thinker. Loomis goes so far as to identify a characteristic “the Breton-
Lay Prologue” which could have acted by its very presence as a generic signifier, and

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7 Ibid., 183.

analyzes generic motifs like a “lady go[ing] in the Maytime into a fair garden where she is wooed by a most unwelcome suitor,” as signifying for Chaucer a generic standard that, while not universal, would have been a warmly receptive environment for the subject-matter of his *Franklin's Tale.* Angela Lucas, while rejecting the *Franklin’s Tale* as a true Breton lay, nevertheless accepts the underlying assumption of generic formation by the enumeration of the characteristic elements the tale does not include, or at any rate problematizes: the rash promise, the impossible task, and the love triangle all form specific plot devices that may function as generic signifiers. Lucas’s analysis is a deeply historically-situated one, seeking explanation for the nature of the genre in Marie de France’s adaptation of a musical, purely instrumental source material. By attempting to police the marches of a more strictly limited genre, critics like Loomis and Lucas identify genres as collections of distinctive structural forms and plot elements.

Hans Robert Jauss creates a compelling synthesis of the historically-limited and universalizing views of genre, emphasizing instead genre’s synchronic nature, after the model of linguistic studies. Genres, like a languages, only exist as networks or systems at snapshots in time: there is no pan-historic definition of “English,” “French,” or “German,” only a system of rules operative in particular synchronic arrangement. Diachronically, change is the rule, rather than stasis, and the grammatical “rules” for Modern English will be very different from those for Anglo-Saxon, while,

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9 Ibid., 25.


simultaneously, such “rules” are not proscriptive, but only subject to observation and description. Genre, meanwhile, is determined by “preliminary information and a trajectory of expectations [Erwartungsrichtung] against which to register [all] originality and novelty.” A text cannot function, generically, without “a preconstituted horizon of expectations […] ready at hand,” from which the more successfully artistic texts depart. Their departure, moreover, can sometimes be productive, actually shifting the network of expectations into a new relationship with its boundaries. Just such a “temporal process of the continual founding and altering of horizons” permits genre to change and shift over time, although not, critically, teleologically, as moving toward a fixed and perfected generic ideal:

[T]he genre’s prehistory is definable in terms of a trying and testing of possibilities; and its arrival at a historical end is definable in terms of formal ossification, automatization, or a giving-up or misunderstanding of the “rules of the game,” as is often found in the last epigones.

Genres can be born and they can die, or they can simply adapt, shifting function within a complex network of mixed genres, borrowing characteristics one from another in the transformations necessary for sustained relevance. The later audience of a work, furthermore, may reappropriate the forms and traits of a bygone genre to mean differently, within a new synchronic network. Genre, therefore, while it may mean

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12 Ibid., 79.

13 Ibid. Jauss’s own taxonomy of such expectations in the case of romance tends toward the structural, including such characteristics as a medial “Level of Style,” a “middle […] social status” in its characters, an initiative “Social Function” (ibid., 84–87).

14 Ibid., 94.

15 Ibid.
synchronously, also behaves diachronically, and situation within an extended tradition forms another axis of its network relevance.

All of these approaches to understanding genre, however, unanimously come at the issue from a modern perspective. They study the medieval works that we now classify as “romance” and either attempt to deduce a definition of the genre based on these examples, or alternatively demonstrate the impossibility of creating such a fixed definition, preferring instead to depict a sort of generic network, to which works may be more or less eccentric. As Jauss observes, “the history of genres [as he approaches it] also presupposes reflection on that which can become visible only to the retrospective observer.”¹⁶ Not only is hindsight twenty-twenty, but the view from within a synchronic system is necessarily myopic. The modern critic may describe and taxonomize, and it is only through such analysis that the “true” nature of a genre can be deduced.

For the genre theorist inhabiting the cultural milieu he hopes to study, however, such disappointment in his limitations may reflect an ideal of generic definition that may not, in the end, prove a realistic goal. Not one of these critics approaches head-on the question of the romance genre as it was understood by its contemporaries, including its authors.¹⁷ Contemporary readers and writers did not always share our modern ideas about the nature of the genre, and while their own theories of genre may prove to be as

¹⁶ Ibid.
¹⁷ Brewer, for example, expresses his discomfort with what he deems the “Neoclassical” notion of genre as a pan-historical universal, divorced from its specific historical context (“The Nature of Romance”). Nevertheless, to the extent that he accepts genre as an object of study, he still does so from the perspective of a modern generic taxonomy, rather than attempting to analyze contemporary ideas about these texts.
flawed as (or even more flawed than) our own, such theories nevertheless still contributed to the “horizon of expectation” that may continue to shape our modern definitions.

The simplest angle on such reception is a recourse to medieval terminology, to how contemporaries labeled their own genres. Such an approach is ultimately frustrating, however, foundering on the tendency for the term “romance,” like so many in the Middle Ages – or, indeed, if we are honest, in our own time – to shift in its reference. Not all those who used the term seem to have had the same understanding of its meaning. “Romance” can sometimes appear to be employed with a generic meaning, but at other times seems to refer more simply to any work written in the French, or “romance” language (this is, indeed, the etymological origin of the term). The Middle English Dictionary offers as its first definition of a *romaunce* “A written narrative of the adventures of a knight, nobleman, king, or an important ecclesiastic,” implying by this definition a focus on the subject matter, rather than the form as the defining generic characteristic, at least in the eyes of those 14th and 15th century writers employing the term.18 Yet Chaucer, when composing the *Tale of Sir Thopas*, clearly had a strong idea of what constituted a recognizable romance form, subject to parody. The “drasty speche”19 of *Sir Thopas* may be absurd, but it is also doubtless intended to recall the poetic verse form of the Middle English romances he imitates. The effectiveness of *Thopas* as parody depends largely on the identification of the genre with the formal


features he exaggerates.\textsuperscript{20} Insofar as Chaucer’s tale can be read as an indication of his own understanding of romance as an identifiable genre, and of his expectations regarding the similar understanding of his readers, it demonstrates that even in the medieval period, the idea of romance as a genre extended beyond the identification of vernacular language and a chivalric hero.

Paul Strohm, indeed, insists on the “purposefulness” of the medieval use of the term “romaunce” (as well as others such as “story,” “geste” and “lay), at least among “earlier writers.”\textsuperscript{21} Yet even he admits that “many medieval generic terms are stretched out of shape or otherwise misapplied in the fifteenth century,”\textsuperscript{22} and that the roots of the terminology in linguistic (rather than generic or content) reference create a continuum on which individual uses of the term are situated. We may identify a generic “purposefulness” within the confines of one of Jauss’s synchronic moments, but, thinking diachronically, too slavish a reliance on contemporary terminology is dangerous. Indeed, the generic claims made by the title of the *Roman de la Rose*, to name only one obvious example, confuse more than they illuminate. As Jauss observes, the *Rose* exists at a generic nexus, mixing characteristics of several genres, of which the dominant one is

\textsuperscript{20} These formal features are not limited to the singsong meter. Other characteristics include the fairy beloved, the somewhat aimless progress of the knight errant, and the enumeration of the hero’s arms. These too must be understood as generic signifiers.


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
better understood as encyclopedic, rather than “romance.”

Terminology can be a red herring.

Given this wide range in the application of contemporary labels, then, the best alternative seems to turn toward the texts themselves, on the search for the shifting features of our “horizon of expectation.” Eugène Vinaver, for example, adopts this approach, observing the interest romance writers had in the form which they gave to their material, in which these authors demonstrate a concern for crafting a product recognizably “romance” in its patterns of structure, a generic characteristic that was theorized (albeit vestigially) in its own time. Chrétien de Troyes speaks famously of the matière and san of his Chevalier de la Charrette as received from his patron, while his own contribution consists of setting that material into the particular narrative form he adopts. The role of the romanceur may be further theorized as that of conjointure, a

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23 Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic, 81. Other genres in the mix include satire, allegory and mysticism. Despite the courtly frame of Guillaume de Lorris’s original composition, Jauss does not even mention romance as a generic influence on Jean de Meun’s continuation, which he treats as a separate work.


25 “Del Chevalier de la charrette / Comance Crestiens son livre, / Matiere et san li done et livre / La contesse et il s’antremet / de panser, que gueres n’i met / Fors sa painne et s’antancïon,” “Chrétien begins his book about the Knight of the Cart; the subject matter [matière] and meaning [san] are furnished and given him by the countess, and he strives carefully to add nothing but his effort and careful attention (Chrétien de Troyes, Le Chevalier De La Charrette, Ou, Le Roman De Lancelot, trans. and ed. Charles Méla, Lettres Gothiques 4527 [Paris: Livre de Poche, 1992], lines 24–29; Chrétien de Troyes, Arthurian Romances, trans. William W. Kibler and Carleton W. Carroll [London: Penguin, 1991], 207). There has been considerable discussion of the precise meaning of these lines, both as to what Chrétien intended by matière and san, and as to what role, then, he is claiming to have reserved for himself. The most usual understanding of these lines, however, dates back to Gaston Paris, who viewed the matière and san as the subject matter and “esprit” of the work, respectively (“Études Sur les Romans de la Table Ronde: Lancelot du Lac: II. Le Conte de la Charrette,” Romania 12 [1883]: 534). Jean Frappier summarized this interpretation well, arguing that what then remains as Chrétien’s original contribution would be the manner of his expression, including, presumably, the poetic form (“Le Prologue du ‘Chevalier de la Charrette’ et son Interprétation,” Romania 93 [1972]: 337–377).

26 “Et trait [d’]un conte d’aventure / Une mout belle conjunture,” “and from a tale of adventure he [Chrétien] draws a beautifully ordered composition” (Chrétien de Troyes, Erec et Enide, trans. and ed.
similarly vexed term that can refer both to the joining together of disparate plot elements into a beautiful (bele) arrangement, or, through the Latin cognate iunctura, can be more closely associated with a “breaking,” arrangement by division.27 Vinaver, in identifying Chrétien as a key founder of the romance genre, then presumably sees the generic innovation as a formal one, separate from the matière and san of Arthurian subject matter or courtly/chivalric ideology, and sited instead in the conjointure. If such is the attitude of romance’s father in the description of his own generic progeny, it may behoove us to examine this form more closely, and Vinaver does so descriptively, with all the benefits of modern hindsight.

The beginnings of a medieval literary theory of romance, therefore, can be launched from romance authors’ own self-reflective words. Even more than this, however, we might return ad fontes not for analysis of the texts themselves as evidence of the generic impetus behind them, but in order to study more carefully the contemporary reception of these texts. There is much to be learned in the way authors constructed texts, but illuminating too is the manner in which readers dissected them.

*The Codicology of Romance: Examining the Manuscript Evidence*

Over the course of the last few decades, there has been a surge in the number of medievalists engaging directly with manuscript studies, plumbing the manuscript record for any clues about textual production and reception. These studies have take a number

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of different directions, examining different aspects of manuscripts as textual artifacts, for many different approaches to the questions of literary affiliation and meaning. Much of the work in the romance genre so far has focused on the choice of texts to include in the manuscript, as scholars attempt to characterize the major preoccupations of readers based on the portrait of them that emerges from their books.

Such studies begin with the methods of manuscript production and manufacture, as they apply to the late medieval literary manuscripts in which we find most extant Middle English romance. Phillipa Hardman’s classic article “A Mediaeval Library In Parvo” is foundational for this, setting out the model for the creation of miscellanies through the assembly of individually produced booklets.\(^{28}\) A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall go even further, in their contribution to an important collective volume on Book Production and Publishing in late medieval Britain. They describe a full professional system of bookshops which they argue emerged around 1400, in which books were copied not, as they had been in monastic scriptoria, exclusively from a single exemplar, but from a variety of different sources, assembled according to the particular needs and desires of the individual customer.\(^{29}\)

Analysis of the choices made in the selection of texts, and frequently, of booklets, may therefore offer insight both into the character of the individual compiler, and also into the way these texts were perceived as functioning together. Studies of this type include, for example, David Parker’s examination of a series of commonplace books, the


commonplace book being by definition a “discernibly personal selection and combination of texts,” and thus reflecting the interests of a single, amateur creator, with particular tastes and concerns, whether literary, financial, or political.\textsuperscript{30} Susan Crane attempts a similar analysis on a national scale, contrasting the types of romances popular in England with those in France, and drawing conclusions from this on the national preferences these choices reflect.\textsuperscript{31} Meanwhile, romances themselves can also be adapted to fit the preferences and preoccupations of individual readers, by altering what version of a particular text is employed, what portions are cut out, and how the text itself is altered to create certain impressions. Alison Wiggins’s study of Guy of Warwick provides a good example of the way in which the conditions of assembly and availability of certain texts within the bookshop itself may also offer clues to the character and concerns of the manuscript’s compiler.\textsuperscript{32}

One of Wiggins’s important observations about the Guy compiler is his drive for completeness, for the repair of a defective text by consulting more than one source: his process is not one of seamless integration, but of accretion. This highlights, however, one of the practical challenges faced by this, and other, manuscript compilers. The Guy compiler overcomes the challenge, but accidents of exemplar availability would have been a constant pressure, steering text selection beyond the straightforward intent or best


intentions of even the best-connected of compilers. John Thompson laments such dilution of thematic or organizational intent as well, in his study of British Library, Add. 31042 (the so-called “London Thornton”) compiled by Robert Thornton.\(^3^3\) Thornton sometimes exhibits thematic continuity and juxtaposition in his choice of texts, but at other times adds texts apparently according to their availability and the amount of parchment remaining in existing quires. The most Thompson is able to say of this process is that it is “not always entirely haphazard,” a rather dampening warning against reading too much into accidents of text-selection.\(^3^4\) Thompson and Julia Boffey jointly explore this situation more fully, as it applies to the world of commercial book production in Britain. They use the model laid out by Edwards and Pearsall as the jumping-off point for their exploration of the market for English-language poetry in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but add an important caveat. Due to the prefabricated nature of the booklets, while the ultimate owner would have controlled the composition of his new miscellany, this control would have been balanced by the restrictions imposed by choosing from a set of premade booklets.\(^3^5\) Buyers would be influenced in their choices by the availability of texts, and would sometimes be in the position of purchasing a duplicate or unwanted text, simply because it was bundled together with another, desired text. Other scholars also urge similar brakes on too-ambitious attempts to


\(^3^4\) Ibid., 64.

psychoanalyze the individual compiler, based on the composition of the manuscript, and the sum total of these critical works is to sketch out a system in which texts in the late medieval period are capable of circulating as independent units, but in which practical considerations of availability and production prohibit a universally transparent connection between the preferences of the creator(s) of a manuscript and the texts it carries.

The choice and juxtaposition of texts is not, however, the only way of approaching contemporary attitudes toward romance. Manuscript layout, in all its guises, is evidence for the ways that the scribes and illustrators setting up the texts understood the way that romances functioned within their codicological environment, both as they interacted with other texts, and in their internal structure. The illustration of romances, for example, can be an important entryway into these issues. Cotton Nero A.x, containing the works of the *Pearl* or *Gawain*-poet (so-called after his two longest and most important works, *Pearl* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*) is a fascinating case study in a manuscript unremarkable for its lavishness, but showing evidence nonetheless of an ambition, at least, toward the beauty of an art object, even if that ambition was not fully realized. The very fact that Nero A.x contains illustrations at all – and it has twelve, either full-page or nearly full-page – is a gesture toward the creation in the

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37 See Israel Gollancz, ed., *Pearl, Cleanness, Patience and Sir Gawain: Reproduced in Facsimile from the Unique MS. Cotton Nero A.x in the British Museum*, EETS 162 (London: Oxford University Press, 1923). The dating of Cotton Nero A.x and, especially, its illustrations, is not an issue untouched by controversy. Still, the manuscript seems to have been written c. 1375-1400, and the illustrations were added somewhat later, perhaps roughly 1400-1420.
manuscript of a visually beautiful treasure. Early critical assessment of the illustrations as clumsy and without value, however, is not without foundation in the pictures’ awkward execution, and has only recently given way toward more positive valuations, by Jennifer Lee, among others, of the pictures as an important part of the manuscript’s initial conception.\textsuperscript{38} Maidie Hilmo, meanwhile, sees the illustrations as indicative of a complex program of reading for the manuscript as a whole, fully integrating \textit{Gawain} into the larger context of a religious pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{39} In her analysis, the pilgrim character of everyman, or the soul, progresses toward reintegration with what is within \textit{Gawain} the society of the Arthurian Court, but what visually becomes also the heavenly court and the symbolic Jerusalem. Hilmo, that is, turns to illustrations as a method of understanding how the texts within a single codex work together: the pictures both tell their own story and tie together all the manuscript’s texts into a single, unified narrative of pilgrimage and salvation, and one in which a romance (\textit{Gawain}) performs work alongside and toward the same iconographic and ideological end as texts like \textit{Pearl}, \textit{Cleanness} and \textit{Patience} – themselves generically very different.

The \textit{Gawain}-poet, whose works function together remarkably well as a unified corpus, and whose works survive, moreover, in a single manuscript not far removed from the original context of their composition, may seem to verge on a special case. But an


attention to the role of illustration in manuscripts yields fruits in the works of other authors, as well. In her book *Sealed in Parchment*, Sandra Hindman walks through the illustrations in various manuscripts of Chrétien’s romances, and sees these illustrations working together to further a particular thematic agenda.\(^{40}\) In some manuscripts, they emphasize the importance of the individual knight and his journey of personal development, while in others, the illustrations foreground the role of the king as dispenser of justice and central authority. Hindman suggests that these distinctions may be understood in terms of the preoccupations of owners, with the manuscripts emphasizing kingship, for example, being centered around royal libraries. Manuscript producers, influenced by the preoccupations of their customer base, present the romances in a particular way, providing an endorsed meaning for the text as, for example, supporting an ideology of royal centralization.

Not all apparatus of layout is, however, purely pictorial. Murray Evans begins to analyze the textual as well, in his book *Rereading Middle English Romance*.\(^ {41}\) He makes a study of decorative elements and elements of *ordinatio*,\(^ {42}\) including titles, large initials, *incipits* and *explicit*, in an effort to determine whether there was a particular “romance style” of layout, by which it might be possible to determine whether a text was considered generically a romance. He concludes that, while many of the decorative

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elements are similar to those found in texts representing other genres, and while there is of course considerable variation to muddy the waters, romances can indeed be seen to have, on average, a larger number of these decorative elements, indicating the perception on the part of scribes and bookmakers that this genre merited a certain specific visual treatment, with a greater foregrounding of the division and subdivision of the text. A subdivision of the text was seen, by the fourteenth century, as one of the tasks proper to the compiler, and this attitude, expressed by the use of the decorative elements Evans examines, was enthusiastically adopted by scribes copying romances.\(^{43}\)

Evans’s study, moreover, brings us to the precipice of the issue in question: marginal annotation in romance manuscripts. Focusing as he does on decorative elements, titles, *incipits* and *explicit*, Evans may perhaps distort the picture. A fuller treatment, including other aspects of *ordinatio* like marginal annotation, alters significantly the portrait Evans paints. Still, his core methodology, a quantification of the amount of attention shown by scribes to issues of layout and subdivision within the romance text (as well as on the larger level of the romance’s presentation within the codex) represents an important stride forward in the understanding of how book producers framed romances, and, consequently, how contemporary audiences read them. In order to understand fully all aspects of manuscript layout and the evidence they have to offer about the nature of romance as a genre, it is necessary to examine what contemporary audiences, as they are represented both by scribes and readers, have told us about their reading of these texts, frequently *during* their reading of these texts. Marginal

\(^{43}\) Evans, *Rereading Middle English Romance*, esp. 3–7.
annotation is a rich territory for manuscript study, and one which, in the genre of romance at least, has not been wholly colonized, nor even fully explored.

Reading Marginalia

Murray Evans, in examining elements of manuscript ordinatio, draws on the extremely influential essay by Malcolm Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of Ordinatio and Compilatio on the Development of the Book.” There, Parkes lays out the connection between the ordinatio of the text and the new style of reading introduced in the thirteenth century with the emergence of scholasticism:

The monastic lectio was a spiritual exercise which involved steady reading to oneself, interspersed by prayer, and pausing for rumination on the text as a basis for meditatio. The scholastic lectio was a process of study which involved a more ratiocinative scrutiny of the text and consultation for reference purposes. The two kinds of reading required different kinds of presentation of the texts, and this is reflected in changes in features of layout and in the provision of apparatus for the academic reader. For this reason it seems to me that from the twelfth century onwards developments in the mise-en-page of texts were bound up with developments in methods of scholarship and changes in attitude to study.

The key here is accessibility, “mak[ing] inherited material available in a condensed or more convenient form.” Ordinatio is for Parkes the method by which bookmakers organize the text to, in his words, “divide and subordinate” the work as a whole, offering the reader a guide for navigating the text. This can be done through a variety of

45 Ibid., 127.
46 Ibid., 129.
methods, including the subdivision of the text into sections marked by capitulum marks, large initials, and even illustrations (those aspects studied by Evans), as well as through the introduction of marginal notes marking further subdivisions, cross-references to other works through source citation, or, as Parkes himself emphasizes, tables of contents and indices. The inclusion of such apparatus may seem at first a basic or uninteresting aspect of book design, but can nevertheless have extremely important implications for the nature of reading. To name only one example, Paul Saenger connects the development and wholesale adoption of many of these techniques with the innovation of spaces between words, and the accompanying shift toward silent reading in the twelfth century. A corresponding shift in practice transformed reading from a public activity to a private and meditative one, focused above all on the visual appearance of the page. An apparatus like this, after all, is only functional if the reader can see it.

These developments are, of course, by no means proscriptive, and were not intended to create one-size-fits all methods of organization. On the contrary, Parkes notes that “Thirteenth-century scholars saw different fields of study as autonomous branches of knowledge, each with its own appropriate mode of procedure,” and ordinatio was deliberately fashioned to respect these differences. But the influence of these new techniques was wide, and began to creep into other areas, including vernacular literary texts, which were not necessarily intended to be read in the full scholastic mode. Parkes in particular highlights the underlining or other emphasis of proper names in the


manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* and *Brut* chronicles. He contends, furthermore, that the *Canterbury Tales*, in particular as it appears in the Ellesmere manuscript, may be seen as a full literary mock-up of *ordinatio* in the service of compilation, with Chaucer presenting himself as the pilgrims’ compiler (rearranging, that is, but not otherwise modifying or supplementing their words), and the manuscript itself facilitating navigation by marginal “sources and topics,” “the word ‘auctor’ [...] alongside a sententious statement,” “full rubrics,” running titles and illustrations of the pilgrim narrating each tale, “to assist the reader to identify them with the General Prologue.” Such an interpretation does not, of course, capture the totality of Chaucer’s project in the *Tales*, but the author’s engagement with the concept of compilation is evidence of the breadth of its appeal.

Malcolm Parkes’s terminology, while an extremely powerful and widely influential tool for understanding book layout and textual apparatus, and a major jumping-off point for subsequent studies of these issues, has not gone wholly unchallenged. Richard and Mary Rouse offer a valuable counterpoint to Parkes’ essay, attempting to put a brake on the (over)use of the term *ordinatio* in modern scholarship, emphasizing the lack of medieval precedent for using the term in Parkes’ technical

49 Ibid., 134.

50 Chaucer is called a “compiler,” not an “author” in the final Ellesmere rubric: “Heere is ended the book of the tales of Cauterbury, compiled by Geffrey Chaucer...” (Benson and Robinson, *Riverside*, 328). Even if this label is judged to have been supplied by the scribe rather than by Chaucer himself, Parkes finds within the General Prologue further engagement with the terminology of both *ordinatio* and *compilator* in Vincent of Beauvais (“*Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*,” 130–131). See Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, I.727–736.
sense. While Parkes has chosen a Latin term, with the implicit suggestion that his characterization of these layout techniques is in fact drawn from contemporary (Latin) theorization of the subject, *ordinatio* was not in fact a widespread term in the period. Rouse and Rouse seek to free *ordinatio* from the strict association Parkes draws between these organizational techniques and the university schools of the thirteenth century, drawing attention to the previous, longstanding tradition of both *ordinatio* and *compilatio*, for which the universities merely provided a new and enthusiastic audience. If it is remembered, however, that *ordinatio* is largely a modern theoretical construct, it remains a powerful term, a useful way of referring collectively to all the methods scribes have at their disposal for the organization of a text. Alternatives such as “layout,” which carries connotations of graphic design, without addressing, for example, the content of annotations, seem inadequate to the task, merely individual aspects of the whole *ordinatio*. While *ordinatio* can take in many aspects of the *mise en page*, notes and rubrics – often appearing in the margins of the book, extraneous to the text proper, but still depending on it – are perhaps the most important, functioning not just to structure or subdivide the text, but to actually add information. At their most basic level, such notes also guide the reader, instructing him on which aspects of the text itself are most crucial, and indeed most crucial for him to note well (*notare bene*).

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52 *Compilatio*, Parkes’s other term, was more frequently employed by contemporary authors, but, as with many medieval terms, its precise meaning shifted widely: “‘To plunder’ became, in literary contexts, ‘to steal ideas or plagiarize,’ then ‘to borrow ideas openly,’ next ‘to arrange or structure borrowed ideas,’ and at length ‘to structure one’s own ideas,’ that is, ‘to compose’” (ibid., 120). While *compilatio* (and the role of the compiler) can, therefore, be a powerful concept in medieval studies, it is dangerous to assume that all medieval “compilers” (as, for example, Chaucer) either can or should be fully assimilated into the Parkesian model of *compilatio*.
Malcolm Parkes’s treatment of *ordinatio* is a window onto the culture of book production. The people creating and executing this apparatus of division and subordination are scribes, or, in some cases, compilers: the individuals, at any rate, involved in the creation of the manuscript, whether that involvement may be in the form of physically writing the text, illustrating, rubricating or overseeing the entire process. Such book producers, whether working in a monastic *scrip torium*, a commercial bookshop or as the amateur enthusiast behind a commonplace book, work within a set of cultural expectations for their production. Annotation, after all, is a genre itself, subject to the same “horizon of expectation” outlined by Jauss. And, like all genres, it is neither fixed nor monolithic. The genre of annotation may be affected by that of the text it accompanies, and may (indeed, *does*) encompass sub-genres, specific to different texts and audiences.

Even more critically, one of the main priorities for these book producers in their design (and, in some cases, “authorship”) of a book’s *ordinatio* is what Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, with specific reference to a manuscript of *Piers Plowman*, calls “the ‘filtering’ – or if one prefers a less ideologically loaded label, ‘social authorship’ – of poetic texts *on behalf of the medieval reader.*” These book producers look forward to subsequent readers, and shape the text for the benefit of future audiences as much (or more) as for their own. Kerby-Fulton and Denise Despres term these book producers – at least, when they are responsible for the design, and not just the execution, of these aspects of

ordinatio – “professional readers.”⁵⁴ These individuals were readers of the text themselves, as anyone who encounters a text subsequent to the author is a “reader” of some kind, but were employed as paid interpreters of the text for the benefit of those readers who would come after. They were “trained to render a text intelligible to their immediate audience – that is, to ‘correct’ dialect, meter, doctrine, anything that might impede the understanding of simpler readers or irritate patrons or the authorities generally.”⁵⁵ By reading the text first, and leaving a record of their “reading” for subsequent audiences to benefit from, these professional readers offer evidence of, first, an “approved” and “endorsed” method of reading for a given text, and, second, the “filter” through which a manuscript’s non-professional readers would experience the text.

An important distinction exists, therefore, between the ordinatio of the text created by such professional readers and any readers’ marks in the manuscript produced by later readers, after the manuscript had been completed. This line between book-producer and reader, however, is not as impermeable as it might at first appear, and, ultimately, may not be possible to enforce consistently. “Completion” of a manuscript is not always a discrete moment in time, as we have already encountered in the practice of production through the gathering together of pre-produced booklets,⁵⁶ or in cases like that of Cotton Nero A.x, where an illustrator came some decades later to complete (or perhaps replace) a program of illustration envisioned but never fully executed by the book’s

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⁵⁴ Ibid., esp. 2–3. See also Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo, eds., The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower (Victoria, BC: English Literary Studies, 2001).

⁵⁵ Kerby-Fulton and Despres, Iconography, 2; emphasis is Kerby-Fulton’s.

⁵⁶ See Hardman, “A Mediaeval ‘Library In Parvo’.”
original producer(s). Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that professional readers are, even in their most clear-cut professional capacity, still precisely that: readers. As Kerby-Fulton observes:

> Medieval illustrators or their supervisors inevitably brought their own ethical and ideological sensibilities to their work; even when developing pictorial programs to suit a specific patron, they ‘translated’ the ideas of the text into iconography on the basis of their own interpretations, ideologies, and assumptions about audience visual literacy.⁵⁷

Just because a professional norm exists for the illustration of a particular text does not mean that the individual is or can be absent from the processes of design and selection, and this observation is equally true of annotators as well.

Perhaps most frustrating of all to the modern critic interested in separating out the “professional” from the “amateur” in the extratextual markings is the sheer difficulty in telling the one from the other, with any certainty. “Professional readers” do not always make marks that appear, to our eyes, as terribly “professional.” Paul Saenger and Michael Heinlen, for example, have identified large numbers of handwritten notes in early printed books as produced by one of the book’s producers: such marks are not, as had been traditionally assumed on the grounds of their haphazard appearance, evidence of use.⁵⁸ And Kerby-Fulton emphasizes the deceptively unprofessional appearance of the professional annotator in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 104: although his “work is just plain visually sloppy,” nevertheless “it is quite clear both from the quality of the

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⁵⁷ Kerby-Fulton and Despres, Iconography, 2.

thought in the annotations and from an error he made in placing one of them that he was not simply spontaneously annotating and that he was indeed copying from a text or rough notes prepared in advance." Readers, furthermore, even when not “professional,” are likely to have been influenced by professional practices of book-production in their ideas of what the _ordinatio_ of a text “ought” to look like. Such amateurs may attempt to re-create the annotation of professional readers when it is absent from their manuscript, repairing what they may view as a deficiency in the text. The lines between book-producer and reader become still more blurred in the case of a scribe or book-producer “moonlighting” as a reader. There is no evidence, for example, that John Cok, the annotator of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80 (see Chapters 3 and 4), was involved in the production of that manuscript. He was, however, a scribe in his own right, copying, among other manuscripts, British Library Add. 10392, in which his interest in the manuscript’s _ordinatio_ is evident and deep. If Cok is acting professionally in this manuscript (and others), can he be viewed as wholly “turning off” this background even when he is not engaged in book production, _per se_, but only book use?

This uncertainty of source works in the other direction, as well. Even when marginal annotation is in the hand of the text’s main scribe, and it is obvious, therefore, that the notes were part of the manuscript’s _ordinatio_ from the book’s first production, we cannot, for all that, always be certain of their source. Notes like these may be the brainchild of the scribe himself, or of a colleague or supervisor of the scribe’s. Or, they

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59 Kerby-Fulton and Despres, _Iconography_, 68; emphasis is Kerby-Fulton’s.

60 Kerby-Fulton, indeed, herself cites him as an example of a “professional reader” (ibid., 74–75).
may be copied from the scribe’s exemplar, and it is at this point that the unknowability of notes’ authorship becomes truly problematic, because, without the evidence of paleography, it is extremely difficult to identify with certainty the writer (let alone author) of notes now invisible to us. The notes may be authored by the exemplar manuscript’s scribe, pushing back their production into a that-much-more unknowable past, but not altering the professional nature of the producer. They may be the work of the text’s own author: some of the great literary lions of the English fourteenth century were acutely aware of their texts’ legacy in a manuscript context not fully under their control, but which and they sometimes attempted to affect. John Gower is generally accepted to have composed his own Latin glosses on the *Confessio Amantis*, and Geoffrey Chaucer has been proposed as the author of at least some of the glosses in the Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales*. Or, finally, the marginal material may be, in origin, the responses of an earlier reader of the exemplar manuscript (or the exemplar’s exemplar), deemed by the scribe valuable enough to be included in the copying process, and reproduced in the new manuscript as an apparatus with a new veneer of professionalism.

A case study in the difficulties inherent in indentifying the author of marginal notes can be found at the beginning of Chapter 5, with specific reference to the Winchester Malory (British Library, Add. 59678). For now, however, it is clear that attempts to police a

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62 For a review of the major scholarship on this issue, see Stephen Partridge, “The Manuscript Glosses to the Wife of Bath’s Prologue,” in *The Wife of Bath’s Prologue on CD-ROM*, ed. Peter Robinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Partridge himself favors the view that the glosses are most likely Chaucer’s own, even if he concedes that this attribution may never be capable of concrete proof.
clear division between the annotation of book-producers and that of readers are problematic at best.

If analyses of the issues inherent in the identification of ordinatio-producers are subject to a sometimes maddening swirl of categories, however, an approach to manuscript annotation from the direction of function is more straightforward. Every annotator – whether scribe (professional reader) or reader/owner – responds to each and both of two simultaneous impulses: his own reaction to the text, and his desire to shape the text for any readers who come after. He stands, in this way, at a nexus of reception. His annotations stand witness to least one reading of the text (his own). At the same time, however, even the most unprofessional of annotators cannot but be aware that his additions and alterations to the text will necessarily be seen and reacted to by any subsequent users of the manuscript. It is, perhaps, this latter truth that explains our modern anxiety about marking printed books: in an age when the codex is mass-produced to be identical, in copy after copy, the addition of readers’ marks alters the experience offered by an individual copy, changing it to a “bad” text precisely because it is no longer identical. A reader may feel that his experience of a book has been enhanced or impaired by the addition of marginal annotation, but, either way, it has certainly been changed.

Study of marginal annotations in manuscripts, therefore, is a window onto the attitudes of contemporary audiences on the annotated texts: not the only such window, certainly, but an important one. They offer evidence both as to the reactions of real readers and to the ways in which those readers were instructed by the manuscripts themselves in the way texts ought to be read, instructions that could reinforce (or, in some cases perhaps, act against) the structuring of the work provided by the author.
Marginalia – in this study, primarily annotation, but also including manicules, marginal doodles, and even those forms of reader response not residing in the margin proper (underlining, interlinear gloss, and even rubrics) – can offer us insight, therefore, into contemporary approaches to the romance genre. Parkes understands these and other aspects of ordinatio as characteristically scholastic in their origins, but insofar as they refer to the text they mark, they are necessarily adapted to that text, as well as to the genre it represents. This is true both within the scholastic project, and, as Parkes has observed, in vernacular literary texts that adapt some of scholasticism’s organizational apparatus.

As such, scholars interested in contemporary views of medieval literature have recently begun to examine the marginalia present in manuscripts, and the interest in annotation and glossing in vernacular poetry has greatly increased. Much of the work that has been done to date, however, deals primarily with texts other than romance, a fact that is particularly true for the study of Middle English. A rich vein has been mined, for example, in the traditions of glossing in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, most thoroughly with specific reference to the interpretively rich and heavily glossed Wife of Bath’s Prologue. Because of the nature of the Prologue, in which the Wife is drawing on and reacting to various patristic sources, most notably Jerome’s Epistola adversus Jovinianum, many glosses tend to treat the Prologue as part of the scholarly network of patristic commentary, with heavy emphasis on source citation and the identification of comparable passages in other, authoritative texts. Of the major types of marginalia that appear in Canterbury Tales manuscripts, Stephen Partridge lists source citation first, and
as most important, particularly in the lavish Ellesmere manuscript. He identifies a major critical strain that views the Ellesmere’s *Prologue* marginalia as presenting the *Canterbury Tales* in the form of a *compilatio* (A. I. Doyle, Malcolm Parkes), and as support for Chaucer’s position as *auctor* (Aage Brusendorff, John S. P. Tatlock, Alan T. Gaylord).

The source citation so typical of the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue*, carrying with it such intense interest in these very Chaucerian issues, is, not surprisingly, a type of annotation all its own. In part because of the influence of Malcolm Parkes’s *ordinatio* and *compilatio* model of theorizing annotation, with its scholastic associations, this particular type of annotation has, perhaps naturally, become the one most familiar to modern critics. This is highly visible in the Ellesmere manuscript, where continuity between *Prologue* and *Tale* is maintained for the Wife of Bath. The marginalia in the *Tale* is remarkably similar to that of the *Prologue*, and tends to cluster also in those parts of the *Tale* in which, for example, the Old Woman speaks at length in a moral monologue very similar to that spoken by the Wife in the *Prologue*. The glossator – whether Chaucer or a subsequent professional reader – has chosen to see the *Tale* as a direct extension of the *Prologue*, rather than treating it as belonging to a distinct genre. Precisely because of the eccentric nature of the *Canterbury* romances, I have largely neglected them in this study, as unrepresentative of the genre. My purpose here is to

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63 Ibid., para. 18.
64 Ibid., para. 20.
65 Since Chaucer is, in *The Canterbury Tales*, experimenting with genre, it is natural that straightforward identification of the “romances” among his tales should be elusive. As J. A. Burrow observes, “the reader who turns to Chaucer’s great story-collection in search of [...] a typical romance will be disappointed; for the five Canterbury ‘romances’ [...] are all, in one way or another, divergent from th[e]
identify generic norms, and to establish a baseline before embarking on the truly exceptional. It should not be surprising, moreover, given Chaucer’s generically varied and problematized text(s) in the *Canterbury Tales*, that the marginal apparatus afforded his romances should not necessarily be representative of romance annotation more generally.

As the *Canterbury* romances are atypical of the genre, so does their manuscript presentation frequently seem more “Chaucerian” than it does “romance”. Although annotation in manuscripts of Chaucer’s works runs the gamut from the very simple to the extraordinarily sophisticated, it is source glossing that has received the most sustained scholarly attention. Indeed, the straw man of “Chaucerian source citation” is one that will recur in this study, a point of departure from which it is possible to see what makes romance annotation different, the genre differently dissected and enjoyed. The marginalia of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer’s grand experiment with romance outside the *Canterbury Tales* (see Chapter 2, pp. 187ff.), in some ways straddles the divide between romance patterns and the most mature style of annotation visible in some Tales manuscripts. *Troilus* annotation does not reach the fullest sophistication of the form visible in the Ellesmere source citation glosses, and instead features a core of annotation far more closely resembling the romance form.

Akin to the *Canterbury Tales* in literary ambition and generic indeterminacy is the monumental *Roman de la Rose*. The French poem was a major source of Chaucer’s stereotype” (“The *Canterbury Tales* I: Romance,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 143). The most obvious candidates, however, include, each in their own way, the *Knight’s Tale*, the *Man of Law’s Tale* (classed in the *Cambridge Companion* as a “tale of pathos,” but still referred to in the volume with the term “romance”), the *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, the *Squire’s Tale*, the *Franklin’s Tale*, and, of course, *Sir Thopas*. Of these, the marginal source glossing of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* has been the most closely studied.
throughout his career: the Wife of Bath bears more than a passing resemblance to Jean de Meun’s *Vieille*.\(^{66}\) Despite its name, however, the *Rose* is not typical of the romance genre either: a dream vision, narrated in the first person, its action is largely dialogue and plays out in a landscape peopled by allegorical representations. It is, as Ardis Butterfield accurately remarks, “somewhat confusingly titled,” if we are thereby led into bringing to bear on it the same generic expectations relevant to more representative romances.\(^{67}\) If the *Rose* seems to us now to have more in common with its Chaucerian successor than with the larger genre of more “typical” romance, medieval readers and annotators seem also to have shared this opinion: source citation is, as in Chaucer, an important part of the marginal mission. Source citation is, however, only one piece of the puzzle, and in Sylvia Huot’s work on the *Rose*, we may see a fuller picture of all that medieval annotation might have to offer. Over the course of her book *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers*,\(^{68}\) as well as several other essays, she offers a thorough study of medieval manuscript layout, presentation, and *ordinatio*.

The capacious nature of the *Rose* in its openness to various, even contradictory interpretations, is something that Huot repeatedly emphasizes, and she observes that, often, the response of readers when approaching the *Rose* is not to embrace this indeterminacy of meaning, genre, and register, but rather to attempt an explanation of the

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\(^{66}\) Chaucer may (or may not) have composed a partial Middle English translation of the *Rose* (Benson and Robinson, *Riverside*, 1103–1104). Only the first of three extant “fragments” of the translation is considered possibly (although by no means necessarily probably) Chaucerian.


meaning of the text, are fixed as singular and, often, more in line with Christian expectation. She also identifies another major type of, as she terms it, “rubric,” those providing identification of speakers. In a heavily dialogic text like the Rose, much of the text is presented, not in the form of narration by the dreamer, but in the form of direct speech between characters. These direct speeches can be quite long, and many annotators seem to have been concerned with identifying shifts in speaker, clearly marking utterances as in the voice of their speaker. There is an insistence on the division – in some manuscripts apparently carefully and consistently observed – between the voice of l’aucteur and that of l’amant, that is, between the voice of the authoritative poet and the voice of his young, foolish, dreaming persona.

In the end, however, source citation is king. Huot observes, “Some of [the Roman de la Rose] glosses comment on rhetorical techniques, historical events, or moral precepts that figure in the text; these would have to be classed as responding to the aesthetic and the educational values of the Rose. The majority of the marginal glosses, however, consist of citations of other texts, usually Latin.” Huot sees the intertextual network emphasized, or in some cases even created, by these source citations, as one of the major pleasures of the literary text as understood by contemporary readers. She posits additionally that the marking of “sententious lines” in the text with nota or its equivalent

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can be connected with the medieval genre of the *florilegium*.\(^{71}\) Intertexts, both auctorial and proverbial, provide the major *raison d’être* of these notes, and by extension one of the major preoccupations of the text’s literary reception.

In summary, *Rose* manuscripts offer evidence for reader interest in the authority of the text, both as presented in source citations, and in speaker personae (the authorial voice may be presumed to have greater authority than that of the flawed lover). The focus of these readers is on resolving ambiguity, on fixing this generically ambiguous text firmly within a generic context, whether that context may be one of allegory, florilegium, or dialogue. Indeed, those aspects of the *Rose* and of the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* that these readers seem to have emphasized – the construction of authority and the work’s place within a network of Latin intertexts and sources – are also those traits which seem least characteristic of the romance genre. The usual romance mode is third person narration, not first,\(^{72}\) nor does the usual romance share the same concern for literary authority. Intertextuality is almost wholly absent. *Romanceurs* do not, as a rule, name their sources, and the recurring device of the *conte* refers at once to the present retelling, and, likewise, to some definitive version of the story, whether narrated to a hermit by one of the characters or even received directly from the hands of Christ himself.\(^{73}\)

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\(^{71}\) Sylvia Huot, “Drama and Exemplarity in the Narrative Text: Reader Responses to a Passage in the *Roman de la Rose*,” in *Aufführung und Schrift in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller, Germanistische Symposien Berichtsbände 17 (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1996), 504.

\(^{72}\) This is true to the degree that Maureen Boulton characterizes the first person monologues that frequently appear in romances as displaying a strong affiliation with the genre of the first person lyric (“Lyric Insertions and the Reversal of Romance Conventions in Jean Renart’s *Roman de la Rose* or *Guillaume de Dole*,” in *Jean Renart and the Art of Romance: Essays on Guillaume de Dole*, ed. Nancy V. Durling [Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997], 88).

\(^{73}\) In the Vulgate cycle, the *Estoire* is the copy of a book given to the author in a vision by Christ, and the Arthurian material was supposedly narrated by Merlin to his colleague and amanuensis Blaise.
literary game of allusion and cross-textual reference is largely absent, and it is no surprise, therefore, that such concerns should be absent from the margins as well.

Stretching beyond the *Rose*, however, work on annotations in manuscripts of less eccentric romances is only beginning to be done. There has been within the last ten years a small flurry of interest in the marginal notes contained in the Winchester Malory, a scholarly discussion I examine in greater detail below in Chapter 5. In the Vulgate cycle, Elspeth Kennedy has studied the marginalia in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 45.\(^{74}\) Her primary interest here, however, is in the corrections that are made to the text,\(^{75}\) “corrections” being in this sense a somewhat broad term, as these notes are not mere amendments of scribal error. Rather, they represent attempts on the part of the annotator to reconcile conflicting versions of the Grail story. As the *Lancelot* was adapted to form part of a Grail saga with Galahad as its hero, earlier references to Perceval, the original Grail knight, became “incorrect,” contradicted by the later unfolding of events, in which Galahad, not Perceval, achieved the adventures that had been prophesied early on. This inconsistency was troubling to readers, who attempted (with greater and lesser degrees of success) to smooth over the discrepancies, and create a story self-consistent in its facts. MS 45 makes an excellent case study of this type of activity on the part of the annotator.

We find in the study of manuscript marginalia, therefore, ample room for sustained attention on the margins of romance manuscripts. The same body of evidence

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\(^{75}\) See Chapter 1, pp. 107ff. for my own observations on those notes in MS 45 that are not corrective in their intent. Kennedy observes the presence of these notes, but dismisses them as of little interest (ibid., 32).
that has been so fruitful in the study of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Roman de la Rose* will yield a similarly captivating new perspective on medieval romances, and on the readers standing, as I have outlined, on that nexus between reception and production.

**A Taxonomy of Annotation**

If *Canterbury Tales* and *Roman de la Rose* annotation – while valuable points of comparison and, more frequently, contrast – is not a good model for the annotation in romances, perhaps recourse to other texts, less obsessed with their own intertextuality, might offer more fruitful parallels. *Piers Plowman* might at first seem a counterintuitive place to look: Latin quotations are at the core of the poem, the seed from which the English poetry blossomed.76 *Piers* annotators, however, do not appear to have treated the text in this way. A brief flip through Carl Grindley’s carefully categorized transcription of marginal notes in two *Piers* manuscripts reveals,77 among a data set of hundreds of notes, less than ten source glosses in one manuscript (British Library, Add. 35157)78 and about half a dozen in the other (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, HM 143).79 Many of the notes, on the other hand, bear a much greater resemblance to the sort of annotations


78 These source glosses are in the hands of the scribes Grindley terms E/F (Thomas Tyrnebeke, mid sixteenth century), G/H (Sir Edward Ayscough, late sixteenth century) and I (Francis Ayscough, late sixteenth or early seventeenth century). Most, although not all, of the marginalia he transcribes in Add. 35157 is by late- and post-medieval readers. Notes in hands contemporary with the manuscript’s roughly c. 1400 production are fewer.

79 All the annotations in HM 143 were made as part of the process of book production.
that will, over the coming chapters, become familiar standbys of romance margins. The formula of “here [something happened]”\(^{80}\) recalls the romance formulation of “how [something happened]”\(^{81}\) or even, less frequently but still occasionally, an identical pattern, “here [something happened].”\(^{82}\) Names, furthermore (in Piers, allegorical names in particular) are frequent features in the margins of Piers as they are in romance.

In the end, however, a survey of Grindley’s Piers transcriptions leads to a conclusion no less significant for all that it is so self-evident: marginalia in Piers Plowman is extremely varied in its type and purpose. The incredible diversity residing in the margins of Add. 35157 and HM 143 is the unspoken impetus behind Grindley’s project: the development of a system of classification for marginal material found in books. He divides marginal material into three main types, of which, for the purposes of this study, we may immediately disregard the first two, except as tangentially illuminating:

- **TYPE I**, which comprises marginalia that are without any identifiable context;
- **TYPE II**, which comprises marginalia that exist within a context associated with that of the manuscript itself; and

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\(^{82}\) The following example is by no means unique: “Here Galahad | was made | knyght” in the Winchester Malory, on f. 349v at *Malory, Works*, 516.13.
TYPE III, which comprises marginalia directly associated with the various texts that the manuscripts contains. 83

By marginalia without context, Grindley means items like ownership marks, signatures and pen trials: scraps of writing added as though the manuscript were merely a stack of convenient paper. These marks are far from valueless, and indeed can provide some of our best evidence for the provenance and circumstances of use for manuscripts and, therefore, the texts they contain. But as they do not engage at all with the texts within the manuscript, they are almost entirely sterile when it comes to providing information about the manner in which the romances themselves were or were intended to be read. Type II marginalia are equally unhelpful for the current project. These types of marginalia engage with the manuscript, but only with the manuscript as a physical object, not with the texts themselves. Such marks can include the marks of book producers (catchwords or page numbers, for example) or of later readers, in letter-forms or passages taken copied from the text, evidence that the scribbler bothered to notice the text as an example of the art of writing, but fairly inconclusive as regards to what (if anything) he may have made of the text. 84

Grindley’s Type III marginalia, interacting as it does with the text itself, is for that reason the most productive in terms of illuminating the writers’ attitudes toward the text,

83 Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman,” 77.

84 Grindley also includes in his Type II tables of contents and introductory materials, which he sees as a sort of structural apparatus of the manuscript, rather than of its texts. I disagree, and would argue that such materials are, in fact, “directly associated with the various texts that the manuscript contains.” A table of contents necessarily involves making choices about which texts to highlight and which to omit, as well as how these texts should be briefly characterized. Likewise, “identification of the main theme or subject of a work” seems a direct and by no means unproblematic commentary on that work (ibid., 81). As it happens, however, the issue of tables of contents and introductions will not trouble us in the present study.
and is, therefore, at the heart of the present study. It is not enough, however, to say merely that these notes relate to the text. They are also subject to subdivision, and, as Grindley sorts them, fall into five different major sub-types.85 “Graphical Responses” refer to non-textual markings, including illuminations, initials, punctuation and “iconography,” including, most commonly, manicules.86 “ Literary Responses” address the text on a poetic level, identifying or appreciating poetic language and including also any glosses on ambiguous or unfamiliar vocabulary. “Polemical Responses” are just that, critiquing society, politics or the church. “Ethical Pointers” encompass a wider variety of different responses to the text, being “direct demonstrations of ethical positions.”87 Grindley’s categorization in this sub-type at least is drawn from Kerby-Fulton, who identifies five different types of ethical pointers in the Piers Plowman manuscripts Douce 104 and HM 143, each one based on one of the five modi that Alastair Minnis has identified in biblical exegesis.88 It is no surprise that the Ethical Pointer subtype should receive so much attention from those examining Piers Plowman manuscripts: such notes, in their various guises, are common, especially among the notes that were added by the manuscript producers or their contemporaries. In Add. 35157, while the later readers’ marks of the sixteenth century and beyond belong to a wide variety of different

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85 For reasons that will, I hope, be clear, I have chosen to address his sub-types in reverse order.

86 Ibid., 90–91. Again, I might quibble with Grindley’s divisions, as I find manicules, especially, to be for all intents and purposes equivalent to a textual nota, and subject, therefore, to further categorization among the other sub-types. I deal with manicules throughout this study, but see especially Chapter 5, pp. 421ff. for a reading of the manicules of the Winchester Malory, and Chapter 1, pp. 88ff. on objects, both drawn and textual, in chronicle and romance margins.

87 Ibid., 88.

categories, a large number of the fifteenth century annotations are recorded by Grindley as Ethical Pointers. It is also true within his data set that many of the notes consisting merely of a simple nota or nota bene are classed as Ethical Pointers.

The last of Grindley’s five sub-types is Narrative Reading Aids. These include the category of source citation glosses discussed earlier. Other categories are “Topic” (‘the general theme or basic subject matter of a small block of text’89), “Dramatis Personae” (keeping track of names and dialogue) “Rhetorical Device” (labeling, but not otherwise engaging with, specific named rhetorical techniques), and “Additional Information” (anything requiring knowledge exterior to the text). The finally category, “Summation,” can be further subdivided according to its relationship with the text, whether the words are drawn directly from the text, or restate the text’s events in some way.

*Piers Plowman* annotation, on which Grindley’s elaborate system of classification is based, shares in all of these various types, sub-types and categories. The same cannot, however, truly be said of romance annotation. While occasional outlying notes pop up from time to time, the overwhelming majority of romance notes belong to the sub-type Narrative Reading Aids. What is more, this can be refined even further. Romances have very little source citation, and nearly all notes fall into the categories of Topic, Dramatis Personae, and, even more critically, Summation. Marginal notes on romances do not typically engage in the type of ethical or polemical dialogues that so enchant readers of *Piers* manuscripts. Annotators’ interest is firmly fixed on the “what” of the text, giving

89 Grindley, “Reading *Piers Plowman,*” 83.
the romances, in their manuscript context, a different character from that exhibited by other literary texts.

*Romance Annotation at Last: Packing Our Bags for Brocéliande*

The first observation to be made about romance observation is that, in terms of relative quantity, there seems to be less annotation on romance texts than there is on texts of other genres, even sitting side-by-side in the same manuscript. London, Lambeth Palace MS 491 contains a number of texts, among them a Middle English prose *Brut* chronicle, *The Three Kings of Cologne*, and *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne*. The *Brut* is heavily annotated in the hand of the text’s main scribe, notes possibly copied from his exemplar. The manuscript’s romances, however, carry no such annotation, and the considerable body of marginal text is all of Grindley’s Types I and II: signatures, practice alphabets, couplets from an elementary primer and other ownership marks that have no bearing on the texts themselves. The Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1) contains hundreds of texts, many of them short prayers and lyrics.90 The texts run the gamut of genres, and while the manuscript as a whole can be characterized as religious in nature,91 it contains a small cache of

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91 The religious leitmotif is so strong as to suggest that the manuscript was intended for use by those in the contemplative life. S. S. Hussey, however, argues that there is no evidence that would rule out an audience of laymen or, indeed, laywomen (S. S. Hussey, “Implications of Choice and Arrangement of Texts in Part 4,” in Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, 61–74).
romances. The manuscript contains large numbers of marginal notes, albeit mostly brief ones. “Nota” is the most common with, also, a large number of passages, in texts like the *Prick of Conscience*, marked with “exemplum.” When it comes to the romances, however, such running marginal commentary vanishes: the only substantial note in a romance text is a single “Somnium” in the *King of Tars*. This single romance note is both remarkable for its type (dreams are highlighted nowhere else in the manuscript) and for its isolation. The most characteristic trait of romance annotation is its very absence – an important preliminary observation, particularly when comparing the genre to others that are more thoroughly, if no less conventionally annotated.

This is not to say, however, that romance annotation can or should be casually disregarded. When annotators do mark romances, the notes may tend to be, at first glance, both terse and innocuous, “straightforward” repetitions of the literal content of the accompanying text. But on closer examination, it is clear that there is more to these annotations than simple plot summary. The terms with which they describe the events of the text lend insight onto how annotators viewed those events. Moreover, the very *choice* of which events to mark can be extremely illuminating. Even within a romance receiving a relatively large amount of marginal attention, annotators, and especially readers (rather than book producers), can be very sporadic with their notes, sustaining intense focus for short stretches of text, and leaving dozens of folios elsewhere unmarked. Sometimes an

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annotator will begin to mark a text, and then lose interest part way through. Other times, specific areas in the text will interest him more than others, but without an obvious reason for the change. And, finally, sometimes the reason for shifts in his practice become clear. As this study progresses, then, the two major questions at issue are, first, “Why has a certain passage been marked when others have not been?” (a question not always susceptible to a satisfying answer), and second, “What can the nature of the annotation (its wording, its subject matter, even its general type) tell us about how the annotator views this passage?”

One way of approaching these questions is with reference to annotators’ own “horizon of expectation” for what a romance ought to look like in its manuscript environment. For some, annotation does not appear to have been part of the picture. For others, however, either because they felt annotation a necessary part of the ordinatio for this text as for others, or simply because they desired to annotate, they looked to previous models of annotation as a guide for their own practice. In Chapter 1, I explore what I believe to be the most potent analogue for romance annotation, the notes found in chronicles, especially those descended through adaptation or translation from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s monumentally influential Historia Regum Britanniae, in texts both English and Anglo-Norman. Scribes and readers did not always choose to mark their romances, but when they felt such annotation was necessary, the model they adopted seems to have been a chronicle one.94 The connection between the genres of chronicle and romance has

94 The larger number of annotated chronicles, compared to the number of annotated romances, as well as the greater age of many annotated chronicle manuscripts (much surviving romance annotation belongs to the fifteenth century and beyond) would suggest that influence flowed from chronicle into romance, rather than in the opposite direction.
already been posited, by innumerable scholars, on other grounds.⁹⁵ Marginal annotation, however, can offer a privileged view of this genre-
crossover in action, as contemporary audiences read these texts in the same way they read chronicles. In both texts, the story of the annotations is a story of nouns: names of people and places, and, sometimes, names of objects. Annotators in both chronicle and romance carefully recorded the “what” of the text, with an acute interest in moments of naming. As objects can be physical relics in the real world recalling to memory the events of a previous age, names can function similarly, as linguistic relics, aids to both memory and meditation.⁹⁶

Also important to both chronicle and romance annotators are dreams, visions, prophecies and marvels. All of these seem to function within the same larger continuum of topic, and all are major attractors for the notes of both scribes and readers. We have seen that a dream (somnium) is the one event in a romance text highlighted by the annotator of Vernon. In the Winchester Malory, the same word (“Sompnus”) is the first extant note remaining in the manuscript. In the case of marvelous events, the supernatural has long been considered as a possible generic marker for romance.⁹⁷

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⁹⁶ For more on both the meditative and mnemonic functions of annotation, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Introduction: The Medieval Professional Reader and Reception History, 1292-1641,” in Kerby-Fulton and Hilmo, The Medieval Professional Reader at Work, 7–13.

⁹⁷ See, for example, Brewer, “The Nature of Romance”; Boitani, English Medieval Narrative; Jauss, Toward an Aesthetic.
prominence of the marvelous in the presentation of romances by scribes, as well as in
readers’ own analysis of the text (as evidenced by their notes), lends strong support to the
marvelous as a valid generic marker powerful not just in our own minds, but in those of
contemporary audiences. As will be revealed in Chapter 1, such dreams and visions – as
well as marvels, sometimes marked as such in the margin (“Mervaile”) – are frequent
features of the margins in chronicles as well. Such continuity suggests that modern
readings insisting on a sharp division between “truth” and “fiction,” especially with
reference to the marvelous, may be anachronistic. The marvelous is the remarkable, the
(literally) note-worthy, that which departs from usual historical or natural norms. It is,
however, equally likely to appear in a text we would consider “fiction” (romance) as in
one we would consider “history” (chronicle), and is equally likely to be highlighted in
each case. “Fictional” romances are being read, on some level, as history, while
chronicles are deliberately marked at those points when the marvelous, extraordinary and
supernatural, all in their etymological senses (that to be wondered at, that outside the
ordinary, that beyond the natural), are most active in the world.

After this initial groundwork, what follows are a series of studies of romance
manuscripts carrying large bodies annotation. I have chosen these manuscripts on the
basis of the presence of annotation in large numbers, their offering of marginal notes of
sufficient quality and quantity to enable an in-depth analysis of the patterns of annotation
and emphasis. The notes in question are mostly (although not exclusively) fifteenth- and
early sixteenth-century, a circumstance likely related both to the greater availability of
romance manuscripts in the later Middle Ages, and to an increase on the part of scribes
and readers in annotating those manuscripts in the later period. Annotations in these
manuscripts are not confined to a single linguistic tradition, either, but move freely between English and Latin, as well as Anglo-Norman and Latin, sometimes within the same body of notes.

In Chapter 2, the relationship between chronicle and romance is explored even more fully. London, Lincoln’s Inn, MS 150 (olim Hale 150) contains on its pages hundreds of notes in the hand of an early sixteenth century annotator. This man is a reader, not a scribe – there is no evidence that he was a professional book producer – but he has remade the manuscript for all future audiences by the addition of his notes. In the copy of *Of Arthour and of Merlin* carried in the manuscript, he annotates the frame story about with the usurping King Vortigern, not the conception of Merlin that is the core of the tale and the romance’s purported subject. His notes betray an interest in the political formations of kingship, as kings are acclaimed and overthrown by corporate action, in the form of armies, of towns and even of a group labeled by both text and annotator as “the commons.” In the *Kyng Alisaunnder*, another romance featuring an autocratic and possibly rash king, the annotator has a more wide-ranging interest, including names, places and marvels. But he also shows attention for the text as a literary artifact, containing moments of inset utterance: moments, that is, when an utterance, whether spoken or written, stands apart as a discrete unit from the surrounding narrative. This might be in the case of a letter, of a formal speech delivered in council, or even a particularly felicitous poetic phrasing. In all cases, however, the utterance is set within the larger narrative flow, and can, likewise be removed again from it, an independent and freestanding unit. Such moments are frequently highlighted in romances, and are indeed an important core to the annotation of *Troilus and Criseyde* manuscripts, an important
part of the degree to which those manuscripts partake in the romance annotation tradition as well as that familiar from the *Canterbury Tales*. But inset utterance is also, perhaps more surprisingly, a concern for chronicle annotators as well, and represents yet another point of connection and continuity between these two genres.

Chapter 3 then represents a change in pace and focus from the preceding chapters, where the relationship between romance and chronicle is so important. In this chapter, and continuing into Chapter 4 as well, I am able to engage head-on with the question of annotators’ identities. As I have already emphasized, there is continuity and overlap between, on the one hand, “professional” readers, often the book producers and scribes who created the manuscripts and provided the text’s original annotation scheme, if one was envisioned as part of the initial manuscript *ordinatio* for the text, and, on the other hand, the later “amateur” readers who enjoyed their productions. I have not, however, queried some of the fundamental issues of the identity of these individuals. I have, until now, universally referred to these annotators, both scribes and readers, as male. This is not an assumption that should, however, be made without further examination.

Considerable evidence exists for women as a large and influential part of the medieval romance audience. It is here, however, that it is important to emphasize the disconnect

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between a work’s entire, real audience, and that for which we have evidence in the manuscript annotations. As Anne Middleton observes with specific reference to *Piers Plowman* the “audience” and “public” of a work are by no means identical. A work’s “audience” is, in her terminology, “that readership actually achieved by the work,” the people who actually read the text.99 This may or may not differ from the work’s “public,” or “the readership imagined and posited by the composer as a necessary postulate in the practical process of bringing the work into being, for a certain effect within certain perceived historical conditions.”100 When the book-producing professional readers create a manuscript, the annotations they produce are going to be directed at the work’s perceived “public.” They *imagine* the types of people who will be reading the work, and whom they wish to aid and influence by their marginal notes. Such a public may or may not include women, regardless of whether, as other scholars have shown to be the case, women formed a large part of the work’s actual audience.

Likewise, when the annotations are “after-market,” added by a real member of the work’s audience, rather than by a book producer with an eye toward a notional public, such notes still may not offer a fair sampling of the full range of that audience. Many different types of evidence for use can be mustered, of which annotation is only one: ownership marks in books, mentions of books in wills, references in the text to an


100 Ibid., 102.
imagined public, even the level of complexity or required level of education implied by, for example, intertextual allusion or the inclusion of Latin. The fact that women formed a part of the audience does not imply that they are equally well represented in every aspect of readership, that they interacted with the manuscript or text in the same way as their male counterparts, or that every part of the text and its ordinatio was equally accessible or engaging to them. And, indeed, evidence of female membership in the “public” of the annotations is slim. Even when the text itself appears to include women in its public, female characters and matters capable of being classed or stereotyped as “female concerns” are largely absent from the notes. Furthermore, while the vast majority of annotators are anonymous, no evidence exists to support the identification of any of these note-makers as women, and, again, their disregard for female characters or other “female concerns” may tempt us to conclude that they are not. While women may of course share in the same interests and priorities as male readers, they have neither been accommodated by the notes as a discrete interest group separate from men, nor have they asserted such an identity by a “gendered” annotation.

In one case, however, we are freed from such speculation on identity, and rejoice in an annotator who has signed his name to his notes, enabling us to associate the annotations with, not only a named individual, but one whose career is known from other

101 Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice make a similar argument about the various levels of readership for Piers Plowman (Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice, “Langlandian Reading Circles and the Civil Service in London and Dublin, 1380-1427,” New Medieval Literatures 1 [1997]: 59–83). Coterie readers, whom Kerby-Fulton and Justice show to have been an important part of Langland’s early audience, are invisible to critics examining only the internal evidence of “public” that Langland himself provides. Still, other avenues of evidence suggest the presence of such coteries, and, conversely, not every member of the Piers audience would be able to enjoy and appreciate every level of interpretation in the poem: “while [Piers] found an audience which even included women – for instance, an early London will bequeaths a copy to one Agnes Eggesfield, and a handful of Piers manuscripts had women owners – still, parts of the poem (bits of Latin, bits of polemical allusion) were clearly not for general consumption” (ibid., 62–63).
sources. This man is John Cok, an Augustinian canon and bureaucrat at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in London. He is most famous as the compiler of the St. Bartholomew’s cartulary, a collection of deeds and rental information that is one of the most important sources for the medieval history of the hospital. He was also a scribe in his own right, copying a few manuscripts that are still extant today, including the religious miscellany British Library, Add. 10329, where his meticulous organization and, indeed, annotation are evident. Chapter 3, therefore, offers a study of his scribal practice in Add. 10392 and the cartulary. Cok is pious, clerical and meticulous. It would seem that in these qualities, as well as in his gender, he is typical of romance annotators, if not necessarily of romance readers generally. Annotations often assume a linguistically learned public (they frequently move in and out of Latin, even in vernacular texts), and seem to emerge from a meticulous impulse on the part of note-making readers. Malcolm Parkes has raised the specter of scholasticism as a way of understanding *ordinatio* generally, and while neither the notes on these romances nor the texts themselves are, by any stretch, scholastic, they nevertheless partake in a similar instinct for order and organization. Cok’s instinct for order, expressing itself in his bureaucratic and religious scribal output, provides a compelling model for, at the very least, his own romance annotation, but also for romance annotation generally as a bureaucratic and clerical inclination.

In Chapter 4, we see Cok in action, annotating a romance text. This is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80, and it contains the texts of two romances by Henry Lovelich, *The History of the Holy Grail* and *Merlin*, verse translations of the Vulgate cycle romances with those names. Cok brings his own particular priorities and
enthusiasms to the text, highlighting moments of high drama. His notes are very different in their approach from, for example, the few notes left by the scribe: Cok is clearly forging his own way in the text, rather than relying solely on the apparatus provided for him. He uses language that reveals his deep sympathy and identification with the persecuted Christian characters in the History, and the complementary ire directed at their pagan tormenters. Yet these things remain an undercurrent in notes which are, on the surface, fairly factual, and clearly positioned within the same romance tradition of reporting the “who” and the “what.” He, like other annotators, focuses on marvels. This is not surprising in a text packed with miracles and strange visions, but his interest in these aspects of the plot comes at the expense of other events, not obviously of lesser inherent importance to the plot: Cok highlights the visionary adventures of Mordraynes, not the chivalric exploits of his brother-in-law Nasciens. In his marking of visions and even bestiary animals, Cok’s annotation is clearly within romance norms, although with his own individual spin.

In the MS 80 annotations, as well as in the annotations of the final manuscript in this study, the Winchester Malory, another tendency of romance annotators is visible. Influenced by Malcolm Parkes’s description of ordinatio as a device for breaking down the entire codex into more manageable and navigable units, scholars have frequently worked from a default assumption that romance annotations are useful for precisely that purpose: dividing a text and assisting a reader to locate important or favored passages more easily. If this is in fact the purpose of such annotation, however, then the notes are surprisingly ineffective. They tend to function, rather, far better on the level of a smaller unit like an individual episode than they do on the level of the codex as a whole. Cok’s
notes create tight structural readings of short stretches of text, marking out the important stages in a progressing narrative. Likewise, as I explore in Chapter 5, the notes in the Winchester Malory, copied by the scribes themselves and thus part of the manuscript’s original *ordinatio*, function far more effectively on the level of individual episodes or, sometimes, whole tales than they do on the level of the full manuscript. The annotations in the *Tale of Sir Gareth*, for example, do little to illuminate the larger sweep of Arthurian history, recording as they do battles fought by Gareth against knights of little or no manuscript-wide importance. When read together within the context of that single tale, however, the notes make a coherent and simplified reading of the text. Neglecting interest in, to name one prominent example, Gareth’s love for his lady, the notes instead trace a structural backbone in the text (one among several), the series of single combats Gareth fights against color-coded opponents. Gareth fights the Black Knight of the Black Lands, the Green Knight, the Red Knight and so on, and the annotator’s repetitive notes next to these incidents ensure that this multicolored series is visible to the reader, even if the tale’s other, equally interesting structural patterns are not. The annotator does not show equal attention to the entire manuscript, and those sections that he does mark, he simplifies, helping the reader to notice those things he feels are the most important: the combats, the marvels, the dreams and visions.

Annotation in romances, as in all texts, is necessarily individual and idiosyncratic, the product of particular readers and scribes. Single notes, furthermore, are rarely terribly enlightening, tending to repeat the events and even sometimes the diction of the text. But by examining the patterns that emerge over long series of notes, the shape of these romances emerges as they were perceived by their first audiences. Book producers, in
making annotations, leave their mark on the text and influence all readers who come after. Readers, meanwhile, give us evidence of their own experience with the text, either in how they viewed what they read or, perhaps, how they believed they *ought* to view what they read, and wanted subsequent readers likewise to appreciate. The readings that emerge are not the only ones possible for the texts, nor necessarily the “right” ones, nor even the only ones experienced by medieval audiences. But they are evidence of one kind of reading, that we know was practiced in late medieval England. And in that reading, we find a marvelous country, well and truly chronicled.
CHAPTER 1:

NAMES, MARVELS AND DREAMS: TAKING NOTE OF BRUT CHRONICLES IN
LAMBETH PALACE 491, BRITISH LIBRARY ROYAL 13.A.XXI
AND COLLEGE OF ARMS, ARUNDEL 58

When annotators – both scribes and readers – came to romance manuscripts with
the intention of making notes, they would have been influenced by a generic expectation
of what romance annotation “ought” to look like. Such an expectation could be gleaned
from their experience of other annotated romances, or could be borrowed from another
genre. Both of these influences were no doubt in play, but the resulting style of
annotation is one that owes a great deal to the tradition of annotation in chronicles. By
highlighting the same sorts of events and topics in romance as in chronicle, these
annotators emphasized the continuity between these genres in their vision of England’s
history. In both types of texts, English history emerges as one filled with marvels,
visions and supernatural prophecies, where the recording of history runs both forward
and back. Both chronicles and romances thematize an interest in the out-of-the-ordinary,
even as they seek to make this extraordinariness routine by its full integration into a
series of similar people, places, objects or events. In all this, the grammatical category of
the noun dominates. The tangible presence of significant objects, of named places (often
still navigable in the present) and of named people works as evidentiary witness to the
events recorded, as well as a mnemonic device for holding them in the mind. Working together, these topics create a very specific experience of the past, and one that remains constant whether the form of the work is romance or chronicle.

1.1 Annotating a Chronicle: (Un)navigable Waters

Unlike romances, their generic close-cousins chronicles were not infrequently annotated in the Middle Ages: annotated chronicles are, if not a majority within chronicle manuscripts, still a significant and widespread minority. Notes, when they appear, are frequently in the hand of the scribe, and therefore formed a part of the manuscript’s apparatus from its first production. This is, furthermore, a characteristic that transcends linguistic boundaries: texts in both English and Anglo-Norman have similar systems of ordinatio, and it is a style of presentation that is carried over from Latin chronicles like Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae.

A first object of inquiry is the purpose of this ordinatio, the function such notes are intended by their creators to serve in the manuscript. Julia Marvin identifies in the presentation of Anglo-Norman chronicles (including such texts as the Anglo-Norman prose Brut, Wace’s Brut, and Geoffrey of Gaimar’s Estoire des Engleis) an ordinatio very much in the style first described by Malcolm Parkes. For Parkes, manuscript apparatus like indices, headings, and annotations were first developed by the thirteenth-
century scholastics to facilitate a new, characteristically scholastic style of reading. This system of manuscript layout and apparatus was then widely influential in shaping the appearance of manuscripts in a variety of genres, including vernacular literary texts. Readers were no longer tied down to a front-to-back, comprehensive reading of a text, but were instead free to flip back and forth between related passages, moving at will through the manuscript with the assistance of these practical navigational aids. Marvin identifies chapter division and headings, in particular, as apparatus that, either by coincidence (as part of a larger trend for more extensive apparatus in manuscripts) or by design, increased the resemblance between Anglo-Norman chronicles and “respectable Latin history,” with its attendant pose of reliable truth and authority. “The prose Brut,” by the inclusion of chapter divisions, chapter numbers, and even, sometimes, tables of contents enumerating these chapters and their contents, “thus becomes a full-fledged reference work,” a work, that is, capable of being consulted, rather than read, or, at the very least, capable of being read non-sequentially.

Marvin finds a similar appeal to authority in the annotations of two particular Brut manuscripts she examines, Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève 935 and Oxford, Bodleian Wood empt. 8. Her findings about them mirror many that I will enumerate below. While these manuscripts are, as Marvin emphasizes, exceptional in the quality and extent of their paratextual material, they are also pinnacles of a type. So, when Marvin describes the annotations of Wood empt. 8, she characterizes them in this way:

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105 Ibid.
Above all, the annotator [...] records kings’ or other notables’ names upon their first appearance, even though these names can also generally be found in the section rubrics. He copies placenames, especially when their origins are under discussion, as well as legal or customary precedents and landmarks, and marvels. He also takes an interest in traditional practices: he writes “wesshail et drinkhail” beside the story of the cupbearing Ronewen’s seduction of Vortiger (18r), which the prose Brut records as the inception of the custom in England, and “consuetudo bibendi et osculandi” when King Edgar and his future wife Estrild reenact the wassail scene later in the text. He moralizes from time to time. The annotations tend towards the synthetic and demonstrate more than casual reading or grabbing at proper names as they appear in the text. The fact that they are in Latin bespeaks a particular habit of thought and reading but also endows the text with a certain dignity and suggests a projected audience for the book as now presented. This would seem to be a case in which the annotator has conscientiously set out to note everything of interest for a wide variety of purposes, and later readers would not need to add much to find their way around.  

In this concise summary, she addresses many of the highlights of chronicle annotation:
the preoccupation with names, both of people (especially within a royal dynastic succession) and of places (especially at the point of origin); the interest in etymologies (again, presumably as part of a narration of origins and the foundation of customs); the sustained attention to marvels. All of these will be revisited in greater depth below. If the annotations of Wood empt. 8 show a depth of analysis beyond mere casual reading and an appeal, both linguistic and intellectual, to the practices of serious medieval history (or even scholarship), the manuscript may be in this regard somewhat atypical in its sophistication and synthesizing engagement with the text. The manuscript is not, 

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106 Ibid., 121–122.

107 It is perhaps not insignificant that these origin-stories also mark axes of connection from the distant past to the author’s and reader’s own present; such etymologies create links of shared language, and customs are recognizable to the reader because they are customs carried forward in time, ideally up to the reader’s present day. As such, these annotations create proximity with the past.
however, wholly eccentric, as we shall also examine further on. But perhaps most
important in this synopsis of Wood empt. 8’s marginal material is Marvin’s concluding
remark that little would need to be supplied in order for readers “to find their way
around,” a statement that betrays her deeper debt to a Parkes-influenced conception of the
evolution and purpose of ordinatio. In such a paradigm, annotations are, first and
foremost, tools for navigation, both within the codex, and (more rarely in both chronicle
and romance manuscripts) between manuscripts, through the mechanism of source
citation. Within this framework, the roots of chronicle annotation are as navigational aids
to the reader, and nonsequential reading the implicit goal.

Such a purpose is both self-evident and, in some cases, primary. Chapter rubrics
break up the text visually, transforming the text into a series of units. Chapter numbers
especially can have no significance if the units are all read in strict order. It is of no
matter whether a given unit is the second, twenty-second or one hundred and second, if
that number is always and simply one more than the number of the previous section read.
Numbers are primarily practical as identifiers when there is some possibility that units
might be encountered out of their proper position, as disjoined from the preceding and
succeeding units. Sequence is only required when non-sequence is an option. And
chapter numbers are by no means a subtle aspect of chronicle apparatus. In London,
Lambeth Palace MS 491, for example, an English prose Brut is carefully laid out with
red-ink running titles at the top of each page, and red-ink headings at the beginning of
each chapter.¹⁰⁸ Lambeth 491 is, in the words of Gisela Guddat-Figge, “spoilt by

¹⁰⁸ Guddat-Figge, Catalogue of Manuscripts, 227. The other contents of Lambeth 491 are the
Siege of Jerusalem, the Three Kings of Cologne, the Awntyrs off Arthure, and a verse treatise on hunting.
innumerable scribbles by former owners,” readership marks that include signatures, alphabets, short practice epistles, and moral/proverbial couplets, all evidence of the use of the manuscript by fifteenth-century schoolboys. These “scribbles,” however, do not have any apparent reference to the text. In contrast, the running titles, headings, and Brut-section marginal annotations of Lambeth 491 are all in the hand of the manuscript’s scribe, a man active in the late 1420s and early 1430s, and also responsible for copying San Marino, Huntington HM 114 and parts of London, BL Harley 3943.

In the Brut, chapter headings are frequent, falling on average every one or two or three pages. Here, to give a fair sampling, are the chapter headings from the Arthurian section of the manuscript:

f. 37r: “Of vter | Pendragon and wherfor he was callid | so aftir men shul here & he was ouertake | for the grete love of Igerne | hat was | the Erle of Cornewallis wyf · Cap\o/ | lxx\o/ ·”

38v: “· How vter bygate on Igerne | þ\t/ was þe Erlis wyf of Cornewaile | Arthur þe kyng · Cap\o/ | lxxj\o/ ·”

39v: “How | kyng vter chos Alotho to kepe þe lande | of Britaigne whil he was sike for as mych | as he myght e not bystere hym for sikenes Cap\o/ | lxxij ·”

40v: “how Arthur | þat was þe sone of vter was crow | nyd aftir his fadris dethe · And how | he drof Colegyrm & þe saxons and | cheldrik of Almaigne out of this lande · Cap\o/ | lxxiiij ·”

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110 Ibid., 121–122. A preliminary identification of this scribe has been made by Linne Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, in work not yet published, as Richard Osbarn, one of a cadre of scribes associated with the London Guildhall.

111 There is considerable variation around this average, however. Folio 10r, for example, is not unique in boasting three chapter rubrics.
42r: “· How Arthour zaf bataille to þe Saxons whan þei comyn | a yen & bisegid þe toune of Bathe and ouer | come hem · Cap\o/ lxxiiij\to/ ·”

43r: “How kyng Arthour axid of Merlyn þe | Auenturis of þe vj · last kyngis þt/ were to regne in Englonde and how þe lande shold l ende · Ca\o/ lxxv ·”

47r: “How Arthour ouercome Guyllomere þt/ was l kyng of Irelande & how þe scottis bycome l his men · Cap\o/ lxxv ·”

48r: “How kyng Ar / l thour spousid Gunnore þt/ was Cadors l Cosyn Erle of Cornewaile & after he con / l querid al Irelond of Guillomer · Ca\o/ lxxvij\o/ ·”

49r: “How kyng Arthour l come in to ffraunce and conquerid þe/ lande l of frolle þt/ was a Romayn a quellid hym l Cap\o/ lxxviij\o/ ·”

50r: “How kyng Arthour auauclid al his men that had trauailid l in his servise · Cap\o/ lxxxix\o/ ·”

51r: “/ Of the lettre that was sent l from the Cite of Rome for pryde to kyng l Arthour · Cap\o/ iiij\x/”

52r: “/ Of þe bolde answere þat kyng Arthour sent to þe emperour of Rome & to þe/ romayne l Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ primo ·”

52r: “¶ Of þe reuerence þat kyng Arthour dide to þe Empemours messagers of Rome l Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ iiij ·”

52v: “Of þe kyngis l and lordis þat comyn to help kyng Arthour l a þens the Emperour of Rome · Ca\o/ iiiij\x/ iiij ·”

53r: “/ How l kyng Arthour faughte wiþ a geaunt in spayne l þt/ me callid Denabus þt/ quellid Eleyne l þat was kyng hoelis cosyn of litille l britayne · Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ iiiij\to/ ·”

54v: “How kyng Arthour yaf bataille to þe emperour in the whiche bataille the l Emperour was slayn · Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ v\to/ ·”

55v: “How kyng Arthour l lete entere his knyghtis þt/ he had lost l in bataille & how he sent þe/ emperours body l to Rome þat þere was slayn in bataille l Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ v\to/ ·”

56v: “How Mordred þe/ traytour to whom kyng Ar / l thour toke his lande to kepe & his castells l held hit a þens hym Ca\o/ iiiij\x/ vij\o/ ·”

57r: “How Arthour enchacyd Mordred þe/ traytour l & how he was slayn & also how kyng Arthour l was woundyd to dethe · Cap\o/ iiiij\x/ viij\o/ ·”
The scribe was not responsible for composing these elements of apparatus, only for
copying them: the chapter divisions and rubrics appear in other manuscripts. But
examination of their appearance and content makes clear the importance of these chapter
divisions as an integral part of the Brut text, both in the eyes both of this scribe and of
others. The rubrics are literally just that, written in red ink and therefore jumping out
from the page, striking the reader’s eye. Each rubric ends with a chapter number,
consistent and easy to locate. And, even more importantly, the challenge of fitting
(sometimes lengthy) rubric and chapter number into the available space creates even
greater emphasis for the chapter numbers. They not infrequently spill out into the right
margin, becoming, in appearance if not in fact, part of the system of red-ink annotation
also provided by the scribe (and, most likely, also copied from his exemplar). This is
perhaps most noteworthy in cases like the headings on ff. 51r and 52r where the chapter
number is actually underlined, a flourish with the perhaps unintended side-effect of
drawing increased attention to the number.

Other aspects of these headings also make clear the degree to which they are
intended as guides for nonsequential reading. Names are, as with much of the Brut
apparatus, of clear and critical importance, and the headings center around these names as
their vital core content, often with an emphasis on familial relations and dynastic
succession, and with relative clauses that fix identities within an extended network of
names: “Igerne þat was the Erle of Cornewailis wyf,” “Arthur þat was þe sone of vter,”
“Guyllomere þþ/ was kyng of Irelande,” “Gunnore þþ/ was Cad ors Cosyn Erle of

B171, Bodleian Library, 2 vols., Early English Text Society o.s. 131, 136 (London: Oxford University
Press, 1906).
Cornewaile,” “Eleyne þat was kyng hoelis cosyn of litille brityn.” The striking thing about these relative-clause modifiers is that they seem to become reflexive formulae, identifying characters in full even when such identification would seem to be unnecessary because the characters have been an ongoing subject of discussion across neighboring chapters, and may have even been so identified in the previous chapter-heading. The headings for chapters 70 and 71 both contain identification of Igerne with her husband, the Earl of Cornwall. A Roman emperor whose death in battle is related in one heading appears in the next as the emperor “þat [...] was slayn in bataille,” catching the reader up on the story-so-far. Arthur is granted the epithet “þat was þe sone of vter,” despite the fact that Arthur’s conception and birth had been related at length only two chapters before, and that the last heading but one advertised the ensuing chapter’s content as “How vter bygate on Igerne [...] Arthur þe kyng.” The headings are capable of standing alone, and do not rely on surrounding context to render them legible, evidence that the reader was considered to free to read them outside of that context.

Is it fair for us to assume, however, that the annotations proper – the portions of the apparatus located in the margin, alongside the text, rather than within the text block at the site of chapter breaks – function in the same way as these rubrics? As I have already suggested, there are significant ties that bind together these two types of apparatus into a single system. Both are in red ink, and the slippage of the rubrics into the outer margin due to space constraints also blurs the line between textual rubric and marginal note.

113 This modifier is even more redundant if the rubric is read directly following the immediately preceding text: “When þe Kyng was dede, his folc bare him to Stonehynge wiþ grete solempnite of bisshopp3 and barons þat were þere, þat buriede him besides Aurilambros his broþer; and after turnede aȝeyne þo everycheon, & lete sende after Arthure his sone; and þai made him Kyng of þe lande wiþ michel reuerence, after his faderes dep, þe xvij þere of his regne” (ibid., I:69.11–16). It is clear, incidentally, that insistence on fixing names within familial networks is a stylistic quirk shared by both text and rubrics.
Furthermore, the content of the rubrics shows a continuity of interest with the annotations. The same Arthurian section of twenty-one folios whose rubrics I listed above also carries some not-insignificant scribal annotation (marginal notes in the scribal hand):

f. 37r, at Brie, Brut, 1:65.10: “iiiij\xx/ vij rex .”
39r, at 1:67.13: “kyng Arthour”
40v, at 1:69.21: “iiiij\xx/ viij\us/ rex .”
40v, at 1:69.22: “\wbr\v by gynnyng l of kyng Arthours l regnyng .”
43r, at 1:72.4: “Prophecie l of Merlyn”
48v, at 1:78.15: “\wbr\v/ rounde l table”
49v, at 1:79.27: “Tabourne Arthours l swerde .”
53r, at 1:84.11: “\wbr\v/ mount l of seynt l Bernard”
58r, at 1:90.18-19: “Nota de fine l Arthuris”
58r, at 1:90.22: “prophecia de l Merlyn”
58v, at 1:90.31: “iiiij\xx/ x\us/ rex .”

The notes are bilingual, in both Latin and the vernacular. As is the case throughout the manuscript, the king-list numbers (e.g. “iiiij\xx/ vij rex”) are always in Latin (“rex” is always used, never “kyng”), perhaps partly under the influence of the Latinity of the Roman numerals. The vast majority of the other annotations, however, are (like the text and rubrics) in English. The tendency for annotators to lapse into Latin within predominantly vernacular annotation cycles is, I think, evidence of a Latinate education for these annotators, a tendency on their parts to slip into the linguistic habits of a

114 These notes receive extra emphasis from a square bracket.

115 Again, this is true not only of the Arthurian section, but of the manuscript as a whole. The exceptions are easy enough to enumerate. There are the two ones listed here (“Nota de fine Arthuris” and “prophecia de Merlyn”), a subsequent “· de prophecia Merlyn ·” (on f. 60v, at ibid., 1:93.18–19), the implied hybridity of an English note that includes a date prefaced by “anno” (“Seynt Alboun l matried l affabel l a\lo/ · iiij\C/ · iiiij\xx/ vj,” on f. 19v at ibid., 1:44.33, the technical term “· Stella Comata ·” borrowed directly from the neighboring text (on f. 184v at ibid., 2:292.17–18), and, for reasons not wholly apparent, but perhaps related again to technical terminology, albeit this time a terminology adapted and not quoted from the text (which used the English “translatid”), “Translacio sancti l Thome Canterburiensis” (on f. 107v, at ibid., 1:173.9–10).
primarily Latin literacy. Conversely, when annotators set out to make their notes in Latin and fall into the vernacular from time to time, they are no doubt influenced by the gravitational pull exerted by a text that is always, in the manuscripts that are the focus of this study, itself in the vernacular. On the most general level, this picture offers a suggestive glimpse into annotators’ Latin training and background, as well as their apparent conception of “proper” annotation. Given the unsubtle hint offered by the main text’s vernacular language, the pull of Latin must be strong indeed for it to make even occasional appearances, let alone to play the predominant role it adopts in some manuscripts.\textsuperscript{116} On the other hand, the analysis of linguistic choice on the level of individual notes is more difficult, given the high degree of bi- or even trilingualism in these annotation cycles. While it would be tempting to see, in Lambeth’s \textit{finis Arthuri} and two \textit{propheciae Merli}

\textit{n} especially, some added prestige or intellectual status resulting from the use of Latin, it is dangerous, here as elsewhere, to put too much weight on the language choice of the annotator. The “choice” seems likely to have been, as often as not, an unconscious one.

Setting aside, then, at least for the moment, the question of language, we can see in these Arthurian notes, writ small, some of the defining characteristics of chronicle annotation. There is the preoccupation with names: excluding the king-list numbers, which I will address at greater length below, every note includes a proper name of some kind, whether a person (Arthur, Merlin), a place (the Mount of St. Bernard), or a special object (“Tabourne,” the Round Table). While the headings, with their greater scope for

\textsuperscript{116} Cf. John Cok’s notes in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80 and the notes in London, BL Royal 13.A.xxi, to name only two examples.
characters’ familial particulars, have a subtly different approach to names, the underlying priority is a constant. Coronations (“þe/ by gynnyng of kyng Arthours regnyng”) and deaths (“Nota de fine Arthuris”) are given special attention in the notes. And the notes both reiterate and supplement the content-descriptions offered by the rubrics and other apparatus. Running titles of “Arthour” across the length of his reign ought to render further identification of this passage as “Arthurian” redundant, but the note beside Brie, Brut, 1:69.22 (“þe/ by gynnyng of kyng Arthours regnyng ·”) heads the chapter, only displaced from a position immediately below the rubric (“how Arthur þat was þe sone of Uther was crownyd...”) by the prior claim of the king-list number. The reader interested in locating Arthur’s ascension to the throne enjoys an embarrassment of navigational choice. On f. 53r, however, the marginal note identifying the name of Mt. St. Bernard, where Arthur encountered the giant, does provide significant information above and beyond that contained in the rubric, which specifies the name of the giant (“Denabus”), the name of the giant’s victim (“Eleyne”), and her appropriate network of familial association (she was the cousin of Hoel, King of Brittany), but which does not specify the location of the event beyond the general attribution of “in spayne.” If the name of the

117 It is difficult to quantify the strength of the rubrics’ interest in names, but I can offer some approximate measures. Fifteen different personal names (e.g. Uther, Igerne, Arthur, Merlin, etc.) are mentioned in these Arthurian rubrics, in a total of thirty-seven incidences. There are an additional twenty-two incidences of placenames, whether within titles (e.g. Earl of Cornwall, emperor of Rome), as national identifiers (e.g. Saxons) or with reference to an actual location (e.g. Britain, Ireland, Spain, etc.). This totals fifty-nine proper names over only nineteen rubrics. A word count is problematic, given inconsistent medieval word separation, and additional arguments for considering compound units like “Uther Pendragon” and “Earl of Cornwall” as, in this context, single words. But my rough estimate is that about fifteen percent of the words in the rubrics are proper names of some kind: a less single-minded focus than is evidenced in the annotations, but striking nonetheless.

118 The first “Arthour” running title is on f. 40v, and the last on f. 58r.

119 The placename of Mt. St. Bernard is taken directly from the accompanying text, although Mt. St. Michel in Normandy is the location more usually associated with this giant. Robert Fletcher suggests
mountain is critical to a reader attempting to identify the episode, then this annotation provides it, in the absence of cues from either the rubric or running title. Looked at in another way – from the perspective of a reader already perusing the episode – the note fixes emphasis on this placename, presenting it as important for the characterization of the passage.  

This brings us now to the two notes marking “prophecies of Merlin” in the text, which point up an even more fascinating and evocative contrast between the rubrics and the annotations. Two points in the text receive such annotations, “Prophecie of Merlyn” on f. 43r at Brie, Brut, 1:72.4, and the Latin equivalent “prophecia de Merlyn” on f. 58r, at 1:90.22. The former falls beside a chapter head, a chapter whose contents are entirely devoted to relating the extended and cryptic allegorical beast-prophecy by which Merlin

that the alteration may have been made under the influence of a romance tradition of Arthur killing a giant man-eating cat near the so-called lac de losane in the Swiss Alps (The Arthurian Material in the Chronicles: Especially Those of Great Britain and France, Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature 10 [Boston: Ginn, 1906], 214, 4n). What a Swiss mountain and the cousin of the King of Brittany might be doing in Spain remains unclear.

It is worth noting that the author – or authors – of the Brut concur with the author of the rubric in identifying those names and facts most critical for characterizing the incident. This event is one resummarized later in the text, during an analysis of an attempt by Geoffrey Mortimer (the son of the ambitious would-be king, Roger Mortimer) to cash in on Arthurian prestige, by the establishment of his own Round Table. The author of this later summary does not endorse Mortimer’s self-characterization, dubbing him instead the “Kynge of Folye” (Brie, Brut, 1:262.6). But it occasions a reflection back on Arthur’s (in the author’s view, far superior) achievements, including this one: “And also he faurt wip a Geaunt hat me callede Dynabus and quellede him, hat hade rauisshede Elyne, hat was Kyng Hoelnes nece, Kyng of Litil Britaign” (ibid., 1:262.16–18; my emphasis: I have underlined those words identical in both rubric and textual summary). The earlier rubric differs only in that it adds a Spanish setting (“faughte wip a geaunt in spayne”), and specifies that the giant “quellid” Elaine, not that he “rauisshede” her. The striking similarity between these two summations can be explained in a number of ways. Perhaps the author (if it is one author for both the earlier and later passage) was also responsible for the rubrics. This would explain stylistic similarities between text and rubric already noted. Or, perhaps, the author of the later summary, interested in refreshing his memory about Arthur’s achievements, flipped back to the Arthurian passage, and was heavily aided by the rubrics in skimming that text: this scenario, too, would suggest that the rubrics were early (possibly authorial) additions. The contrasting difference of the “mount of seynt Bernard” annotation, meanwhile, could perhaps indicate the work of a different person, an annotator with a slightly different view on the facts most in need of emphasis and attention. This would be a bold conclusion, however, to base on such limited evidence.
lays out the future history of Britain. The second prophecy is far less extensive, comprising mere lines instead of whole folios, and treats Arthur’s ambiguous (non?)-death:

Arthure himself was wonde to þe deth. but he lete him bene born in a liter to Auyoun, to bene heled of his wondes; and þitte þe Britons supposen þat he Leuþ þen a-noþere lande, and þat he shal come þit and conquer al Britaigne; but certes þis is þe prophecie of Merlyn: he saide þat his deþ shulde bene dotous; and he saide sothe, for men þerof þitte hauen doute, and shal for euermore, as me saiþ, for men weten nouþ wheþer þat he leuþ or is dede. (1:90.18-25)

We may add to these two a subsequent short prophecy of the beast-allegory type, marked in the text with “· de prophecia Merlyn ·” and located on f. 60v at 1:93.18-19: at this point, the text reports not the moment of Merlin’s prophetic forecast, but the moment of its fulfillment.121 It cannot be said that Merlin’s prophecies are universally accompanied

121 Despite first appearances, this does not seem to constitute a real cross-reference within the text, but merely the late reporting of a new prophecy, not previously revealed. At this time Certif is king in Britain, and “Gurmonde, þat was þe Kynges sone Dauf rik, of þe Paynymes folc, þat hade þe reaume after his fader, and was kyng,” abdicates in favor of his brother and seeks a new dominion through foreign conquest (ibid., 1:93.14–15). And “of him [i.e., Gurmonde] prophecied Merlyn, and saide þat ‘he shulde bene a wolf of the see’” (ibid., 1:93.19–20). No “wolf of the see” is mentioned in the earlier, extended beast prophecy in chapter 75 (the prophecy helpfully labeled on f. 43r as “Prophecie of Merlyn.” The closest equivalent there seems to be “a wolf of a straunge lande” that will do “grete harme” to a lamb, but “at þe ende þe lambe shal be maistre, þrou helpe of a rede Fox þat shal come out of þe Northwest, and him shal ouercome; and þe wolfe shal dye [in] water; and after þat tyme þe lambe shal leue no þat þat he ne shal dye” (ibid., 1:72.11–16). This “wolfe of a straunge lande,” however, refers not to Gurmonde, but to Simon de Montfort, and his war against Henry III (cf. ibid., 1:177.14ff., where this prophecy is explicitly glossed). If the thirteenth-century Simon de Montfort seems a prescient forecast indeed for the Prophecies of Merlin, found in Book VII of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s twelfth-century Historia Regum Britanniae, it is because while this prophecy of lamb, wolf and fox may find its inspiration in that text, it does not in fact find its source there. There is in the Historia no prophecy precisely equivalent to this one, nor indeed do any of the details found in the Middle English Brut’s chapter 75 correspond to that text. The prose Brut’s author has provided a new prophecy of fresher political significance, in place of the original allegories of the Historia. The Historia is, in contrast, the ultimate source for the Gurmonde prophecy of the “wolf of the see,” albeit following a slight shift in allegorical attribution: “Sex posteri eius sequuntur sceptrum, sed post ipsos exsurget Germanicus urmis. Sublimabit illum aqueos lupus, quem Africana nemora comitabuntur. Delebitur iterum religio, et transmutacio primarum sedium fieri.” (“His six successors will wield the sceptre, but after them the German worm will rise. It will be raised up by a wolf from the sea, who will be accompanied by the forests of Africa. Religion will be destroyed again and the archbishops of...
by marginal notes. They are, on the contrary, seeded occasionally throughout the text at the moments when they are fulfilled, and do not, except at these three early mentions, merit attention from the annotator. Still, while the annotator is by no means exhaustive in marking these moments, three notes over almost fifty folios is sufficient to constitute a sustained interest in the theme.

The way the notes treat the prophecies is, additionally, different from how, in particular, the rubric to chapter 75 treats the prophecy it introduces. In some ways, note and rubric function similarly on f. 43r. Both appear at the head of the section, and so introduce the text that follows for the reader. Significantly, however, the word “prophecy” does not appear in the rubric. Instead, “kyng Arthour axid of Merlyn þe Auenturis of þe vj last kyngis” of England. The subject of the sentence is Arthur, not Merlin, and focus is on Arthur’s question, not Merlin’s response. There is, furthermore, at least some indication as to the subject-matter of Arthur and Merlin’s conversation, namely, in the “Auenturis” of the kings and “how þe lande shold ende.” The note, in contrast, offers none of this detail. Instead, the focus seems to be on categorizing what follows as a particular type of utterance – a prophecy – rather than on highlighting the content or circumstances of that utterance. The repetition of the word prophecy or prophecia across three notes establishes the text they accompany as a category or type, something that occurs repeatedly in the text, not (as the in the rubric) as a specific

instance of that category, with identifying details that set it apart from the others. For the annotator, then, a “prophecy of Merlin” is a type of event within the text that requires some special notice from the reader.

This brings us to a major question, then. How exactly are the annotations in Lambeth 491 intended to be read? Are they, in fact, intended as navigational aids, signposts for directing a reader where to begin reading? Or are they adjuncts to the reading process? For the rubrics, at least, we can clearly see them working in both ways. I have already discussed the purpose of the chapter numbers for navigation, specifically, but the rubrics were (unsurprisingly) also envisioned as being read along with the text. In our example of the chapter 75 rubric (“How kyng Arthour axid of Merlyn þe Auenturis of þe vj · last kyngis þe were to regne in Englonde and how þe lande shold ende”), this rubric actually adds information not carried in the text itself. What follows is the passage, along with the text both preceding and following, as it is found in Brie’s edition:

But þe Scottes were al feire wiþin Mounref, and þe þai helde ham awhile; but Arthure ham pursuede, and þai fledde þens fowþ into Lymoigne [... and] þe Scottes were so grete rauenours þat þai token al þat þai myȝt fynde in þe lande of Lymoigne wiþ-outen eny sparyng; and þerwiþ þai chargede aȝeyne þe folc, into Scotland forto wende.

**How Kyng Arthure axede of Merlyn þe aventures of vj the laste kynges þat weren to regne in Engeland, and how þe lande shulde ende. ¶ Capitulo ¶ Septuagesimo ¶ Quinto.**

“Our,” *quod* Merlyn, “in þe þere of Incarnacioun of oure Lorde Ihesu Crist M’ CC xv þere shal come a lambe oute of Wynchestre

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122 Not all rubrics in the text work this way. Compare, for example, the rubric to chapter 186 (not, perhaps significantly, accompanied by a note): “Of Merylnys prophecie þe was declarid l of kyng Edward kyng harries sone þe l thrid. · Capitulo · C · iiiijxxij vio.” (on f. 126v). Here, like the earlier notes, the rubric addresses what follows *qua* prophecy, and the identity of the prophet (Merlin), while deemphasizing the content, providing only the name of the principle referent.
pat shal haue a white tong and trew lippis, and he shal haue wryten in his hert ‘Holynesse’.... (Brie, Brut, 1:71.24-72.7)

The text moves directly from relating a raid by the Scots on Lymoigne (Loch Lomond) to a report of the words of Merlin’s prophecy. There is no indication, except that provided by the rubric, of the circumstances of Merlin’s prophecy, or of the question Arthur is reported to have “axede.” The reader, then, is expected to read the rubric, as well as the text.

But what about the annotations? Reading them is not precisely necessary, as they do not add information requisite for the interpretation of the text. Yet in some ways, they seem inadequate as navigational aids, too. The likelihood is small that a reader would be interested in jumping directly to a marked prophecy of Merlin, merely to locate the statement by Merlin that Gurmonde “shulde bene a wolfe of the see” (Brie, Brut, 1:93.19-20). The statement is brief and, within its immediate context, an aside rather than a major event or plot point. It seems, therefore, that we must look to a different model than that of the navigational aid to explain the function of the Lambeth 491 annotations. They seem, rather, intended for readers progressing through the text in a strictly sequential manner. The notes themselves assist in constructing “prophecies of Merlin” as a focus of interest, rather than merely assuming it as an interest existing in the reader’s mind a priori.

123 Cf. the equivalent episode in Geoffrey of Monmouth, where the place is called “stagnum Lomonoi” (History, IX.149.152).
1.2 A Lexicon of Nouns

It will be useful, at this point, to range afield slightly from Lambeth Palace 491, to other annotated chronicles, in order to map out some points of connection. It is true that annotations of chronicle texts are not identical from chronicle to chronicle – a copy of a Middle English Brut (like Lambeth 491) will not carry annotations identical with those in a copy of Wace’s Anglo-Norman Brut, nor with those in a copy of Robert of Gloucester’s Chronicle. Indeed, it would be surprising if they did. But comparison between notes carried in these different chronicles reveals certain patterns of similarity, such as Marvin described, in the kinds of notes that are applied to the texts. There is a definite tradition within chronicle annotation, and manuscripts that partake in this tradition will carry types of notes that appear similar and familiar, from text to text. Names – of objects, of places and, even more importantly, of people (especially kings) – are always the primary focus, followed by etymologies, the origins of customs (especially when the custom is itself a name or linguistic usage), and, as an important minor interest, marvels (both natural and supernatural).

In finding a baseline, we may turn, first, to London, British Library Royal 13.A.xxi. The manuscript in its present state is composed of four separate manuscripts, all originating in England, and later bound together. One of these sections, containing texts in both Anglo-Norman French and Latin, dates to the thirteenth century, and contains a suite of “historical” texts, including the Imago Mundi, a diagram of the Heptarchy (that is, the seven constituent kingdoms of England), the so-called Royal
Brut, Wace’s Roman de Brut and Geoffrey Gaimar’s L’Estoire des Engleis. The Royal Brut and Roman de Brut are joined together in the manuscript, forming in appearance a single, unified chronicle of the history of Britain, from its founding by Brutus to the death of King Chadwalader. Indeed, the first 52 lines of the text are taken from Wace, and introduce an account of the succession of the kings of Britain, “Ki cil furent e dunt il vindrent / Ki Engleterre primes tindrent, / Quels reis i ad en ordre eü, / E qui anceis e ki puis fu, / Maistre Wace l’ad translaté.”

The Wace preface creates for an unwary reader the illusion that all that follows is, in fact, “Master Wace’s” translation. After line 52, the text switches away from Wace, and begins the anonymous Royal Brut, which appears in place of most of the first half of the Roman de Brut, and continues for over 6000 lines before rejoining Wace at line 8729, in the middle of the episode of the seduction of Igerne and conception of Arthur. The two texts fit together seamlessly.

124 Alexander Bell, ed., An Anglo-Norman Brut (Royal 13.A.xxi), Anglo-Norman Texts 21-22 (Oxford: Anglo-Norman Text Society, 1969). Because the Royal Brut survives only in this unique manuscript, it is difficult to be sure about its authorship or date. No clues within the text itself fix it to a particular time period, and without any attribution within the manuscript to a particular author, dating must be made on stylistic grounds alone. Bell believes the Brut to date to the earlier thirteenth century (ibid., xxxiv), while Peter Damian-Grint places it still earlier, around 1140 (Peter Damian-Grint, “Redating the Royal Brut Fragment,” Medium Aevum 65, no. 2 [1996]: 280-285). This would make the Royal Brut either roughly contemporary with, or alternatively about 75 years or so after, the Wace it accompanies. The Royal Brut’s author was from Britain, not the Continent, and Bell detects a particular affinity with northern England (Bell, Royal Brut, xi).

125 This is not to say that the scribe conceals the final transfer between texts. It is at the join between the end of the Royal Brut and Wace that a large winged dragon is drawn in the margin, its nose pointing directly at Wace, Wace’s Roman de Brut: A History of the British, trans. and ed. Judith Weiss, revised ed., Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2002), line 8729. Still, the reader is invited to treat what follows as a continuation of what has gone before, two sections of the same composite text, to be read and interpreted in the same ways.

126 The kings “who once upon a time were the rulers of England – who they were, whence they came, what was their sequence, who came earlier and who later – Master Wace has translated it” (ibid., lines 3–7).
The manuscript is parchment, and of moderate quality – it is not de luxe, but has been professionally prepared in a neat and attractive bookhand. One of the most prominent aspects of the text’s presentation is the series of marginal annotations in the scribal hand, in both Old French and Latin, that run fairly steadily throughout the manuscript. The notes vary in content, with the most common type listing of the name of a character, often a king, at either the point of his introduction or at the point of his death, sometimes accompanied by the length of his reign. As always, the first issue to address is that of the notes’ authorship. They are in the handwriting of the text’s scribe, but are they his own composition, or has he copied them from his source? The texts themselves, both Wace and the Royal Brut, have been copied from exemplars, and despite their integration within this manuscript, the two exemplar texts may not have been from the same manuscript. As Alexander Bell suggests, it may be that an otherwise ambiguous note that appears at the first line of the resumed Wace text (“marckeby.”)\textsuperscript{127} may refer not to the text itself, but to a physical location where the scribe must go to acquire another exemplar, now that his anonymous Brut has come to a premature end.\textsuperscript{128}

If this one note is the scribe’s own contribution, referring to the physical act of the manuscript’s copying, one might suppose, then, that all the marginal notes were composed by the scribe himself. Further evidence for this conclusion can be found on f. 83rb, where a note reading “¶ gonvais reis l dorcanie .” occurs next to a line where the scribe has found it necessary to write around a hole in the parchment, and reproduces the

\textsuperscript{127} On f. 77va, at ibid., line 8729.
\textsuperscript{128} “Introduction,” in Bell, Royal Brut, x.
text almost word for word. It is not unusual for a character – even a relatively minor one, like Gonvais – to be noted in the margin at the point where his name is first mentioned, and notes often reproduce the diction and even orthography of the text they accompany. But Gonvais is mentioned here only in company with two other kings (“E Doldanim, reis de Godlande, / E Rummaret de Wenelande;” Wace, Brut, line 9708), who are by all appearance equally important in the text, but who receive no notice in the margin. A more practical reason for the note, therefore, is entirely possible. At a line where a botched attempt to write around a hole in the manuscript has rendered the line difficult to read, the scribe’s repetition of the words of the text has the primary function of correcting or clarifying his own faulty production. Here, at least, then, the scribe seems to be composing his own notes, reacting to the needs of the reader of this particular manuscript.

The question of the notes’ original authorship is somewhat more difficult to answer. More equivocal is the evidence that the notes were produced simultaneously with the text, rather than later. There is at least one instance (f. 68rb) where the scribe has prepared a set of ruled lines on which to write his note, an indication that the notes formed an important part of the scribe’s original intention for the manuscript, and that he included them in the process of preparing the pages. Furthermore, if the notes are the artifacts of the exemplar manuscript – or more likely manuscripts – one might expect to see differences in the notes between the Royal Brut and Wace sections, reflecting the usages of two different original annotators. And indeed, there is some variation. A noticeable change in the style of note occurs at the point of transition between the

129 “Gonvais, ki ert reis d’Orchenie” (Wace, Brut, line 9708).
anonymous text and Wace. While most of the notes in the Royal Brut section are simple names, often only one word in length, the notes accompanying Wace’s poem are far more likely to include a full phrase or sentence. The last few notes to the Royal Brut are very simple, one or two words naming characters and places: “¶ dux guerrehes,”130 “Tintagol · l dimilio ·,”131 “vlfinmardoc ·,”132 and “Merlin ·.”133 The notes in the Wace section, in contrast, begin with the place name “marckeby ·,”134 but then go on to read “¶ De ortu | arturi ·,”135 “Morz est li | duc ·,”136 “¶ natus est arturus”137 and “¶ nata est an / | na soror eius ·.”138 This is, of course, a simplification – many of the notes in the Wace section are as short as those in the Royal Brut, and some of those in the anonymous text go beyond a simple name or obit. Taken as a whole, however, the difference is striking.

This does not in itself, of course, mean that the two sections were handled by different annotators. One could explain the more elaborate notes in the Wace section simply because this later part of the Brut includes episodes that are more fully developed. The Arthurian section continues for some 4300 lines, in contrast to the reigns of earlier kings, which were limited sometimes to only a couple of lines recording their succession

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130 On f. 76va, at Bell, Royal Brut, line 6054.
131 On f. 77rb, at ibid., line 6170.
132 On f. 77rb, at ibid., line 6197.
133 On f. 77va, at ibid., line 6212.
134 On f. 77va, at Wace, Brut, line 8729.
135 On f. 77va, at ibid., line 8733.
136 On f. 77vb, at ibid., line 8746.
137 On f. 78ra, at ibid., line 8816.
138 On f. 78ra, at ibid., line 8819.
to the crown and subsequent death. Within this more discursive description of a single figure’s reign, there is far more scope for the development of individual characters and for a wide variety of battles and episodes. A simple introduction and obit would not suffice.

Length of the notes is not the only difference between the Royal Brut and Wace sections, however. The language of the notes also suggests a divide between the two sections. Language in many of the notes shifts freely between Old French and Latin. Some notes actually combine the two languages, shifting from using Latin rex as the title of the king to Old French anz in the description of the length of his reign. The meaning is clear, but betrays a certain linguistic distraction on the part of the scribe. Like the annotator of Lambeth 491, this annotator too seems influenced by the vernacular of his main text (here Anglo-Norman), while at the same time sometimes finding Latin the more natural language, whether because of a prejudice about the appropriate language for such notes, or because he has a Latin exemplar in front of him.

Whatever the explanation for these shifts, it is nevertheless true that the notes in the Royal Brut section use Latin far more frequently than those in the Wace. For those notes where it is possible to assign a language (for some, especially simple proper names, such an identification is not possible), in the Royal Brut 39 are in Old French, and 51 are in Latin, with easy and frequent passage back and forth between the two languages. Once the Wace text begins, it too initially favors Latin as the language of the notes, but quickly switches over into Anglo-Norman, so that the totals for the Wace section are 54 notes identifiably in Anglo-Norman, and only seven in Latin, with those few all occurring toward the beginning of the section. This may suggest an initial attempt on the part of the
scribe to bring the Wace notes linguistically in line with those from the previous section. In any event, the imbalance implies a distinction in the practice that the scribe has reproduced from his exemplars, at least one of which must, therefore, have already had notes to copy. The picture that emerges, then, is one in which the marginal annotations are playing an extremely prominent role in the scribe’s presentation of his text to the reader. Whether or not his exemplar contained annotations (and, for the Royal Brut section at least, I believe it did), the scribe has clearly taken some care to adapt them to the circumstances of the new manuscript. In doing so, he provides aids to the reader that are sometimes simply practical, as in the note clarifying a reading that is illegible in the main text. He also provides a guide for reading the two texts as a cohesive whole, and in doing so also offers some clues as to how he perceives these texts as a unity.

The first thing to strike a reader of the manuscript is the consistency of the repeated names in the margins. About 70% of the notes in the Royal Brut section contain a proper name, whether of a person or of a place, and many of these notes are the name alone, with no other information. While notes in the Wace section tend to be a bit fuller, many are still single names of places and people, and those that do provide more information often contain at least one important name within them, so that the proportion of notes containing names is actually slightly higher, at 78%. In all, this creates a consistency in form and theme for many of the notes throughout the Brut texts, while simultaneously emphasizing the texts’ large number of characters, and their way of organizing British history around the skeleton of a king list. The history of the British nation becomes identified with the history of the passage of kingship from sovereign to sovereign.
In terms of a practical aid for reading, however, the function of all of these names is somewhat more complicated than it at first appears. The running titles at the top of the pages which seem to participate in the same program of organizational apparatus as the marginal notes, certainly function well as finding aids, allowing the reader to quickly locate the section of text dealing with a particular king, and so subdivide the text by reign, in the same way that history is so subdivided by the texts’ authors. At first glance, the marginal notes may seem to serve the same purpose, offering a more specific guide to the location in the text of individual kings, a service particularly valuable when several reigns may pass in the space of a single folio. Yet the very proliferation of notes that include names thwarts their easy use for this purpose. Many kings rate no marginal notice at all, and many of the names listed in the margins are not those of British kings. They may be famous women like Cordelia or Helena, contemporary saints and popes, or even adversaries who defeated the Britons or who were defeated in their turn. One series of notes, for example, records in quick succession Donual, Ruderí and Stater. The first of these men was the king of Britain, and the second two were the kings of the Welsh and the Scots respectively, whom Donual defeated. Nothing in the notes, however, indicates who is the British king and who are his adversaries. Far from drawing out Donual as a part of the series of monarchs whose progression could be understood as providing a sort of organizing principle to the text, the notes subordinate

139 Indeed, not only does Cordelia merit a note (“cordoille ·” on f. 48rb at Bell, *Royal Brut*, line 1216), but so do her sisters (also on f. 48rb: “· gonorille ·” at ibid., line 1215 and “Ragav ·” at ibid., line 1217).

140 “¶ Seint heleine ·” on f. 62rb at ibid., line 3591.

141 On f. 49vb, at ibid., lines 1482, 1489 and 1490, respectively.
him within the details of his particular episode. He becomes one aspect of an episode that includes multiple characters, all with competing claims on both history and the narrative limelight.

The level on which the notes reflect the structure of the text is perhaps even more obvious slightly earlier, on f. 47r. Here, Brutus’s three sons divide the kingdom between themselves, and the names of Locrinus, Kamber, and Albanactus give rise to Logres, Cambria, and Albana respectively. As each of the brothers is identified, his name appears in the margin along with a Roman numeral: i, ii and iii. These numbers refer directly to the text’s statement that “La terre unt en treis departiz,” “they have divided the land into three parts” (Bell, Royal Brut, line 1036), and the numbering of the brothers themselves as “l’einzéné,” “the eldest” (line 1039), “li maiens,” “the middle one” (line 1039) and “li terz,” “the third” (line 1043). The numbers have immediate reference not to a larger, manuscript-wide system of ordering, but to the specific rhetorical structure within ten lines of text. The notes carry significance only within immediately proximate context, not in conjunction with the other notes in the manuscript.

Elizabeth Bryan, examining similar bodies of notes in the two extant manuscripts of Laȝamon’s Brut (London, British Library, MSS Cotton Caligula A.ix and Cotton Otho C.xiii), connects the names in Caligula and Otho to somewhat different interpretative

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142 The Laȝamon notes are clearly of a part with the tradition of chronicle annotation I am here exploring, showing the same predominant occupation with names. In one regard, however, they are quite different from the notes in Lambeth 491 and Royal 13.A.xxi: they are (with some few exceptions in the Otho manuscript, all, intriguingly, in the Arthurian section) none of them in the hands of the text’s scribes (Elizabeth J. Bryan, “The Two Manuscripts of Laȝamon’s Brut: Some Readers in the Margins,” in The Text and Tradition of Layamon’s Brut, ed. Françoise H. M. Le Saux, Arthurian Studies 33 [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994], 91). The possibility remains of an annotator/rubricator who was, although not the main scribe himself, still part of the original production team, particularly in the Caligula manuscript, where the notes are in red ink and contemporary with the scribes (Carole Weinberg, “The Latin Marginal Glosses in the Caligula Manuscript of Laȝamon’s Brut,” in Le Saux, Text and Tradition, 103). In the case of the Otho
imperatives. In Caligula, a more wide-ranging focus encompasses both genealogy and providential history. The Otho annotations, on the other hand, are more exclusively genealogical, a pattern Bryan connects with the memory techniques outlined by Mary Carruthers in her *Book of Memory*. The *divisio* of manuscript layout is, for Carruthers, a tool by which readers can break down the unwieldy unit of the entire *codex* into a series of more manageable sections, to be memorized *ad res* (on the level of the idea), as opposed to *ad verbum* (word-for-word). Marginal annotations, in this scheme, are not precisely “notae” themselves – the words or images intended to recall to the reader the entire furniture of the memorized compartment in which a given passage has been mentally stored – but recommendations of appropriate places at which to fix mental notae, specific to the individual reader. Simple cue-words, like names, might in this scheme, be employed for “recollective meditation,” with “creative intellectual, emotional and spiritual force,” a “foundation for storing all knowledge in memory.” Images, too, manuscript, however, many of the annotations are much later than the manuscript itself, dating to as recently as the fifteenth century (Bryan, “Two Manuscripts”). While the system of names was never exhaustive, including “long stretches where it is very unlikely additional names were written,” subsequent readers still felt that some additional apparatus was warranted, above and beyond what the scribe had supplied (ibid., 91, 3n). With reference to the Caligula manuscript, Carole Weinberg sees in the annotations evidence that Lažamon’s text, “though written in the vernacular, was taken seriously as a historical text” (“Latin Marginal Glosses,” 113).

Indeed, Bryan’s conclusion that “there was no one normative way of reading in the middle ages” is one of the leitmotifs of her study (“Two Manuscripts,” 101). If it is possible and productive to identify broad patterns in annotation – and I insist that it is – it must never be forgotten that notes inevitably respond to the exigencies of particular textual moments and to the priorities (and even whims) of individual annotators.


Cf. Carruthers’s examination of the numerical grid as a model for memorization, following the method laid out by Hugh of St. Victor (ibid., 81ff.).

Ibid., 107–108.

Bryan, “Two Manuscripts,” 95, 96.
can play a part in such systems of mnemonics, pictures sometimes arbitrary and (perhaps more frequently) representational, visual equivalents of such marginal words. Carruthers identifies this practice as one that extends across the Middle Ages, from as early as the ninth century or before,\textsuperscript{148} to as late as the fifteenth-century Douce \textit{Piers Plowman} (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104).\textsuperscript{149} Kathryn Kerby-Fulton connects these same Douce 104 marginal images with a bureaucratic filing system originating in the English Exchequer, \textit{signa} matching documents with the storage chest appropriate to their contents.\textsuperscript{150} A world of information – including, as in Douce 104, allusive social satire – can be encoded in a simple word or picture, as such marginal drawings propose that a line or passage of \textit{Piers} be filed in an appropriate Exchequer storage chest, a mental filing system to match the real-life one.

In these chronicles, then, marginal names would create an axis for readers, running throughout history, with specific events hanging on the names associated with them, the proper name standing in for the larger whole. Such a complex system of organization would imply, first, a profound intellectual and scholastic respect for the subject material of the \textit{Brut} (in all of its various, but similarly-annotated incarnations) and, second, a two-tiered utility for the annotations themselves. On the first reading, they would mark suggested \textit{foci} for meditation, and, on subsequent readings, they could potentially assist in recalling these \textit{foci} for reinforcement of the mnemonic grid.

\textsuperscript{148} Carruthers identifies the technique in the Utrecht Psalter (\textit{Book of Memory}, 226).

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 228–229.

\textsuperscript{150} Kerby-Fulton and Despres, \textit{Iconography}, 46.
The mnemonic model for annotations’ use, like the navigational “finding-aid” model, emphasizes genealogy (or dynasty) as a narrative structure for rendering a Brut text legible. If Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Latin Historia organizes itself around successive kings, then those texts that derive from it – whether Wace and the Royal Brut (in Anglo-Norman), or LaJamon, or Robert of Gloucester’s Metrical Chronicle (both in Middle English verse) or any number of Middle English Bruts, both verse and prose – are naturally perceived by their contemporaries (as they must certainly be so perceived today) as unrolling along this same structural axis.  

Both models of annotation, the mnemonic and the navigational, implicitly presume that the notes operate on the level of the codex, and, furthermore, that they operate semi-independently of the text they sit beside, whether as an aid to non-reading (nonsequential reading, after all, implies the omission of selected passages in favor of the prioritization of others) or as a technique for carrying the manuscript’s contents along in the memory, when the reader steps away from the manuscript. But this is not, as we shall see, the entirety of the picture.

Let us for now, however, turn our attention to London, College of Arms MS Arundel 58, to gain yet another witness as to the appearance of annotation within the chronicle context. This manuscript is, principally, a copy of Robert of Gloucester’s Metrical Chronicle, with some considerable revisions and supplements, including additions adapted from Geoffrey of Monmouth and from sources like William of Malmesbury’s Gesta Regum Anglorum, John of Glastonbury’s Cronica sive Antiquitates

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The manuscript was completed in 1448 (a couple of decades, that is, after Lambeth 491) and shows evidence of a Wiltshire dialect. It is also quite heavily annotated by the scribe of the main text, with notes in both Latin and English. It is, as usual, difficult to determine whether the scribe was copying his notes from an exemplar, or composing them himself. The scribe was, at any rate, certainly not the author of all the manuscript’s notes. On f. 103v, a section of the text not belonging to the Metrical Chronicle proper, the catchword “Ethelric” appears at the bottom of the page. This word is not, however, the first word of the text on the following page, which opens “Af fter Ide and Elle regned....” “Ethelric” is instead the note standing in the margin just to the left of “Af fter.” Its use as a catchword is evidence that it was already present beside the text the scribe sent out to copy.

The scribe seems, however, to have considered himself authorized also to contribute new notes to already existing ones he copied from his source. It is usually assumed that the scribe of Arundel 58 was also its compiler, not that he copied his patchwork text wholesale from another document. On f.83r, for example, during a prose

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insertion into the *Metrical Chronicle*, notes continue to appear that closely resemble the surrounding verse. “¶ Rex Merciorum” and “¶ Penda” seem cut from the same cloth as “¶ Osrik,” on the verso and marking now the *Metrical Chronicle* proper. It would seem that the scribe has started with the notes in his base text and then, in the interpolated sections, has chosen to create new notes (or adapt existing ones) to present the impression of a unified annotation apparatus.

Even more fascinating is the scribe’s marginal note “¶ hij tres in Duno / tumulo tumulantur in vno l Brigida Patrichius / atq̄e Columba pius” at the description of a tomb containing Saints Brigid, Patrick and Columba, patrons of Ireland (on f. 79r). The note marks a point within one of the manuscript’s interpolations, adjoining lines that may be transcribed: “But in the Abbeye of Doune in north I rlonde | his bones beth nouth in shryne / as y vnderstonde.” This is a fascinating moment where interpolation and note work together, with the interpolation possibly showing the first-person “I” of the Arundel 58 compiler himself. These two lines are slipped neatly between lines 4800 and 4801 of the version of the text reported by W. A. Wright, and the note itself does not represent mere bland reporting of the content of the text, but in fact contributes additional information from another, quoted source, perhaps traditional. Note and brief

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155 “Six score 3er & on he was old · ar dep him come to · / Pus was at glastinbury · verst yholde vp cristendon · .” (ibid., 1:338.4800–339.4801).

156 The couplet from the note can be found in the 1602 edition of Giraldus Cambrensis’s *Topographica Hibernia*, published by William Camden (“Topographia Hibernica,” in *Opera*, ed. James F. Dimock, vol. 5, Rolls Series 21 [London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1867], 164, 1n). Dimock, however, reports that he has not found the verse in any extant manuscript of the *Topographia*, and elsewhere disparages Camden’s edition as “a very faulty text, plainly taken from a bad late manuscript, and ignorantly or carelessly edited” (“Preface,” in Dimock, *Opera*, lxxx). If the couplet cannot therefore be assumed to be the echir Giraldus, then it seems likely Camden and the Arundel compiler alike drew it from some other, unidentified common source.
interpolation seem to work together, importing information from outside the text, and to enrich this supplementation, furthermore, by the invocation of a first-person voice. Whether this addition was made by the Arundel compiler or by the hand of another, the addition was surely made by someone with access to chronicle-historical information besides that provided by the *Metrical Chronicle* itself, and, furthermore, with an investment in supplementing the annotational apparatus alongside the text.

Nor was this effort a simple one-off. Another interpolation into the Arundel text is elsewhere accompanied by another note highlighting burial. On f. 83v, a brief additional passage finds its way into the text, accompanied by a note in the left margin.

And hugh that the peple *cristendom / in nes lieyth in the prio rye of Rouchestre*  
¶ This paulynus bo / 
₃t/ contre toke | In the lyff of seynt Paulyn / may me fynde by boke | That was Erchebissropp made / of York y vnderstonde | Sone after seynt Austyn cam in to this londe\textsuperscript{157}

Once again, the interpolation includes a first-person voice, this time, in bookish cross-reference to another source (*a vita* of St. Paulinus). Once again, too, we see what appears to be an impetus on the part of the interpolator to supplement the marginal apparatus at the same time as he supplements the text, and, what is more, to choose the margin as the appropriate location for information on the place of burial.

As for the content of these notes, the first several may offer a fairly representative sampling:

\textsuperscript{157} The lines fall between Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:359.4945 and 4946.
It is possible to see in these notes a broader range of interest than characterized those in Lambeth 491, but still a basic similarity in kind: names (“Diana dicitur dea siluarum”), numbers (“M\l/ M\l/ M\l/ iiij\xx/”), places, place-names and their origins (“How Tours was founded”), familial relationships, especially those determining dynastic succession (“Of þe good Dardan of whas kynde Brut cam”), marvels (“Wondres of Engelond”), and visions and prophecies (“þe vision of Brut”). Notes vary from the very brief and enigmatic (“Nota”) to the more fully developed. One note a few folios later (on f. 18r, at Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:73.993) is a particularly rich example of such greater development, both in its length and in the increased sophistication of its

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158 The passage to which this note corresponds is inserted slightly earlier in the manuscript than in William Wright’s edition.

159 In this case the number is a date, measured from the creation of the world. Annotations frequently show an attraction to numbers, but especially dates. This one also connects to another frequent interest for chronicle notes, in situating the events of English history within a larger world chronology. Cf. Bryan, “Two Manuscripts.”

160 The motivation behind *nota* markings is, unfortunately, not always easily discerned, but the reference of this *nota* is fairly clear. The note falls next to the lines “A clerc por3 enchantement · him bigan þo telle · / þat · þat child ssolde verst · fader & moder quelle...” (Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:16.225–227; the passage continues, going on to predict Brutus’s exile, military conquest, and foundation of dynasty). The passage’s nature as prophecy is doubtless the attraction here.
analysis: “¶ the langage of Pictes faillede | thurg h the Irissh modres · for | the childe lerneth his moder tonge ·.” The note once again has drawn attention to a moment of origin, in the explanation of present circumstances and custom, and one with a particular linguistic focus: a form of Gaelic, not of Pictish, is spoken in Scotland. The main text has a broader application, comprising a partly matrilineal culture in which, since “me mai bet sopnesse of þe moder · þan of þe fader iwite,” it was the custom that “wanne man wiþoute eir of him sulue · to deþe were ibro3t · / His moder kun was is eir · & is fader ri3t no3t” (Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:73.988, 991-92). The annotator’s invocation of the “mother tongue,” as well as the corresponding implicit equation of culture with language, is his own.

While the Arundel 58 annotator has a tendency to provide more information, however, and to focus even more aggressively than the other annotators we have encountered on names as products of etymologies, he is not incapable of presenting names, simply, in the absence of other information: “¶ Guentholiene,“161 “¶ Madan · kyng”162 and “¶ Mempris”163 all carry no more information than a name alone. These notes fall, like their Royal 13.A.xxi counterparts,164 beside the brief recital of the kings’ succession to power and death. Indeed, the Royal notes actually offer more information than do the Arundel ones, as the Arundel annotator, perhaps encouraged by the text,165

161 On f. 14r, at ibid., 1:47.640.
162 On f. 14r, at ibid., 1:47.642.
163 On f. 14r, at ibid., 1:47.644.
165 “Guendolein was king · viftene þer þo ·” (Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:47.640).
obscures Gwendolene’s gender. Arundel 58’s sometimes fuller notes, then, represent an expansion and further development of a basic annotation style that is still visible in the manuscript, rather than a wholly new type of annotation.

The identification of chronicle notes as interested in names, places and etymologies is one that has been repeatedly observed, by Marvin, Bryan and others. And in some ways, the practice is a fair representation of the preoccupation shown by these texts themselves with history as a succession of kings and a series of foundational moments, often presented linguistically through etymologies. The Arundel annotator’s reference to the “mother tongue” is particularly powerful in this latter regard: institutions and culture are fundamentally linguistic, even when this is not made overt by the text. The category of noun, however, is more inclusive than kings’ names and important cities, and as the entire grammatical category is recognized as central to chronicle notes, the notes’ function as mnemonic and representative devices becomes more clear.

1.3 Objects of Interest

Dynastic king-lists and etymologized places are the most obvious thematizations of names (nouns) in the chronicles’ margins. But some special objects are also things capable of being named, and these are in consequence frequently designated in both text and margins by a proper name. There is an obvious and intimate relationship between the names of people and the place-names derived from those eponymous individuals. The treatment of objects in these manuscripts is, however, even more instructive. Certain objects are among those names that merit notes, and hold their own beside the names of people and places as a critical part of the naming apparatus. Of the ten Arthurian notes in
Lambeth 491, two are objects: “þe rounde table”\textsuperscript{166} and “Tabourne Arthours swerde.”\textsuperscript{167} The scribe of Arundel 58 included only one of these items in his notes ("The rounde l table of Arthure"),\textsuperscript{168} an omission that seems to have been felt by at least some of the manuscript’s later readers. A later hand (perhaps the same seventeenth-century one that takes particular notice of “The stone in the l Chaire of Corona = l cion yet remayning l at westminster Anno 1627” on f. 17v) repairs what he apparently sees as a lack in the annotational apparatus with notes on “kynge Arthurs banner l made by Merlyn,” “a verye bright sworde l and well scowored,” “kynge Arthurs l Armes” and “Calyberne Kinge l Arthurs sword ·.”\textsuperscript{169}

In Royal 13.A.xxi, however, we can see an even more illuminating treatment of Arthur’s armaments. The manuscript is not an illustrated one, but there are a few pictures, including the decorative dragon at the join between the Royal Brut and Wace’s Brut, and, with more immediate application to the text’s content, rough drawings of Arthur’s sword, shield and spear. The drawings are large and, while fairly simple, are still recognizable as rendered accurately, if not with great realism. The sword pictured as “Caleburne” has the same curved guard described as typical “by around the middle of the

\textsuperscript{166} On f. 48v, at Brie, Brut, 1:78.15.

\textsuperscript{167} On f. 49v, at ibid., 1:79.27.

\textsuperscript{168} On f. 63v, at Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1:269.3839. Whether there may be any other objects in Arundel 58’s annotations is a trickier question to answer, being dependent on a precise definition of what may constitute an “object.” Stonehenge, for example, does merit notice, although one may argue whether it is a thing or a place: “¶ ffundacio stanhenge ·” (on f. 47r, at ibid., 1:215.3037). Cf. “þe stonys þt now bene at Stone l henge” and “Stonehenge” (on Lambeth 491, ff. 34r and v, at Brie, Brut, 1:61.13, 62.7–8).

\textsuperscript{169} These notes are scattered among a number of others in this hand, as well as in that of the scribe, and fall on ff. 58v and 60r.
fifteenth century” by Kelly DeVries and Robert D. Smith,\textsuperscript{170} and here visible in a somewhat earlier, thirteenth-century incarnation. These drawings are clearly in the hand of the main scribe, as they are accompanied by labels: “Caleburne ·,”\textsuperscript{171} “Pridwe[n]”\textsuperscript{172} and “brun ·.”\textsuperscript{173} The illustrations are in the same brown ink of the notes, but, like some of the notes as well, have been embellished with small amounts of red ink as a highlight: there is light red shading on the sword, as well as a red line along the top of the shield and thick red highlights running along the curving white highlight of the spear’s shaft. Pridwen, the shield, is perhaps the most “accurately” depicted of the armaments, as it carries the inscription “aue maria,” presumably standing in for the picture of Mary that is said to decorate the shield’s inner surface: “Dedenz l’escu fu par maistrie / De ma dame sainte Marie / Purtraite e peinte la semblance, / Pur enur e pur remembrance” (“Inside the shield, the image of my Lady St Mary was artfully depicted and painted, in her honour and memory;” Wace, Brut, lines 9293-9296). The scribe does not attempt to create an actual portrait of Mary, perhaps because his artistic skill is not up to the task, or perhaps because the allotted space is small. He is evidently invested in placing the image next to the passage that describes it, as the shield (which enjoys only a short description in the text and is sandwiched between the sword and spear) is itself smaller than the other armaments, and even the existing inscription has been greatly compressed, including a

\textsuperscript{170} Medieval Weapons: An Illustrated History of their Impact, Weapons and Warfare (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC CLIO, 2007), 185.

\textsuperscript{171} On f. 80vb; the point of the sword is even with Wace, Brut, line 9267 and the pommel with ibid., line 9283.

\textsuperscript{172} On f. 81ra; the top of the shield lies even with ibid., line 9292 and the base of the shield reaches down to ibid., line 9296, where it touches the top of the spear below.

\textsuperscript{173} On f. 81ra; the spear, from head to butt, stretches from ibid., lines 9296–9316.
Pictures in a medieval text may have a multitude of functions. The most obvious is simply to charm, to decorate and entertain. Images may also have some of the same functions within a system of mnemonic apparatus as words. Carruthers, after all, emphasizes the importance of visualization and imagery in the construction of mnemonic systems both in and outside of texts. Within manuscripts, she observes that “the scribe was most often also the book’s decorator,” highlighting the complicated and dependent relationship between illustration and the divisio of the text.¹⁷⁴ “[O]ne must,” in Carruthers’s model, “understand [an image] as directly referential not to an object but to a text (‘historia’) and thus to the human memorative processes called reading and composition.”¹⁷⁵ In this way, when the scribe draws Pridwen and inscribes it with “aue maria,” he does not intend to depict the actual Pridwen, but to make the pictorial equivalent of one of the manuscript’s many notes, relying on the physical shape of the shield to fix this textual passage the more firmly in the reader’s mind. The substitution of word for image on the shield itself – of “aue maria” for portrait face – reverses the process of the image as substitution for text. And these images are, fundamentally, textually determined. While Pridwen offers the scope for a detailed and visually arresting image that is never realized, another of Arthur’s armaments privileges image over language even more powerfully: “Helme ot en sun chief cler luisant, / D’or fu tut li nasels devant / E d’or li cercles envirun; / Desus ot portrait un dragun; / El helme ot mainte piere

¹⁷⁴ Carruthers, Book of Memory, 225.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 222.
clere, / Il ot esté Uther, sun pere” (“The helmet on his head gleamed brightly; the nose-guard in front and the surrounding hoop were all of gold, and at the top was painted a dragon. Many precious stones were in the helmet; it had belonged to his father Uther;” Wace, Brut, lines 9283-9288). The helmet, with its glistening gold, precious gems and proud heraldic dragon all invite illustration, but the margins carry no note and no picture. The reason for the omission of the helmet in the depiction of the armaments is surely that the helmet, unlike sword, shield and spear, has no name. Without the linguistic cue of the proper name, which seems to be the key prompt for the production of textual notes as well, the rich visual appearance of the object is not sufficient to give rise to an image. These images are an extension of the marginal naming.

This is not the only force at work in their production, however. Arthur’s weapons, while certainly both well-known and interesting – especially Caleburne/Excalibur – are given, by these large and extremely conspicuous pictures, a more emphatic treatment than any other person, place, thing, event or action in the whole of the manuscript. What is more, these images invite the reader to pause, to study them, even to meditate. Kelly Parsons locates images, drawn in red ink and with a minimal skill similar to that shown by the Royal 13.A.xxi scribe, of, among other things, the smock of the Virgin Mary and the “flames of divine love,” complete with the Latin inscription “ignis divini amoris” in the manuscript of the Book of Margery Kempe. She

176 The helmet, along with sword, shield and spear, is mentioned by Geoffrey of Monmouth, although in somewhat less gloriously visual language: “auream galeam simulacro draconis insculptam capiti adaptat,” “[he] placed on his head a golden helmet engraved with the image of a dragon” (History, 147.107–108).

177 Kelly Parsons, “The Red Ink Annotator of The Book of Margery Kempe and His Lay Audience,” in Kerby-Fulton and Hilmo, The Medieval Professional Reader at Work, 151. See also Parson’s figs. 1 and 5.
identifies these images as “an emblematic focus for [readers’] meditations,” a place to
pause during reading and to exercise an affective piety similar to those that Margery
embarks on in her text.\textsuperscript{178} The Winchester Malory manuscript offers its own potential
analogue, that carries with it suggestive echoes of a connection with affective piety for
such images. The one marginal picture in the manuscript is a rather crudely-drawn cross
with a stepped platform.\textsuperscript{179} It appears at the bottom of the left hand margin, on a page on
which two knights, Galahad and Melyas, come to a cross in the road. This cross marks a
fork in the road, and warns that if a knight passes to the right, he must be a very good
knight indeed to win honor, but that a knight passing to the left will win no honor at all.
Melyas and Galahad part ways at the cross, each taking a different path. A search of the
text, however, would surely turn up objects of importance equal to and even greater than
that of this cross, which is soon forgotten as Melyas quickly comes to grief and meets
Galahad again. Excalibur receives no illustration, nor even the Grail, nor, to choose a
more proximate example, the “crowne of golde” picked out as noteworthy by the scribal
annotation at the top of the very next page. The appropriateness of the image for pious,
affective meditation is suggestive. While the base of the cross is even with a rubric
introducing a new adventure (“Now turnyth the tale unto syr Melyas de Lyle;” Malory,
\textit{Works}, 529.37), the more critical sectional break would seem to be at the opening of the
Sankgreal, even more conspicuously marked on f. 349r, following two entirely blank
folios. The cross in Malory does not accompany text that would seem particularly well-

\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 151. These images, too, may of course also participate in a mnemonic program (Kerby-

\textsuperscript{179} On f. 357v at Malory, \textit{Works}, 529.37.
adapted to pious meditation, but no other potential explanation for its presence is without its own objections.

Another cross, of a slightly different kind, occurs in Arundel 58,\textsuperscript{180} displaying an even more complicated relationship between image, devotional object, and text. The episode is the conversion of the emperor Constantine, when he sees a cross in the sky, predicting his victory:

\begin{verbatim}
he [Constantine] wende he bi hold · toward heuene an hey ·
& þo vp in þe firmament · an aungel he sey ·
Pat huld an croiz & þer on · ywrite was lo þis ·
Constantin þoru þes signe · þou ssalt be Maister iwis ·
Constantin þis vnderstod · he þene þei he were ·
An croiz in stede of is baner · is men at vore him bere ·
(Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1:135.1888-1904)
\end{verbatim}

Once again, the Arundel annotator shows himself somewhat more likely than the usual chronicle annotator to supplement the text with additional information. If he is also Arundel 58’s compiler, composing his own notes, this makes sense: the annotations are an expansion of his supplementary act of textual interpolation, the expansion of Robert of Gloucester’s \textit{Metrical Chronicle} by recourse to other sources. Here, he draws the cross held by the angel as a Greek cross (all arms of equal length), a shape frequently associated with Constantine’s vision. Even more interesting, he places an inscription on the cross reading, left to right, “Constan tyn” and, from top to bottom, “\textit{in hoc l vinces}.” While the text itself only gives the English rendering (“þoru þes signe · þo ssalt be Maister”), the marginal image carries the traditional Latin \textit{in hoc signo vinces}. The drawn image allows the reader to imitate Constantine in pious contemplation of the

\textsuperscript{180} On f. 31v, at Robert of Gloucester, \textit{Metrical Chronicle}, 1:135.1901.
symbol. It also provides, however, a pictorial equivalent of the usual marginal noun or object-name, even to the point of integrating Constantine’s own name into the symbol.

To return, then, to Royal 13.A.xxi, sword, shield and spear cannot, clearly, be objects of true religious meditation, but still acquire a sort of enriched existence, by which, because of the picture, these objects are more present, more fully embodied, than they would be if they existed only in the text describing them. Because a reader may “see” the objects that Arthur possessed, a bond of connection is created between that reader and the pseudo-historical people and events described. The linguistic relics of wassail and drinchail,181 the “foundation” of Stonehenge, or the etymology of some familiar placename all create a connection between the past and the present, and these pictures share in the same effect. A word that survives in the lexicon as commemoration of an earlier incident is a reminder and visceral connection with that historical event. The pictures, in rendering Excalibur, Pridwen and Brun some degree more physically present than they would otherwise be, are a similar symbolic representation of events that have passed before. And it suggests that some of the importance of important, tangible objects within the text may be as mental hand-holds. As such objects are potentially more visible to the mind’s eye and tangible to the mind’s hand, they carry with them the events that they come to represent.182

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181 See “wassayll | drynkhaill” on Lambeth 491, f. 26r at Brie, Brut, 1:52.11–12.

182 Cf. Carruthers, Book of Memory, 222: “Just as letters, litterae, make present the voices (voces) and ideas (res) of those who are not in fact present, so pictures serve as present signs or cues of those same voces and res.” Tara Williams, in a recent conference paper, argued that marvels themselves can act within romances as mnemonics, outstanding moments of a frequently highly visual nature that create a vivid image capable of being situated in the rooms of the memory (“Why Marvels Matter” [presented at the The 32nd Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval Studies: Think Romance!, Fordham University, New York, 2012]).
Noteworthy objects in the text seem to shade off into another area of interest for chronicle annotators: marvels, both natural and supernatural. As with so many types of notes, the difficulty comes in identifying what annotators may consider to be “marvels,” or, looked at another way, what notes we modern readers may view as belonging all to a single type of annotation, and whether the label of “marvel” is an adequate or descriptive one in characterizing this type. In some cases, the question is clear-cut. The following passage is marked by the note “· A mervail ·” in Lambeth 491:

And in this same tyme, oppon þe sonde of the Scottyssh see, þat meny a man hit sye ther iij. dayes togedir þere were sene iij. Egle3, of þe which the tone come out of þe sourthe, & þe touþer out of þe North, & cruelly & strongly þey foughten togider & warsted togider; & þe south Egle ferst ow Hand ðe Northe egle, & al tarent and tare hym wiþ his bille & his closes, þat he shold not reste ne take no breþe; and aftir, the south egle flye home to his owne coostes. (Brie, Brut, 2:319.17-24)

This incident of two eagles is followed by a shower of falling stars “whos flaumes & hete brent & consumed mennys cloþes & mennys here,” and terrible storms with “such lightnynges, þundres, snowe & hayl, þat hit wastede and destroyed men, bestes, houses and trees” (2:319.28-29, 31-32). It is unclear whether the label of “marvel” is intended to refer only to the eagles, or to the stars and storms as well, and, furthermore, whether one or both of these latter events are themselves the misfortunes portended by the omen of the eagles, or are subsequent omens in their own right, foretelling a future, unspecified misfortune. Falling stars, for example, may be considered fairly standard harbingers. But unlike usually harmless meteor showers, this one seems to have combined its foretelling with its own consequent devastation, in the burning of clothing and hair.
Classifying this as a mere omen or as a disaster in itself, in both the modern and etymological sense, must be a question of subjective viewpoint, whether as one of those by whom “hit was seen & known,” or by one of those burned (2:319.29).

The base definition of marvel seems straightforward enough, though, as some event in the natural world outside of the usual natural order, but not, for all that, necessarily without a natural mechanism. The usage may be somewhat more narrow, however, on f. 195r, where the note “· A Mervaile ·” precedes a series of notes that highlight a succession of natural but out-of-the-ordinary events, including “A grete l pestilens,”\(^{183}\) “· \(\text{\textit{wynd,}}\)·”\(^{184}\) a “· grete frost”\(^{185}\) and “· \(\text{\textit{wynd,}}\)·”\(^{186}\) In this case, the “marvel” in question is, even more than fighting eagles or hair-igniting stars, of a type that might be considered as truly without natural explanation:

\[
\text{as þey had dweulled in playn cuntres \& desert bare wytnes, sodenly þer apperid iij castels, of þe whiche wenten out iij. ostes of armed men; and þe to oste was helid and clothed in white, and þe to þere in blak; and whan batayl bytuene hem was bygynne, the white ouercome þe blake, and anone after, þe blak token hert to hem \& ouercome þe white; and after þat, þey went a\(\text{\textit{jen}}\) into her castellis, and þat þe castels \& al þe oostes vanisshed awaye. (2:314.5-12)}
\]

The incident of appearing and disappearing castles, containing mysterious squads of mutually hostile and non-specifically allegorical inhabitants seems like an event out of the *Queste del Saint-Graal*, without the subsequent explanatory exegesis. Like the


\(^{184}\) On f. 195v, at ibid., 2:315.3.

\(^{185}\) On f. 196r, at ibid., 2:315.27–28.

\(^{186}\) On f. 196v, at ibid., 2:316.21.
marvel of the fighting eagles, emphasis rests on the testimony of eyewitneses, characterized as many and general (the entire population of “playn cuntres & desert,” rather than particular select authorities). The event appears to be important both because of its particular nature and because of the widespread knowledge of its occurrence. The event occurs, also, within a larger context of an extended serious of various events that are in violation of the normal natural order (unusual wind, unusual cold, pestilence), all of which too receive marginal annotation.

We may compare the treatment of this incident to one of the appearance of “two mones” (for so the annotator marks it) somewhat earlier in the manuscript, and earlier too in English history:

And in þat tyme wer’ seyne ij mones in þe firmament: þat on as clere, and þat oþer was derc, þat men myȝt hit þo see þ[r]ouȝt out al þe worlde. and Grete debate was þat same tyme aȝeyn þe Pope Iohn þe xxij aftþat Seynt Petre was Pope, and þe Emperoure of Almaigne, þat made him Emperour’ aȝeins þe Popes wille, þat þo helde his see at Aynoun; hwerfore þe Emperour made his crie at Rome, and ordeynede anoþer Pope þat hight Nicholas, þat was a ffyrre’ menour; and þat was aȝenes þe right of holy cherch, wherefore he was cursed; and þe power’ of þat oþer Pope sone was laide; and for encheson þat soche mervailes were seyne, men saide þat þe wor[l]de was neiȝ at an ende. (1:252.8-18)

Here we have another astronomical oddity, but this time it is glossed within the text. The two moons, again visible to all, are understood to represent (or perhaps foretell?) the establishment of an antipope, presumably the dark moon existing simultaneously with the bright one. An additional significance of the moons, perhaps jointly with the two popes, if that latter incident is read too as an omen in its own right, is given that “þe wor[l]de was neiȝ at an ende,” although it is unclear whether the author endorses this interpretation, provided neutrally as something that “men saide.” The author does,
however, endorse the two popes, or the two moons, or perhaps both, as “soche mervailes.” While the annotator does not himself use such terminology, therefore, it seems likely that even when he does not employ the word “marvel,” it would be fair nonetheless to class such portents as these within a broader class of marvelous events, and to understand them as belonging to a type or category that the scribe feels himself particularly obliged to emphasize. Such a view of the situation is particularly compelling in light of the fact that it is the moons, important only in their ominous portention, that receive a marginal marker, not the historical event that they foretell, and which is far more important in itself as a driver of both church and national politics. Such marvels are, like the cross of Constantine (in hoc signo), signs of events to come, open to the interpreting gaze of both historical witnesses and the text’s own reader. They visually prefigure events which text and annotations verbally symbolically represent.

Christian miracles do factor into the landscape of the marvelous, although not as frequently as the more natural marvels already discussed: there are two miracles identified by that name in the margins of Lambeth 491, and they mark events adjacent in the text. “A Miracle | of seynt | Edwarde” marks a vision by Edward the Confessor of King Swayne of Denmark attempting an unsuccessful invasion, drowning together with his followers. This is followed shortly thereafter by “A myracle | of seynt | Iohn Euang[ist],” in which the saint appears to two English pilgrims and entrusts them with a ring to be taken to King Edward with the news of his imminent death and salvation, because “jour’ Kyng Edward is my frende, & y loue him specialy for encheson þat he

188 On f. 86r, at ibid., 1:132.15.
hap euer’ Leuede in clennesse, and is clene maide” (1:132.28-29). In the first incident, the vision experienced by Edward is both prophetic and visual. In the second marvel, a key object (the ring) once more serves as a physical, visible anchor to the experience. The notes focus on the miraculous here at the expense of the political, insofar as Sweyne’s invasion, at least, might be considered a (non)event more important to English history than Edward’s vision of it, although, and this seems to be the key, less remarkable in its cause.

While these notes sanctify the political, they, like the miracles they mark, also politicize the sacred, recruiting John the Evangelist to the cause of endorsing an English king. Such politicization is not unusual for the chronicle’s miracles, and a useful point of comparison might be the those of St. Thomas of Lancaster, a martyr to the anti-Edward II cause whose death and posthumous healing miracles elicit, however, no notice from the annotator. Further light may be shed by the annotator’s treatment of another saintly and political Thomas, namely Thomas of Canterbury. He does not, intriguingly, merit marginal mention at the point of his death, but rather at the point of his translation. The point is a brief one within the text, but one entry in a laundry list of significant events both political and legislative:

¶ And in þat tyme þe Kynge toke of euery plough of londe ij s; and Hubert of Burgh was made þo chief Iustice of England. ¶ And þis was in þe iiiij þære of Kyng Henryes [i.e. Henry III] regne; & in þe same þære was seynt Thomas of Kanterbery translatede þe I [50³] þære after his martredome. ¶ And after, it was ordeynede by alle þe

189 Cf. ibid., 1:228.22ff.
190 The note “Translacio sancti Thome Canterburiensis” falls on f. 107v, at ibid., 1:173.9–10.
Lordes of Engeland, þat alle Aliens shulde gone out of England, &
come nomore þerin. (1:173.6-12)

The translation loses itself between, on one side, a tax of two shillings and the
appointment of a chief justice, and, on the other side, the exile of “alle Aliens” from
England. Nothing about the text itself would seem to favor the translation and the
translation alone as an appropriate object of marginal interest. Yet he receives a note
where Thomas of Lancaster did not. Miracles are – like all other categories – annotated
irregularly in the text, but whether there is any bias toward dynastic saints like Edward
the Confessor, and against anti-royalist ones Like Thomas of Lancaster or Thomas
Becket, is more difficult to state with confidence.

Such events could, paradoxically to modern sensibilities, actually increase the
believability of an account. As Chris Given-Wilson notes, “Miracles, in an age of faith,
were expected: they made things more, not less, credible.”191 The marvelous was an
expected category of event, and one with an evidentiary function: miracles could work as
signs of God’s power within the world.

Preternatural signs included miracles, dreams, portents (or
prodigies) and – since they were widely held to be divinely-
inspired – authoritative prophecies. The reasons why it was
incumbent on a chronicler to record and interpret them were
twofold. Firstly, because they revealed the operation of divine
providence in earthly history; secondly (and as a consequence
of the first reason) because they provided evidence as to the meaning
and value of earthly events.192

191 Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England (London: Hambledon and London,
2004), 33.

192 Ibid., 21. Given-Wilson notes, however, that explicit labeling of such events as “miraculous”
was not universal: “For example, neither the author of the Vita Edwardi Secundi, nor the Bridlington canon
Either with or without an explicit attribution to divine agency, occurrences outside of the usual natural order were considered a regular and predictable (as well as predictive) part of history. Such a focus on the marvelous naturalizes it by making the unusual as much a part of the pattern of nature as the usual.

The consistency of practice that characterizes annotators’ approach to these events can be seen by comparison of the natural marvels highlighted in Lambeth 491 with those of Royal 13.A.xxi. I have already discussed the great emphasis given to certain special objects (Arthur’s arms, the Round Table), but noteworthy events are also marked, that may be considered outside the natural order: on f. 111vb is a “¶ famine grant” (great famine) and “¶ M\or/talite ·.”

And, if Lambeth 491 has its comets marked, both as a “ marvel” and more directly as “Stella Comata,” Royal 13.A.xxi has its comets as well, a “stella” in the Royal Brut and a total of five marked as “Comete” or “Commete” in the margins of Gaimar’s Estoire. Arundel 58 is less generous with its

who wrote a chronicle of the deeds of Edward II, used the words miraculum or miraculose once in their chronicles, despite recording events which others might well have seen as miraculous” (ibid., 35).

193 The notes fall at Wace, Brut, lines 14663 and 14675, respectively.

194 On f. 197v, at Brie, Brut, 2:319.17–18.


196 “¶ stella apparuit ·” on f. 75vb, at Bell, Royal Brut, line 5920.

197 On ff. 121va, 123ra, 142vb and 143vb, at Geoffrey Gaimar, L’Estoire des Engleis, ed. Alexander Bell, Anglo-Norman Texts 14–16 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1960), lines 194, 1431, 1713, 5139 and 5357. See also Geoffrey Gaimar, The Anglo-Norman Metrical Chronicle of Geoffrey Gaimar., ed. Thomas Wright, Research & Source Works 154 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1850), lines 196, 1433, 1715, 5145 and 5363. Unlike the Royal Brut and Wace’s Brut, Gaimar’s Chronicle is not presented as part of the same continuous text. Nevertheless, the scribe is the same. Whether he crafts his own notes here or copies from an exemplar, however, remains an open question. There are differences, as in the consistent use of the French “Comete” in Gaimar, contrasting with the Royal Brut’s Latin paraphrase of “stella apparuit.” Still, there are similarities, as well. The same one-letter abbreviation for obitus is used in the Royal Brut (e.g. on f. 62ra at Bell, Royal Brut, line 3547, on f. 62rb at ibid., lines 3588 and 3601, on f. 65va at ibid., line 4164, etc.), in Wace’s Brut (once, on f. 100va, at Brut, line 12741), and repeatedly again in the Gaimar (e.g. on f. 122va, at Estoire, line 1614 or Anglo-Norman Chronicle, line 1616, on f. 123ra, at Estoire, line 1688 or
marvels. The “Wondres of Engelond” are marked, but as part of a series of notes highlighting other numbered sets like the “¶ · vij · ages of þe | wordle” and the “¶ Profites of En | gelonde.” Arundel does have a few notes, however, belonging to a class that seems to be related to that of marvels: dreams and visions. There are two marked visions, neither of them much explained in the text. At “¶ þe vision of | Brut,” Brutus falls asleep and sees an “ymage” that “tolde him is chance [fate],” with the single line of dialogue, “Brut he sede passe vorþ · al biþonde france ·” (Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:24.328-329): go north, young man! The comparative terseness of this “vision” only emphasizes the importance of its status as vision in prompting the note. This text offers no wealth of rich detail nor even important plot information. The text shows little interest in what Brutus dreams, but for the annotator, it is remarkable that he did dream, and that this dream carried prophetic weight. The vision of Laurentius (“¶ The vision of | Erchebisshop Laurence”), another dream, is more fully expanded in the text. The authority who brings a message is not a nameless “ymage,” but St. Peter, and Laurentius’s physical and psychological pain in this vision is vividly depicted: “so vyllyche ys ssep vorsake / Wyþoute warde among þe wolues” (Robert of Gloucester, *Anglo-Norman Chronicle*, line 1690, on f. 123rb, at *Estoire*, line 1740 or *Anglo-Norman Chronicle*, line 1642, etc.). This distinctive orthography may be evidence of the same annotator at work throughout, or it may simply be evidence of the scribe’s efforts to standardize the already-composed notes he is reproducing from his source.

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199 Sic; on f. 7r, at Ibid., 1:14.190. Note that this passage in the text is out of order compared to the version carried in W. A. Wright’s edition.

200 On f. 7r, at ibid., 1:10.139. The “profits” are a list of notable English resources and industries: fish, wild game, sheep, fruit, ships, etc.

201 On f. 9v, at ibid., 1:24.328.

202 On f. 96v, at ibid., 1:349.31.
Even more, the vision has the significant effect of prompting the king’s conversion, as he “for drede · ys false wyf vor soke / Pat he huld in such hordom · & cristendom toke” (1:350.45-46). Laurentius’s dream stands as a shorthand for the king’s Christian conversion,\textsuperscript{203} emphasizing the importance of the visionary for the annotator’s scheme.

Dreams populate the margins of other chronicles, as well. There are a number of marked visions in Royal 13.A.xxi, including “¶ Auis ion le rei | Artur ·”\textsuperscript{204} and ¶ Exposicion del | auision ·,”\textsuperscript{205} both further emphasized by accompanying manicules, at King Arthur’s prophetic dream of the battle between a bear and a dragon. Despite the annotation’s promise of a simple “exposicion,” the dream is given no clear authoritative gloss in the text. Some see in it the defeat by Arthur of a foreign giant (an interpretation granted some support by the encounter with the giant of Mont St. Michel immediately following), Arthur himself chooses to read “La guerre que nus devum faire / Entre mei e l’empereur” (“the war we must start between the emperor [Lucius] and myself,” and others provide unspecified interpretations “d’altre guise” (“in a different way;” Wace, \textit{Brut}, lines 11276-77, 11273).

A second vision is granted to St. Augustine of Canterbury, and here again it is possible to see the way in which these annotations emphasize the repeated appearance of...
a particular type of incident – in this case a vision – at the expense of an interest in marking the specificity of events. Augustine is travelling through pagan England, preaching, spreading Christianity, and performing a number of miracles. Sandwiched between the punishment of some recalcitrant inhabitants of Dorchester (they are cursed with tails) and the miraculous production of a spring, Augustine receives a vision in which God appears to him and delivers him some rather nonspecific words of encouragement:

Tu iês mis serfs e tu me pleis
E bien me plaist ço que tu fais.
M’aie avras, jo sui od tei,
Ço que tu requiers, ço t’otrei.

You are my servant and pleasing to me, and what you are doing pleases me. You will have my help, I am with you, and what you ask I will grant. (Wace, Brut, lines 13761-64)

The content of the vision is unimportant; the critical fact is that Augustine has a vision. That information alone is sufficient as evidence of Augustine’s special relationship with God, the divine authorization of his mission of conversion, and his ultimate sainthood – facts which are, in fact, also the only specified content of the vision itself. Incidents like the granting of the tails more vivid as an individual event, but fitting less neatly than visions into a larger pattern of incident type, are passed over by the annotator.

Paging back among the chronicles to Lambeth 491, we actually come full circle to a question that arose at the beginning of the examination of the annotations: how are we to understand Lambeth’s “prophecies of Merlin”? In terms of annotation type, they are

206 Merlin’s prophecies are marked as such on Lambeth 491 ff. 43r, 58r and 60v, at Brie, Brut, 1:72.4, 90.22 and 93.18–19, respectively.
surely of a piece with the dreams that have prominent place in Arundel 58 and Royal 13.A.xxi. These dreams are by and large prophetic, in which either an authority figure appears to deliver some privileged knowledge of the future, or, as in the case of the “Auision le rei Artur” of the fight between bear and dragon, an integument of beast allegory is representative of future events. Merlin’s own prophecies are themselves mostly of this latter type, differing only in that their mode of delivery is through Merlin’s words, rather than by direct vision in sleep. Given the similarity between “prophecies” marked in Lambeth and “visions” that receive notice in other chronicles, it seems less likely that these prophecies were of interest merely as a particular stage in the Arthurian story, and more probable that “prophetic vision” existed in the minds of both annotators as a category or type meriting specific marginal notice. The reader does not approach the text with a particular desire to locate Merlin’s prophecies as a point of special interest. The visions of Arundel and Royal 13.A.xxi, after all, are typically brief, and, if taken in isolation from their surrounding context, uninformative. Instead, the annotations mark successive incidences of a particular type of event deemed by the annotator as worthy of notice, and this repeated marginal attention encourages the reader to view that type of event as definitive of the text in some way. It is unlikely that any reader would skip from vision to vision or prophecy to prophecy in one of these manuscripts. The repeated flagging of these moments in the text, however, both assumes a natural interest in such events on the part of the reader and moreover leaves a reader with the impression that

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207 On Royal 13.A.xxi f. 91vb, at Wace, Brut, line 11253.

208 While dragons and bears are animals typical of Merlin’s prophecies, the battle between dragon and bear is not among the “prophecies of Merlin” proper. Arthur’s vision does, however, derive directly from Geoffrey of Monmouth (Cf. History, X.165.16ff.), and the formal relationship between these two modes of prophecy is immediately recognizable.
these chronicles may be characterized by the inclusion of such incidents. The notes address an implicit desire on the part of readers for emphasis on such moments, but simultaneously, by that very emphasis, perpetuate marvels as a recognizable and highly visible category.

1.5 A Tradition Redeployed: Romance Annotation and the Corpus Christi Prose Lancelot

The extended examination of patterns within chronicle annotation, as detailed in the preceding sections, is a necessary prologue to the study of romance: similar patterns emerge in romance manuscripts as well. Chronicles are more likely to receive annotation than are romances, and are often more heavily annotated than romances. Furthermore, while scribal annotation is common in chronicles, romances are more likely to receive their notes from owners and readers than from manuscript producers. Still, within the English context – in manuscripts, that is, produced in England in both Middle English and Anglo-Norman French – when annotators (usually readers) decide to take up their pen to mark the text, they are likely to do so in a manner reminiscent of chronicle annotation, sharing many of the same priorities and note types. While it is impossible to identify with certainty the direction of the flow of influence – and the most likely scenario would probably feature influence flowing back and forth across generic lines – the greater prevalence of chronicle annotation, as well as the relative antiquity of chronicle notes,\(^{209}\) would suggest that romance annotators are relying on a familiar

\(^{209}\) It is easy to find annotations in chronicles, in manuscripts of all periods. Royal 13.A.xxi is itself an older manuscript within the context of this study, dating to the thirteenth century. Romance annotations, in contrast, seem more typical of readers in the fifteenth century and beyond, and most of my examples come from that later period.
chronicle tradition as their model. Romance book-producers – sometimes the same scribes we identify as chronicle book-producers – do not (with some notable exceptions) seem to view an apparatus of annotation as a necessary adjunct to romance texts. But romance readers did not always agree, and looked to the sister-genre of chronicle as a pattern. Some differences will emerge, certainly, which will be explored in greater detail in future chapters. But the overwhelming story is one of similarity, and, when need for some kind of major textual apparatus is seen in romances, of a generic continuity in that apparatus with chronicle.

One manuscript of a text of indisputably romance affiliation (the Prose Lancelot) provides us with a small number of annotations, but with ones of relative antiquity. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 45 carries a small but significant amount of marginal annotation, including notes in what is likely a fourteenth-century hand. The manuscript itself, technically volume two of MS 45 and not originally associated with volume one, is uncertain in provenance but generally deemed “most probably written in England,” c. 1250. The annotations are described by Gweneth Hutchings, with some imprecise reservation, as “definitely in an English hand of a somewhat later date (? fourteenth century).”


212 Ibid., 193. See also Kennedy, “Lancelot En Prose,” 23–38. With regard to paratextual material, Kennedy focuses primarily on corrections to the text made both by readers and by the scribe in an apparent attempt to disentangle some of the confusion created by a shift from Perceval to Galahad as Grail Knight.
There are several different hands at work in the manuscript, and disentangling them into discrete bodies of annotations by individual hands is a task not without difficulty. Some notes are extremely terse indeed (a simple *nota* is not uncommon), and even the wordier notes do not stretch longer than a single sentence or even phrase. Complicating this issue, the notes vary widely in medium, featuring a few different colors of ink, and even leadpoint. It would not be unexpected for a single person writing over a long period of time, with a variety of different pens, to exhibit a wide range of scripts. Bearing this in mind, therefore, while there are some very few words, mostly corrections, that I judge to spring from a different source, and a small body of manicules that form a grouping of their own,\(^{213}\) I consider the majority of the manuscript’s annotations to spring from the same source, albeit in a number of different pens and over an extended period of time.

The notes can be united by the association of many in this group with distinctive accompanying manicules. While these manicules, like the note-texts, differ in appearance, there are some features that appear in all of them. Pointing index fingers are thin and long, ending in a fingernail drawn across the width of the finger, and resting above three equally-sized secondary fingers, folded under as rounded bumps. Even more characteristically, each hand is clothed in a sleeve that extends far past the wrist, flush with the base of all four visible fingers, forming a sort of fingerless glove that flares out widely at the wrist. These sleeves or gloves are further embellished with a sort of drawn-

\(^{213}\) Manicules in this grouping are located on ff. 118vb, 124va, 125ra, 151rb and 153rb (at Sommer, *Vulgate*, 3:218.11, 249.11–12 and 252.27; 4:25.26–27 and 35.18). Two additional manicules appear to be one-offs, with no clear affiliation to other marks in the manuscript: one on f. 94va at *ibid.*, 3:66.19–21 and another on f. 95ra, at *ibid.*, 3:70.8.
on texture of vertical lines (folds?) or, in one case, cross-hatching. The cuff or flare at the wrist is always smooth and straight on manicules in the left margin, pointing right, and is always gracefully scalloped on manicules in the right margin, pointing left. The distinction between right- and left-hands extends to the fingers as well: hands pointing left have index fingers of exaggerated length. And most, telling of all, these manicules are always in the same medium (whether ink or leadpoint) as the notes they accompany, seeming to preclude the possibility that they have all been added at some previous (or subsequent) time, by a reader other than the author of the notes.

While a cuckoo in the nest may possibly remain, I consider it by far the most likely scenario that all these notes spring from the same source, and treat them here as a single individual’s apparatus. While an exact count is difficult, relying as it does on distinguishing closely associated notes as either one note or two, there are approximately seventeen notes in this series. Elspeth Kennedy, in her study of this manuscript, observes their presence, and ascribes their significance to an interest in love and in the conduct appropriate to a young knight. Rereading these notes with the chronicle tradition in mind, however, contributes a rather different perspective on this annotator’s concerns. Love and loyalty, major themes in the Lancelot itself, must of necessity color any reading of that text, including this particular reader’s. But other aspects of these notes may owe less to an organic growth from the Lancelot’s subject matter, and more to contemporary expectations of appropriate apparatus.

We may start with the annotations’ relationship with names. Lacking the dynastic structure of Brut chronicles, where the backbone of a list of successive kings, unfolding

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out over history, is thematically and structurally vital to the text, it is not surprising that
the *Lancelot* notes do not participate fully in the chronicle annotations’ name obsession.
Still, there is in CCCC 45 a not-insignificant interest in names, especially placenames and
placename origins. This seems, indeed, to be the motivation behind the first series of
notes, on f. 87ra:

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f. 87ra, at Sommer, *Vulgate* 1:16.23-24: “ou le roy ban [u]ust
ense | [u]ely Nota”
87ra, at 1:16.26-27: manicule
87ra, at 1:16.39-40: “Nota nomen | castelli”

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In the first of these notes, there are a number of potential points of interest in this general
area, not least of which is the naming of the monastery where King Ban’s body is finally
laid to rest (“chis lieus si fu apeles moustiers roiaus,” “the place came to be called the
Royal Minster”). The specter of etymology hovers, even when it is not specifically
invoked by the wording of the note.

While the name of Moustiers Roiaus is not reproduced in the margin, place (*ou*)
and burial (*enseuely*) preoccupy the note. Sites of burial are frequent points of interest in
chronicles, and perhaps even more so in the annotations. Certainly kings’ names are
likely to appear at the point of death, at which point their place of burial may be
additionally mentioned in the text. Arundel 58 is particularly interesting in this regard.
The manuscript has a number of marginal notices of burials, including, for example, “¶
The buryinge | of Lordes,” at a mass burial of Arthur’s slain enemies in the war against

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215 “Where the king Ban was entombed: Note.”

Lucius,\textsuperscript{217} or the “¶ hij tres in Duno / tumulo tumultantur in vno / Brigida Patricius atque
Columba pius” and burial of “paulynus bones [...] in the priorye of Rouchestre” discussed
at length earlier.\textsuperscript{218} These last two notes in particular, reporting as they do information on
burial location not provided in the text, isolate the margin as the appropriate place to
provide this notice. The adjoining lines seem to speak with the compiler’s own voice,
and he would have had, therefore, discretion to place this information in the poem itself.
But the locations of these burial places are not only necessary adjuncts to any mention of
the saints, but also proper fodder for marginal notice, even above and beyond the notice it
might otherwise receive within the text itself. The marginal placement is a deliberate
positioning.

A comparable treatment of royal burial places may perhaps be found in the
“chronicle” of John Cok,\textsuperscript{219} a sort of pared-down skeleton of a chronicle included in
Cok’s cartulary of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, and likely copied from a tablet hanging in
St. Paul’s Cathedral. The “chronicle” consists of brief entries, of which the following is
typical:

\begin{quote}
Anno · M\o/ · C · xxxv · Coronacio Stephani Regis apud westmonasterium · hic Regni sui · xix\o/ · anno apud ffaueresham
humatus est
\end{quote}

In the year 1135 the coronation of Stephen the King at

\textsuperscript{217} On Arundel 58, f. 74r, at Robert of Gloucester, \textit{Metrical Chronicle}, 1:316.4481.

\textsuperscript{218} On Arundel 58, ff. 79r and 83v, both adjoining interpolations in the text.

\textsuperscript{219} Cok, his “Chronicle,” and his annotations on the romances of Cambridge, Corpus Christi
College MS 80, will be treated at greater length in Chapters 3 and 4. See also Appendix A for a
transcription of the chronicle.
Westminster. He was buried in the nineteenth year of his reign at Faversham.\textsuperscript{220}

Date and place of coronation, length of rein, and location of burial are the basic information that, for Cok, form the backbone of a chronicle. Burial place is a necessary adjunct to even the most basic historical record, and particularly congenial, moreover, to a schematic presentation like that found in such a vestigial chronicle. The marginal apparatus, if taken in isolation from its text, naturally becomes similarly schematic.

To return to the province of romance, then, when the annotator of CCCC 45 pays such marked attention to the location of Ban’s burial, then, he takes a markedly historical approach to the significance of the event. The text of the \textit{Lancelot} is more concerned with the extravagant grief of Ban’s wife (Lancelot’s mother), and with the refuge from her troubles that she finds in a withdrawal to the religious life. The burial of Ban in a purpose-built monastery speaks to both of these themes, of course, but the phrasing of the note strips the event of this significance, presenting the bare facts of entombment and location. Emphasis on place is driven even more powerfully home a few lines below, with the loosely associated note signaling the “name of the castle” of “mont lair.”\textsuperscript{221} Here the usurping Claudas turns from his persecution of Queen Elaine to an attack on her sister, the mother of Lancelot’s cousins Bors and Lionel. These important characters, as well as the parallelism of the two afflicted queens, are subordinated, however, to the naming of a geographical location, even though this castle will not, ultimately, be of great

\textsuperscript{220} The transcription is my own. For the English translation, see Norman Moore, \textit{The History of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital}, vol. 2 (London: C. Arthur Pearson, 1918), 37. The “Chronicle” can be found on f. 646v of the cartulary (not f. 636v, as Moore erroneously states).

significance in the larger context of the romance. My meaning here is not that the annotator is missing the point, but that in his eyes, the identification of places and moments of naming are some of the very *raisons d’être* of annotation. Romance annotation is a genre of its own, with its own generic conventions. Such conventions may sometimes pull *against* the generic ideology and forms of the romance text, but it is not a sterile conflict. Rather, such contrasts can be the front lines of interaction between rival genres (chronicle and romance), and can also nuance future readings of the text.

Placenames will continue to be a recurring theme in the *Lancelot* notes. A complex of notes on f. 97rb begins with a *nota bene* and manicule whose import is not immediately apparent: a knight requests of a damsel direction to lodging.²²² All is explained a few lines later, however, with the more expansive note, “le non del forest *par le chaste[l].”²²³ Although the placename itself does not stand in the margin, the annotator wishes readers to understand that the “chastel qui auoit non brions” (Sommer, *Vulgate*, 3:84.17-18) lends its name also to the forest Briosque. Then, on f. 157rb, a note stands beside that point in the text where Galehaut is credited with granting that name to a castle in which he had formerly intended to imprison Arthur:²²⁴ “Nota del chast[el] | qauoit a no[n] | lorgulous gar | de † mys *par* galehout | *nota*” (“Take note regarding the castle

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²²² Both note and manicule fall at Ibid., 3:84.13–14.

²²³ On f. 97rb, at Ibid., 3:84.20–21.

²²⁴ “Et il meisme li auoit mis non . lorguellouse emprise . por la trez grant force quil auoit,” “he himself had named it the Proud Fortress, because of its beauty and its strength” (Sommer, *Vulgate*, 4:6.2–3; Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 4:73.9). The English translation is based here on a reading of the text closer to CCCC 45 than is Sommer’s edition: CCCC 45 has “lorguellouse garde” rather than “lorguellouse emprise,” and attributes the name to “la bialte” as well as “la force” of the fortification.
which has as its name Orgueillous Garde, [a name] set by Galehaut: note”). Both note
and manicule highlight the name, as well as the act of naming.

Orgueillous Garde and, for that matter, Briose and Moustiers Roiaus, are not, of
course, real places and cannot, therefore, fully share in the role of etymologies in
connecting past with present through relics of that past both tangible and linguistic. 225
This might seem to set these etymologies apart from those afforded to Thongcaster in
Royal 13.A.xxi and Lambeth 491, 226 or Leicester in Arundel 58, 227 to name only a few
examples out of many. One may be cautioned, however, since Thongcaster itself, with its
well-known etymology dating back to Geoffrey of Monmouth, 228 is better known for the
story of its naming than for its actual existence under that name. The town is now no
longer Thongcaster, but Caistor in Lincolnshire. 229 There is some evidence, moreover,
that such a town was unknown to some English audiences as early as the thirteenth
century, since several manuscripts of Wace’s Brut carry an inserted explanation of the
place-name as an early form of Lancaster: “Premierement ot nun Wançastre / Or l’apelant
plusurs Lancastre / Si ne sevent pas l’a chaisun / Dunt Wançastre ot primes cest nun” (“It
was first called Thwangcaster; now many call it Lancaster. They don’t know the reason

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226 “¶ thangcastre” on Royal 13.A.xxi f. 68vb, at Bell, Royal Brut, line 4726.

227 “¶ Leir foundes leycetre” on f. 14v at Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1:50.680.

locos, ubi nunc ingentia cernis / moenia surgentemque novae Karthaginis arcem, / mercatique solum, facti
de nomine Byrsam, taurino quantum possent circumdare tergo,” “They came to the place, where now you
see the giant walls and rising citadel of New Carthage, having bought land, as much as they could encircle
with the hide of a bull, and having fashioned Byrsa [from βύρσα, “ox-hide”] from that name” (Virgil:
Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I-VI, trans. and ed. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library 63
[Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986]).

229 Wace, Brut, 175, 1n.
for it first acquiring the name [i.e. Lancaster]). The interpolation solves one problem, the apparent unfamiliarity of Thongcaster as a real place, but creates the new problem of an etymology that no longer functions to explain the modern name (now “Lancaster”). The confusion suggests, however, that these etymologies held interest even when they explain place-names that are outside the common experience of the reader. Thongcaster is, in a way, no more relevant or real than Orgueillous Garde.

A final series of notes to examine in CCCC 45 is even more interesting, and exhibits another major concern common to both chronicle and, as here, romance annotation, namely the interest in visions and dreams. A conspicuous note, further emphasized by a manicule, stretches across the left half of f. 115v: “nota · del trois diuresses songes · le roi artour en · iiij diuresses nuitz !” (“Take note of the three different dreams of King Arthur, on three different nights”). In the margin below, these three dreams are then enumerated by the annotator: “le premer songe” (at Sommer, Vulgate, 3:199.30-31), “la iij· songe” (at 3:199.30-31) and “la iij· songe.” The last of these cannot be precisely located in Heinrich Sommer’s edition (or, for that matter, in Alexandre Micha’s), since the presence of three dreams rather than two represents a departure from the standard version of the text. On the first night, Arthur dreams that

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230 Ibid., 174, 6n.

231 The other question, of course, is why, specifically Orgueillous Garde? Why not, for example, Joyous Garde, which is perhaps the better-known castle, and whose name-change from Dolorous to Joyous is one of Lancelot’s major chivalric accomplishments? This incident in the manuscript receives no attention from the annotator; see CCCC 45 f. 114rb, Sommer, Vulgate, 3:192.23–24; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 3:40.419. The CCCC 45 annotator is simply not consistent or sustained in his note-making. As Marvin cautions, it must be borne in mind that, in any individual manuscript, there will always be “many factors that will remain forever unknowable [that] will enter into the creation, use, and survival of any given manuscript” (Marvin, “Anglo-Norman Narrative,” 124).

232 As it stands in the manuscript, the passage reads as follows:
the hair has fallen out from his head and beard. Then, “a la tierche nuit apres” (at Sommer, Vulgate, 3:199.31), Arthur dreams again, this time that all the fingers except the thumbs have fallen from his hands. CCCC 45 supplements these two dreams with a third, the invocation of the “third” night inspiring a grouping of three. This final dream falls “en lautre tierce nuit,” “on the other third night,” perhaps meaning on the third night after the last. This time, “tuit li doit despies li chaoient sans les pouces” (“all the digits of the feet fall off except the thumbs [i.e. big toes]”): Arthur loses his toes. Freudian dreams indeed, especially compared with the more usual Arthurian fare of visions of beast-allegory.

Further down in the column comes a final note in the series: “coment le\’s/ son / ges roi arto\’ur | furet expone\’s/ .” (“how the dreams of King Arthur were explained”). The explanation is a grim one: “toute honor terriene vous couient a perdre . & chil ou vous plus vous fies vous fauront estre lor gre .” (“you are to lose all worldly honor, and those in whom you have the greatest trust will, all unwillingly, fail you”). Some hope

| le premer songe | kar a sonia que tuit licheuel del aceste li chaoient & tuit lipoil de la barbe · si en fu mult espoente & par ce de mora encore enlaule ale tierce nuit apres liравint quil |
| la ijej\’e/ · songe | sonia que tuit li doit de\’s/ mains lichaoient sans les pouces & lors fu mult plus esbais que deuant · & en lautre tierce |
| la iiij\’e/ songe | nuit resonia que tuit li doit despies li chaoient sans les pouces & lors fuil trop espoentes si ledist a son chapelain |

233 This note is exemplary of the difficulty that exists in identifying these notes as the work of a single annotator. It functions seamlessly as a part of this series of notes, but is written in a different ink, and in a somewhat different script. “Songs,” a word that appears in all four other notes on this page, and which appears, in all of those notes, with an initial sigmatic s, here starts with a long s. S at the end of “le\’s/” and “expone\’s/” is elongated and suspended in a way that appears nowhere else in the manuscript. At the same time, “artour” is very similar in this note and the one at the top of the page, and “roi” nearly identical. Given the close association of this note with others on the page, and the fairly wide variation that exists throughout this body of notes between ones that are likewise linked by common characteristics, like the manicules or the (comparatively consistent) script of the “nota.”

is held out to Arthur a few lines later, albeit of a remedy he does not have any real chance of pursuing, as it is one not itself legible to uninitiates, among whose ranks both king and reader stand: “Nule rien ne vous puet rescoure de perdre toute honor terriene . se il ne vous resqueut li lyons iauages & li mires sans me[de]cine par le conseil de la flor” (“Nothing can save you from losing all worldly honor, unless you are saved by the water lion and the drugless doctor at the prompting of the flower”).235 As all things must come to an end, so does Arthur’s worldly power, and we may assume, therefore, that he never does discover the miraculous protection or remedy here described. These dreams, therefore, while they are important harbingers of events to come, do not really have a practical payoff. Camelot will fall, whether Arthur dreams it or no, and the forewarning is not efficacious. The import of this passage, therefore, lies primarily in its role as evidence of visionary experience, not as a real linkage within the text to subsequent action. The annotator clearly sets great stock in this series of dreams, devoting to it four notes, including one standing highly visibly at the top of the page. It is perhaps the single most conspicuous note cluster in the manuscript. These dreams, however, are peculiarly potent only qua dream, not as drivers of future action: Arthur, not understanding the advice given him, takes none. Arthur, like the saints and kings of chronicle (among whose ranks he also stands), dreams prophetic visions. These dreams seem to populate the margins of chronicle and romance texts alike as evidence of the dreamers’ exceptionality. A great man in a time of great crisis will have a dream, and the proof that a text deals with such weighty matters is that it takes steps to relate such dreams to its readers, who, in turn, take careful note.

There has, for some time, been a recognition of the relationship between the
genre of romance as it developed in England and the tradition of English chronicle. This
is evident, as Le Saux and Damian-Grint have taught us, in the selection of the texts that
make up English manuscripts: romances are, in England, frequently carried along with
historical chronicles, far more than is seen on the Continent.²³⁶ Any distinction between
romance and chronicle on a basis of questions of truth is, moreover, problematic, as it
raises questions of the degree to which medieval readers may or may not have been
concerned at all with the very question of truth.²³⁷ Subject-matter, in a shared Arthurian
referent, contributes to the generic continuity, and texts like Wace and Laȝamoun straddle
this divide. If I have treated Wace in particular, as it appears in Royal 13.A.xxi, as
generically pure (chronicle), it is because the annotators appear to treat it as such.

The examination of romance marginalia has not shown a lack of awareness of the
line between chronicle and romance. The romances carried in Lambeth 491 (Awntyrs off
Arthure) and Arundel 58 (Richard Coeur de Lion) are distinguished by the scribes from
chronicles in those manuscripts: they are granted no notes. But the continuity suggested
by the intimate relationship between chronicle and romance within the manuscripts –
Richard, for example, is actually nested within the Metrical Chronicle – cannot be
denied. This may be unsurprising for romances like Richard, that are based on recent
history, rather than the misty past of Arthurian subject-matter, already of necessity semi-
legendary even in the driest of chronicles. The genealogical romances now known by the
term of the “Matter of England” (in contrast to the traditional Matters of Britain, France

²³⁶ Le Saux and Damian-Grint, “The Arthur of the Chronicles.”
²³⁷ Cf. Given-Wilson, Chronicles, esp. 57ff.
and Rome) emphasize the nationalism of the association between romance and chronicle, being set in no distant Logres, but drawing their primary impetus from desire for the glorification of a familial, and local, history. In examination of CCCC 45, however, it is evident that this continuity can speak even to a romance that is, in itself, fully part of the great Continental tradition of the genre. This Lancelot, when consumed by an English reader, is clearly in the hands of a reader primed to processing that text with concerns in mind similar to those that animate chronicle scribes – and, in obedience to these scribes’ marginal exhortations of nota, chronicle readers, as well. This evidence is, furthermore, a two-way street, and there is evidence here not just as to the reception of the genre, but also as to how scribes and readers understood the act of annotation.

It would be premature, at this point, to claim that continuity of annotation style between chronicles and romances has been demonstrated. I have, so far, presented examples from only a single romance manuscript. But the themes I have laid out in this manuscript – of the importance of names, place-names, etymologies, marvels (with particular marvelous or even talismanic objects as a critical subcategory), dreams, visions and prophecies – are all themes that will appear again and again in subsequent chapters. Each annotator has, no doubt, his own individual perspective and priorities, and each annotated text presents its own particular challenges. It is no surprise, therefore, that each individual manuscript also has its own particular biases and patterns in its annotations. In every manuscript I examine, however, the note-types that I have explored in this chapter, and the continuity with the chronicle tradition that this implies, recurs in the annotations.
CHAPTER 2:

THE CASE OF LINCOLN’S INN 150: READINGS IN THE POLITICS AND POETRY OF ARTHOUR AND MERLIN AND KYNG ALISAUNDER

Chronicle annotation, to put it succinctly, focuses on names and the marvelous. If this model has the power to explain annotators’ practice in romances, these characteristics will reappear regularly in romance manuscripts as well. London, Lincoln’s Inn 150 stands witness to the continued power of this model as a way of understanding annotation, all the way to the end of the medieval period. There we find a large supply of notes, in which certain themes are visible, some specific to the concerns of the manuscript’s annotator, and others that further illuminate the manuscript’s place within a larger tradition of annotation. In addition to lending further support for the importance of names and marvels in the tradition of annotation, Lincoln’s Inn 150 also broadens our understanding of the complicated relationship between romance annotation and that in chronicles. The annotator of this manuscript brings to these texts a concern for the public issues of kingship and politics that belie descriptions of romance as a genre of individual achievement. In Of Arthour and of Merlin, there is a preoccupation with corporate action idiosyncratic to this annotator, but bearing a deep and complex relationship with political history. Meanwhile, the notes of the Kyng Alisaunder stand at a fascinating crossroads between the romance and chronicle traditions, and in their
attention to moments of formal and excerptible utterance, display characteristics that straddle the divide between these two genres. Romance annotators are far from deaf to the literary nuance of the text, a mindfulness that is, perhaps unexpectedly, also observable in chronicles.

London, Lincoln’s Inn MS 150 (olim Hale 150) is an early fifteenth-century collection of Middle English narrative verse, including an incomplete Libeaus Desconus, a short version of Of Arthour and of Merlin relating the conception and youth of Merlin, a Seege of Troye, and a Piers Plowman A-text. The manuscript is perhaps most recognizable to modern scholars as that caught in the center of the debate about so-called “holster books” and their connection with an itinerant minstrel culture. More than twice as tall as it is wide, the book’s unusual shape has demanded explanation, and had been attributed to a supposed utility in portability, for use as a minstrel’s prompt-book. More recent studies, however, have discredited this theory, highlighting a much wider range of use for books of this shape, and especially as books for recording household accounts. Certainly any romantic notion that the manuscript was jotted down on the

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239 See Horobin and Wiggins, “Reconsidering,” 31–32 for a summary history of this debate.

240 Ibid., 31. The authors acknowledge a particular debt to studies by A. G. Rigg and Lynne Blanchfield. See also studies by Andrew Taylor, calling into question the broader notion of a minstrel culture evidenced in Middle English romance (“The Myth of the Minstrel Manuscript,” Speculum 66, no. 1
road by a minstrel, the record of a particular oral performance, is untenable in view of the codex’s script, the product of a single, professionalized early fifteenth-century scribe. A 2008 article by Simon Horobin and Alison Wiggins, however, reasserts the case for oral performance, based on the evidence of some non-verbal marginalia in the hand of the main scribe, that appears to be part of a program of symbolic code – its precise meaning now sadly lost – that may have been an aid to oral delivery,\textsuperscript{241} even if that delivery is unlikely to have been as part of a minstrel’s repertoire. On the basis of this evidence, as well as a more pervasive program of adaptation and revision within the texts themselves – increasing the text’s repetition, reliance on formulaic units, and simplicity of vocabulary – Horobin and Wiggins suggest that the manuscript was likely created with oral performance in mind, and may indeed have found its way to Lincoln’s Inn as an accessory to the “traditional after-dinner entertainments” of the Inn’s post-medieval residents.\textsuperscript{242} The scribe’s own contribution to the marginal material of MS 150 is, however, fairly minimal, and, in the view of Horobin and Wiggins, largely interested, firstly, in highlighting the scribe’s own textual revisions, and, secondly, in offering navigational aids, “providing signals to locate a particular episode quickly.”\textsuperscript{243}

By far the larger and more detailed apparatus of annotation – and the scribe’s few notes can hardly constitute an apparatus – is in a slightly later (sixteenth-century) hand I refer to as B (second, that is, in a list of the manuscript’s principal hands, only to A, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{241} “Reconsidering,” 40.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 50.
\item \textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 40.
\end{itemize}
main scribe). Hand B annotates across most of the manuscript, although not evenly so. There are no Hand B notes to the *Seege* and only one to the *Libeaus Desconus*, and while he clearly read the *Piers Plowman*, adding occasional notes, the bulk of the notes in this hand fall in the *Merlin* (eleven notes) and *Kyng Alisaunder* (over two hundred notes). Together, these notes give us a rich and detailed picture of an annotator placing his own indelible mark on the manuscript, but one steeped in a larger traditions of generically-nuanced annotation.

2.1 *Libeaus Desconus* and *Piers Plowman*: Some Preliminary Observations

For those sections of the manuscript that do not receive Hand B’s sustained attention, it is difficult to know what to make of his notes. There is insufficient evidence to make any firm conclusions about his attitudes toward the texts themselves. Still, there is some information to be gleaned here, both with regard to the scope of his annotation project, and as to his reliance on other models of annotation in the composition of his notes. Hand B does not seem to be a radically individual renegade of annotation: on the contrary, his notes show awareness of connection with a larger tradition of notemaking.

A sixteenth-century signature places the manuscript in the possession of Anthony Foster, resident in Wimbold’s Trafford near Chester, during the reign of Henry VIII (Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts*, 229; Hanna, “‘Two New (?)’,” 170-171). This possible owner is, however, not likely to be identical with Hand B. While the hands seem to be roughly contemporary, with many letters bearing the same forms, their execution differs: compare, for example, Hand B’s usual rounded, left-leaning capital A with Foster’s more angular letter. Foster also uses a closed *d* very different from the open-bowled form Hand B favors. Although a positive non-identification is problematic, given the small sample size provided by Foster’s signature (as well as its very nature as a signature), it appears more likely that Hand B was a member of Foster’s family or household than that Hand B was himself Foster. An image of two of Hand B’s annotations is accessible in G. V. Smithers, ed., *Kyng Alisaunder*, vol. 1, EETS 227 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), Plate II. Fortuitously, one of the pictured notes is among those highlighting the text’s many letters: “Alexander ansuer l to þe/ letter” (f. 45v, at ibid., 1:104.1833). I discuss the importance of letters in the *Alisaunder* annotation below.
A study of the *Libeaus Desconus* uncovers only sparse marginal materials. A note in the scribe’s hand on f. 4r (at Kaluza, *Libeaus*, line 216i) may merely be a correction. Two marks on f. 9v (perhaps indicating points of *nota bene*) are not obviously the work of Hand B, nor obvious, furthermore, in their reference; they may belong to the series of nonverbal marks identified by Horobin and Wiggins, who focus on the *Merlin* in their description of this marginalia. The latter of the f. 9v marks may introduce a shift in speaker, as it falls next to the beginning of a speech by Libeaus, including the exclamation “Be seint Gile!” (line 1114) that may double as a verbal “open quote,” signaling to the reader that what follows is direct speech. Finally, on f. 9r, there appears a rough doodle, now badly damaged and partially hidden by the binding, that could be dismissed as mere idle toying with the pen, were it not for the fact that it may be intended to depict a horse, inspired, one imagines, by the nearby line, “As þey ride on a lowe” (line 1057). There is in this marginal material evidence, therefore, that the text was read with at least passing attention, likely by a number of readers, but that they were not moved to leave substantive textual notes.

The most fully-developed marginal response to the *Libeaus* is that of Hand B, and even his is tantalizingly terse: the single note “w delabrun[ch]” on f. 4v, next to the line “he hyght william delabrawunche,”\(^{245}\) is very much of a piece with some of the themes observed and discovered across notes in this manuscript and others. It participates in the fascination with proper names (particularly names of people and places) and the tendency

\(^{245}\) My quotation of that line is a transcription of the manuscript. Kaluza’s edition offers instead the version “William Salebraunche,” with the expanded syntax and altered spelling “delabrawunche” as variant readings (*Libeaus*, line 289). Hand B has, presumably, merely replicated the “delabrunch” spelling from the text, albeit inexacty.
to place those names in the margins at one of a few different key points, including
the character’s death or (as here) the first mention of the character’s name, in this case
equally well the beginning of an episode. Why William, though? The knight is the first
adversary that Libeaus confronts on his adventure, and the repetition of his name in the
margin, therefore, may signal an intention to break down the narrative into a series of
armed encounters, differentiated by the names of Libeaus’s opponents. If so, however, it
is an intention that is never carried out. Either the Hand B annotator was insufficiently
interested in *Libeaus Desconus* and his annotation project within it to concern himself
further with the text, or his attention to William was prompted by some other attribute
specific to that character, obscure to us now. What is perhaps most significant here is
that Hand B does not exhibit a pattern of inconsistent notemaking that could be attributed
to ambitious goals at the beginning of a manuscript, and a falling away of interest as the
pages turned and tedium set in. On the contrary, he did not make a strong showing at all
in the manuscript’s opening folios. Instead, his single note fleshes out the pattern of his
annotation at other points in the manuscript: at the beginning and end of one text, but not
the middle; in the middle of another text, but not the beginning or the end; or only very
occasionally in yet another text. The pattern is suggestive of a reader who has in fact
perused the entire manuscript, and who has maintained a sustained (if not uninterrupted)
attention to the task of annotation, from front cover to back. Under these circumstances,
if his silences do not speak as loud as his words, still, at least they might be listened to.

The notes in the manuscript’s final text, *Piers Plowman*, are few, but even more
interesting. We find, to name a few examples, “*nota*,”246 “waie to | trvthe /,”247

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“[co]vitise,”248 and “stele not/ / slea not.”249 These notes would seem to reinforce the perception of a generic divide in Hand B’s annotation (they do not greatly resemble his Merlin or Alisaunder notes) and would, moreover, suggest, on the part of Hand B, a familiarity with and respect for the standard norms of annotation. These notes have their equivalents or near-equivalents in other manuscripts, as can be seen by reference to Carl Grindley’s edition of the annotations in two heavily marked Piers manuscripts.250 The nota cited above, for example, accompanies the line “And libbe as ye lere ts, we wile leue 30w þe beter” (Langland, Piers, A.V.36) whose C-text equivalent earns the comment “pastors must do as they teche” in the margin of British Library, Add. 35157.251 “Waie to trvth” also appears, almost word for word, in that manuscript, in exactly the same location as chosen by Hand B.252 “Covitise” has no equivalent among Grindley’s transcriptions at the precise location it falls in Lincoln’s Inn, but seems to reflect nonetheless the same concerns, patterns and expectations that gave rise to “Covetyse” in Add. 35157 and, perhaps, “hyere cam couetyse to schrefte ward” in HM 143.253

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247 On f. 120v, at ibid., VI.43.
248 On f. 121r, at ibid., VI.60.
249 On f. 121r, at ibid., VI.64.
250 The notes appearing in British Library, Add. 35157, as referred to here, are all identified by Grindley as late sixteenth century. They are made by Sir Edward Ayscough and Francis Ayscough (“Reading Piers Plowman,” 93). The notes in HM 143 have their origins more solidly in the medieval period, being added by Grindley’s “Scribe B,” during the production of the manuscript in the early fifteenth century (ibid., 94).
251 On f. 31r, at Langland, Piers Plowman C-Text, V.141 (Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman,” 102).
252 On f. 42r, at Langland, Piers Plowman C-Text, VII.206 (Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman,” 105).
Likewise, while the commandments “Stele-nat and Sle-nat” pass without comment in HM 143, “wraðhe naȝt” (here apparently a directive to the reader, rather than an allegorical character) stands in its margin less than fifty lines further on. Hand B should not, therefore, be looked on as a maverick in annotations, but as, at least in the case of *Piers Plowman* (and, as will become clear in his other texts as well) participating in a larger tradition of text reception, crafting Lincoln’s Inn 150 into a manuscript that looks as it ought. His readership marks are prompts to further reading, as well as evidence of his own reading, and in both regards, they seem to work well within a larger and familiar tradition.

### 2.2 Of Arthur and of Merlin: *Hand B and the Politics of Corporate Action*

In *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, it is already clear that Hand B is capable of developing a unique reading of the text, with emphasis on certain themes or events and a corresponding de-emphasis on others. The resulting annotations are, in some regards, very different from the chronicle pattern laid out so far. Hand B engages with neither the marvelous nor the dynastic in the text. Still, while he does not cleave fully to traditional chronicle forms of annotation, there is in his notes nonetheless a historical sensibility, a privileging of the public and political in his sites of emphasis and mode of reading. The *Arthour and Merlin* that he helps, by his notes, to create, is as tantalizing as it is unexpected. Eleven Hand B notes can be identified in the *Arthour and Merlin* section of

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253 On ff. 35r and 26r of their respective manuscripts, both at Langland, *Piers Plowman C-Text*, VI.196 (Grindley, “Reading *Piers Plowman*,” 103, 130).

254 On f. 33v, at Langland, *Piers Plowman C-Text*, VII.262 (Grindley, “Reading *Piers Plowman*,” 130).
the manuscript, over seventeen folios,255 concentrated in two major clusters on ff. 3r-v and ff. 26r-27r. This means that, although there is considerable attention to both the beginning and end of Arthour and Merlin, Hand B has not seen fit to add any marking to the middle of the text. The annotations are as follows:

f. 3r, at Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 18.234: “Vortiger made l Kinge”
3r, at 20.244: “þe/ comene”
3r, at 20.255: “vter & his brother l connvoyed beyond l sea”
3r, at 22.283: note is illegible due to wear
3v, at 26.303: “kinge Aungys l wende to [***] l into enge[londe]”
26r, at 126.1801: “The storye of l vter & pendrago[n] l & ther reterne l agayne”
26v, at 126.1830: “winchester”
26v, at 130.1865: “revolt of the l peopls”
26v, at 130.1875: “Gret previledge l graunted to l winchestre”
27r, at 132.1908: “vortiger and xx l to one”
27v, at 136.1960: “vortiger l driven to the castell l vppon the playne of l Salisburye”

It is immediately obvious that a large section of the plot is missing from these annotations. Vortigern is introduced as an (illegitimate) king of Britain (“Vortiger made Kinge”), a usurping steward who has driven the two rightful heirs, Uther and Pendragon, into exile (“vter & his brother connvoyed beyond sea”). Following a decisive battle with the King of Denmark to consolidate his rule (described in terms of Aungys [Hengist]

255 That is, ff. 13r-27v. Folios 2 and 3 were formerly bound out of their correct position, to which they have since been restored: they carry text from Arthour and Merlin between ff. 13v and 14r. They still carry the modern numeration, however, of ff. 2 and 3, and, following the practice of Macrae-Gibson, I continue to refer to them in this way.

256 This note is obscured with soil and heavily worn, with some of the ink rubbed away. The asterisks mark points where letters visibly remain, but are unidentifiable. Enough of the note remains, however, that its sense is still decipherable: King Aungys is crossing over from Denmark into England.

257 “Vortiger” is underlined in the manuscript.
going “into enge[londe]”), Vortigern turns his attention back to the question of the two exiled brothers, the remaining magnets for any subsequent political movements against him. We know that this is his concern because the text tells us so:

So on a day sire Fortager
Byþouht him of þeo childre þo two
Pat owt of londe weore flemed þo
And also he byþouhte him þan
Of mony anoþir douhty man
Pat he hadde flemed out of þeo l<ond>,
And in his heorte gan vndurstond
Pat hit was a sory hap
And douted him of afterclap.

(Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:36.440–48)

Yet his response to this political threat is very different from the clash of armies that has gone before. Vortigern embarks instead on the defensive action of constructing a castle, presumably with an eye to providing himself with a fortified stronghold, on the inevitable return of Uther and Pendragon at the head of an army.

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258 Because of the partial illegibility of the note, it is difficult to be certain, but there appears to be some confusion here on the part of the annotator. The adjoining text has King Aungys not coming “into England,” but leaving it after signing a treaty with Vortigern. The text of Arthour and Merlin is, it must be admitted, somewhat confusing on the relationship between Vortigern and Aungys. Aungys is still Vortigern’s father-in-law, but the relationship is not given the full treatment through a relation of Ronwen’s story, which appears so prominently in chronicles (cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, History, 100.338ff.) and the brief explanation of their relationship falls in a stretch of the text that is not contained in Lincoln’s Inn 150 (contrast the relevant passage in the Auchinleck manuscript: “Angys hadde verrament / A douhter bohe fair and gent / (Ac sche was heþen Sarra<in) / And Fortiger for loue fin / Hir tok to fere and to wiue – And was curssed in al his liue / For he lete Cristen wedde haþen / And meynt our blod as flesche and maþen,” O. D. Macrae-Gibson, ed., Of Arthour and of Merlin, vol. 1, EETS 268 (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 37.477–484). As a result, there is in Arthour and Merlin – and especially in the Lincoln’s Inn version – no clear explanation of how Aungys transforms from enemy to ally, and much of the coming and going that characterizes Hengist’s role in the Historia Regum Britanniae is elided. Hand B may compose this note, therefore, with an idea that the Hengist-character ought to be settling in England, with an eye toward his later role beside Vortigern in the battle against Uther and Pendragon, rather than (as the text would have it) wandering off only to reappear later as an ally of longstanding. Bolstering the idea that Hand B is aware of the story from another source is the fact that the notes invariably read “Vortiger,” while the manuscript’s text prefers “Fortager.”
And it is at this point that the tale takes a turn away from the narration of the fate of nations, and looks instead to the more fabulous tale of Merlin’s conception as the child with no father. At this point, too, Hand B’s annotations are suspended, so that none of the succeeding story is afforded notice or emphasis by the margins. This disinterest on the part of Hand B does not spring from any inherent dullness in the ensuing tale. On the contrary, the story, with its duplicitous demons and female characters both virtuous and adulterous, makes for a rousing morality tale, full of carousing, sex and dramatic suspense. Vortigern’s castle keeps falling down, and it is revealed that the only solution to the problem is to “smeore [his] werk abowte” with the blood of a certain boy, born five years before and “By<ʒ>eten wiþowtyn ony monnes mon” (1:46.555, 44.537).

What then follows is a detailed account of Merlin’s conception, the circumstances that led to his curiously fatherless status, and Merlin’s interaction with Vortigern when he is ultimately located for the purposes of the bloodletting. The story dates back at least as far as Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, but the *Arthour and Merlin* version is clearly descended more immediately from the Vulgate *Merlin*, where details have been changed and fleshed out.²⁵⁹ *Arthour and Merlin* relates the story of three sisters whom a devil sets out to seduce into adultery, taking a different approach with

²⁵⁹ Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, 106.504–108.577. In Geoffrey’s version, Merlin’s mother is a nun seduced by “someone resembling a handsome young man” (“quidam in specie pulcherrimi iuuenis”) who frequented her cell: “[H]e appear[ed] to me very often, holding me tight in his arms and kissing me. After remaining with me for a while, he would suddenly disappear from my sight. Often he would talk to me without appearing, while I sat alone. He visited me in this way for a long time and often made love to me in the form of a man, leaving me with a child in my womb” (“apparebat michi [...] amplectens me strictis brachiis deosculabatur. Et cum aliquantulum mecum moram fecisset, subito euanescetb ita ut nichil ex eo uiderem. Multociens quoque alloquebatur dum secreto sederem nec usquam comparebat. Cumque me diu in hunc modum frequentasset, coiuit mecum in specie hominis saepius atque grauidam in aluo deseruit,” ibid., 107.533–539). Despite her vocation, it is by no means clear that Merlin’s mother considered these supernatural sexual advances unwelcome, a potential moral failing carefully written out of the Vulgate narrative.
each sister and achieving a different outcome. The eldest two sisters inevitably succumb to his blandishments, finding their respective fates in a death sentence for adultery and the moral death sentence of a life of prostitution. The heroine is the youngest of the three sisters, and the only one unwilling to be seduced, locking herself up in her bedchamber at night and making the sign of the cross to keep the lecherous devil at bay. These precautions work, but only until she decides on a pleasant evening at the pub, where she encounters her libertine sister. The two get into a drunken brawl so upsetting that she forgets her nightly ritual and neglects to cross herself. The devil seizes his chance and rapes her as she sleeps, begetting Merlin.260 When it becomes clear that she is pregnant, the authorities punish her with the same death sentence passed on her late sister. The sentence is suspended until after the birth of the child, and the precocious Merlin then launches a legal defense of his mother, in which he uncovers the trial judge’s own mother’s infidelity. An exploration of feminine virtue and frailty, the story contrasts the heroine’s compromised chastity with the more aggressive sexuality of the tale’s other women. Readers may be invited to join in the misogynistic condemnation of such

260 Interestingly, Arthour and Merlin slightly adjusts its Vulgate source in this tale, allowing the virtuous youngest sister to share in some of the blame for the argument and its effects. She goes “to þe ale” voluntarily, in the company of friends, and once there, “Longe heo sat and dude mys / Þat heo was dronkyn ywis” (Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:62.810, 811–812). It is only after she is herself inebriated that “Hire oþir suster þat ... was an hore” arrives to insult her and start an argument (ibid., 1:62.813–814). In the Vulgate, the public-house crowd must seek the virtuous sister out in her own home, disrupting the peace of an otherwise peaceful and regulated domestic scene: “Lors auint que a vn samedi au soir entra  sa suer en la maison ou ele estoit pour li [couroucier] & pour uoer sele le poroit engignier . Et quant elle i fu venue si fu grant piece en la nuit & amena vne tropee de garchons & vindrent tout dedens lostel,” “Then it happened that on a Saturday night her sister went into the house where she was in order to upset her and to see if she could ensnare her for the devil. And it was very late in the night when she came, and she brought with her a crowd of lowborn young men, and they all came into the house” (Sommer, Vulgate, 2:8.35–38; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 2:1.8–9). The Arthour and Merlin alteration creates a reading perhaps more misogynistic, with all three women complicit in their own downfalls. But the reading is also less simplistic, as the heroine is permitted human flaws without sacrificing the sympathy of the reader, who must concur with Merlin when he asserts that, of the crime of adultery at any rate, “heo is gultles” (Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:82.1132).
widespread female depravity, or, alternately, to identify with Merlin’s mother as the sympathetic victim of demonic assault.

The tale then shifts again when Merlin reaches the age of seven, turning back to the suspended story of Vortigern’s structurally unsound tower, with the marker of interlace typical to romance:

Now lete we at his modur beon
And to owre tale we turne aȝeyn
And to speke we of þo messangeres
Pat wenten fro sire Fortageres
Forto seche Merlyn þe bolde
To haue his blod as y ow tolde.


Merlin is taken to see Vortigern, making further displays of arcane knowledge on the way, culminating in his famous political prophecy of the red and white dragons, fighting below the foundations of Vortigern’s tower, simultaneously undermining the structure and presaging the collapse of Vortigern’s power.

All of this plot passes by with no annotation from Hand B. The first note in a dozen folios corresponds with the reentry of Uther and Pendragon into the narrative, a point cast in the text itself as a new beginning for a story previously abandoned:

Bote ȝef ȝe wolen a stounde dwelle
Of oþir thynge y wol ȝow telle
Of þe hende chidre two
Vter and Pendragon also
Y tolde ȝow y vnderstonde
How þey weore flemed owt of londe,
Now wol y telle ȝow for certayn
In what maner þey com agayn
...................................
Listenþ now and ȝe may here!
A mury tyme hit is in May
Whan spryngþ þe somores day
And damyseles caroles lediþ
On grene wode fowles grediþ;
So in þat tyme as ȝe may here
Two barouns com to Fortagere....

(1:126.1800-1821)

The note falls at the beginning of this passage, beside the line “Of oþir thyng...”: “The storye of vter & pendrago[n] & ther reterne agayne.”261 The question, then, must be Why Now? Why, after such a long period of silence, has Hand B found it appropriate to take up again his abandoned annotation? And, to approach the problem from the other direction, what characterizes the unmarked passage that may have discouraged his interest or, at least, the expression of his interest?

There are a number of potential explanations. The first may be the power that beginnings exercise on his imagination and vision of organization within the romance. This passage is not merely an interlace link like that quoted above, at 90.1263. It includes many classic romance markers of beginning: a summary of the contents to follow, a *reverdie* establishing the setting in a green and fertile May, and even a direct address demanding attention from a listening audience. In its appeal to listeners and preview of important plot points, this late passage actually mirrors the opening lines of *Arthour and Merlin* itself,262 and even goes further, with the May setting placing it firmly in the tradition of the opening of the *Roman de la Rose*, as well as the tradition of association between such settings and courtly adventures of love. In part, therefore, Hand B may find inspiration for his note in the fresh beginning, a reading bolstered by the

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261 On f. 26r, at ibid., 1:126.1801.

262 “He þat made wiþ his hond / Wynd and water wode an d lond / Æue heom alle good endyng / Pat wolon listne þis talkyng, / And y schal telle, ȝow byfore, / How Merlyn was geten and bore / And of his wisdoms also / And opre happes mony mo / Sum whyle byfeol in Engelonde” (ibid., 1:4.1–9).
broad reference of “The storye of vter & pendrago[n]....” Hand B marks not just the line, but the entire “storye” that ensues.

This explanation does not, however, account for the fact that, once Hand B begins to annotate again, he continues the practice for the duration of the romance. It is not only a moment of (re)beginning that attracts attention, but the entire section of text following, in a way pointedly different from the section that passed before. What was in that neglected section? There is, first of all, a great deal about women. As Arthour and Merlin’s author himself observes, the story of Merlin’s conception is not really the story of Merlin at all, but the story of Merlin’s mother (1:90.1263), and even the child’s subsequent legal defense of his parent thematizes female infidelity as much as it does the magician’s prophetic power. Annotations to other romances have shown a similar lack of interest in the affairs of women, and a disregard for the conception story would be fully in line with this larger tendency. Yet there are other events in those dozen folios than those things specifically gendered as female. Included in that stretch of text are Merlin’s prophecy of the two dragons and prophetic knowledge of events to which he could not, through natural means, possibly be privy. And, unlike female affairs, prophecies are, as we have seen, rather more likely to receive marginal notice than are other events.

Another potential explanation for the differing treatment offered to the annotated and unannotated sections would be one of genre. Vortigern’s consolidation of kingship is, in terms of content, a very different sort of story from the conception material. The latter has many of the markers of romance when contrasted with chronicle. Among these are, of course, the attention paid to female characters and to matters of love, or, in this case, sex. There is, too, a focus on the tribulations of one or more individuals, rather than
on the fate of nations. Surely one marker of generic difference, however, must be in the source from which these narratives spring, which invites a comparison between the two major versions of Vortigern’s reign. On the one hand, there is the version that appears in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*, and which, for that reason, is transmitted into the chronicle tradition, and, on the other hand, there is the version that receives a more detailed treatment in the Vulgate *Merlin*. This distinction seems valid at first: Vortigern’s seizure of power and conflict with Uther and Pendragon, so important in the notes, receives short shrift indeed in the prose *Merlin*. But in the end, there is no exact correlation between which events are included (or even expanded on, in greater detail) in which source, and which events fall within the annotated sections. The story of Merlin’s mysterious conception, after all, is included in the chronicle narrative, albeit in not a form so fully developed as the one appearing in the *Merlin*. Likewise, the prophecy of the red and white dragons, similarly unmarked, is carried forward into the Vulgate in a well-developed form.

If there is any correlation between genre and the annotations, therefore, it is not a correlation of source. Similarly, there is no correlation between annotation pattern and a generic distinction as determined by the form (as opposed to the content) of the *Arthour and Merlin* text. *Arthour and Merlin* is strongly marked as a romance throughout, and formal signals of romance affiliation (e.g. interlace links, switching from one story back to another that had been temporarily suspended) appear in both annotated and unannotated sections.\(^{263}\) The issue of genre, however, seems to approach close to the

\(^{263}\) Compare the examples quoted above, of interlace (unannotated) and *reverdie* (annotated): ibid., 1:90.1263–1264 and 126.1800ff.
mark, even if it does not hit it precisely. The distinction does not seem to be one of which sections are presented as “romance” (as opposed to “historical”?), nor which sections find their source in the Vulgate instead of harkening back to a tradition originating with Geoffreys of Monmouth’s chronicle. Instead, the distinction is between which events are “personal” and which are “political.” On the one hand, there are those events in the text that involve broad troop movements, dynastic squabbles, political conflict within governments, and nationbuilding. On the other hand, there are examinations of the personal struggles and failings of individuals, whether Vortigern, Merlin, Merlin’s mother or her sisters. The red and white dragons are, in this reading, less important in their implications for the future of the nation than they are as proof of Merlin’s prophetic power and skill. The prophecy is of a piece with the other privileged knowledge he has displayed throughout the text, information that is in the other instances of purely private interest to the individuals involved, and insignificant to any larger arc of national history. The red and white dragon are, furthermore, grouped together with the story of the unstable tower, rather than with the battle that follows – a reading perhaps influenced by the text’s rebeginning, just following Merlin’s exegesis of the dragons’ significance.

A closer examination of the notes at this point may be illustrative of the types of events that draw Hand B’s notice. One of the most important recurring themes is that of motion – the movement of Uther and Pendragon in and out of England (at Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:20.255 and 126.1801), and that of King Aungys into England. It is an armed motion, wherein the named generals stand not only for themselves, but for the larger forces they bring in their wake, and where movement into a
country constitutes an invasion. Important too are the “commons” or “people,” first at the point when Vortigern is offered the kingship by the commons (at 1:20.244), and then later when popular support is granted instead to Uther and Pendragon, victoriously returned from their exile (at 1:130.1865). Vortigern’s kingship (explicitly invoked with the note “Vortiger made Kinge”), is not presented as a family affair, the natural product of an orderly dynastic succession. In romance, of course, royal rank (like nobility of character or chivalric skill) is usually familial, a necessary result of one’s birth, even if that birth is not widely known. Here, however, Vortigern’s kingship is a specifically military and political construction, dependent on the outcome of events, rather than a natural consequence of birth. Some of the de-emphasis on genealogy and dynasty is, no doubt, an accident of Vortigern’s usurpation. But Uther and Pendragon’s filial qualifications for kingship are significantly not highlighted by the notes (their father is unmentioned). Their ill-fated brother Moyne, whose own kingship and deposition rise and fall on his own birth and death, is passed over in silence. Instead, it is movement in and out of the kingdom, as well as the will of the people – in either acclaim or revolt – that determines outcomes, and defines the process by which Vortigern holds onto the kingship he has seized at the beginning of the narrative, and by which he will ultimately lose it.

Intriguingly, the story as presented by the notes is very much the story of Vortigern, – not of Uther and Pendragon, the apparent protagonists of the conflicts, nor even of Merlin, whose conception and doings are the ostensible subject of the romance. The poet introduces his subject as “How Merlyn was geten and bore,” relegating Vortigern to an all-encompassing “And oþre happes mony mo” (1:4.6, 8). The story as
depicted by the notes is a very different one, beginning with Vortigern (“Vortiger made Kinge”), and ending with him too (“vortiger driven to the castell vppon the playne of Salisbury”). It is, perhaps, dangerous to refine too much on the distinction, but this last *Arthour and Merlin* note does not mention Vortigern’s death, but only his military retreat, and, therefore, the end of his kingship as a politically viable position. The action is another collective one, a withdrawal of his faction to a stronghold rather than a personal act of concealment. The penultimate “twenty to one” note is remarkable, too, in that it picks out from the text no detail of personal prowess or heroism, but a description of the relative strength of the combating armies. Uther and Pendragon themselves receive no notice as warriors, but highlighted instead is the corporate achievement of their forces, winning victory against incredible odds.

After Vortigern, the other major subject addressed by the notes is the town of Winchester. Here we again see an annotator’s interest in proper names as fodder for the margins, this time the name of an important town. The capital of England before London, Winchester would have been recognizable as an important center of administration, and, too, as the center of royal power in the Anglo-Saxon period through to the twelfth century. Winchester also boasted Arthurian connections, as the site of a replica of the Round Table dating to the reign of Edward I. The table, refreshed and repainted by Henry VIII in 1522, hung in Winchester Castle’s great hall – where indeed it still hangs today – the attempt at a tangible connection between late medieval governmental administration and the nation’s Arthurian past. Our early sixteenth-century annotator might be expected to share in some of Henry’s awareness of Winchester as a town resonant for Arthur’s time and for that of Vortigern, immediately preceding.
But corporate political action is key in these notes, as well, as we may find more clearly flagged at the moment of foundation for Winchester’s privilege: “Gret previledge graunted to winchestre”. Hand B has shown interest in a point in the text where the author explains some modern custom as founded in historical precedent. And, once again, “the people,” loosely defined, play an important role in determining the outcome of the conflict between rival political camps. The note falls precisely at the line “Þey oldyn heom boþe toun and tour” (Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:130.1874), in which the inhabitants of the town of Winchester surrender to the forces of Uther and Pendragon, officially repudiating Vortigern as their king. It is as a result of this that Winchester receives its privilege.264

To summarize, then, the Hand B notes in Arthour and Merlin seem very deliberately targeted at a particular storyline, and one that pushes at the limits of the romance, directing attention toward a very specific aspect of the tale. Vortigern is the main character, not Merlin, and the story told by the margins is not that of his life, per se, but of his kingship, as it is defended and ultimately lost through both military action and political maneuver – each of these, significantly, defined as a corporate action. The names of individuals like Vortigern, Uther, and Pendragon are mentioned most frequently when they stand at the heads of armies. Their movement in and out of England is recorded when the textual significance of these movements is that of a movement of an entire faction or army. Vortigern’s name (“vortiger and xx to one”) accompanies an assessment of the odds not against a single man caught in ambush, but of odds that must

264 “Þat euermore Wynchestre after þan / Gret þank and freodom of heom [i.e. Uther and Pendragon] wan” (ibid., 1:130.1876–1877).
be multiplied out over the host of two armies. And, most tantalizingly, we see an interest in the role of the people or “commons” in shaping political reality, an interest that cannot but have been shaped by the role of the “commons” in popular insurrections of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. John Watts, in surveying the significance of the term “commons” as a power-word in late-medieval and Early Modern English politics, identifies a shift in the significance of the term “commons” in the sixteenth century – roughly contemporary, that is, with our Hand B annotator. Still, even as late as the sixteenth century, “‘common’ still had something of its legitimizing connotations,” functioning as a power-word in the discourse which royalist partisans might wish to avoid, lest the “commons” they sought to present as peasant rabble share in some of the late-medieval valence of the term, as councilors to the king, representing the will of the people (broadly defined) and acting for the “common” good, i.e., the good of the “community.”

The “commons” in Arthour and Merlin is clearly very much in the late-medieval model, encompassing an elite with the privilege of direct access and conversation with Vortigern himself (Macrae-Gibson, Arthour and Merlin, 1:20.244ff.), as well as what may be termed by the Hand B annotator as a “people’s revolt.” Whether or not the sixteenth-century annotator would have understood these terms in the


266 Ibid., 252.

267 Significant, too, is the urban association of the corporate action of the city of Winchester. Watts identifies the urban associations at the origins of the “commons” or communitas, an insight that even more firmly allies the urban capitulation of Winchester with the other political actions attributed to the commons in Arthour and Merlin (Ibid., 245).
precise context in which they were written, he at least recognized the power of the political forces they represented.

If we are to assign a generic outlook to these notes, therefore, it must surely be an historical one, with an eye toward the foundation not just of the English nation itself, but of the political institutions that determine power. These notes may work against a chronicle annotation pattern that interests itself in marvels, but it does so in order to explore a more politically-minded view of pseudo-historical events. In *Arthour and Merlin*, Hand B borrows some of the conventions of the chronicle annotation (like the interest in placenames and foundation), while disregarding others (like the attraction of marvels). Still, by his political reading of the text, the romance is more fully integrated into the landscape of national history than would be permitted by a more fervent interest in the ethical quandaries of Merlin’s mother and aunts. And, as the manuscript’s pages continue to turn, Hand B’s annotations become even more typically “chronicle” in their form, engaging with kingship, conquest and the marvelous in the exploits of Alexander the Great.

2.3 Kyng Alisaunder: A Chronicle of Kingship and Conquest

If the notes Hand B provides for *Arthour and Merlin* are interpretively rich, the notes for *Kyng Alisaunder* are a treasure trove. Over the course of sixty-three folios (6746 lines of text), there are approximately two hundred notes. As in *Arthour and Merlin*, on those pages where annotations appear, there are frequently numerous notes, with the text being steadily marked over extended stretches of narrative. And also like in *Arthour and Merlin*, there are stretches of text that receive no notes at all. The beginning
of the text is the longest such stretch, as nearly ten folios pass between the final note in *Arthour and Merlin* and the first note in *Alisaunder*. That first note, when it comes, is not terribly prepossessing. It is the single word “fongeth,” obscure in its meaning, and most likely merely clarifying the reading or grammatical form of a word in the nearby line of text: “he fongiþ faire þat present.” Once the floodgates of annotation are opened, however, a deluge of notes pours out, running dry at last only seven folios from the end of the text. There is a considerable continuity, however, in the preference shown by Hand B for public affairs over personal ones. Nor do the Hand B notes always favor the same episodes that seem to have offered attractions for the manuscript’s original compiler. Patterns of annotation, as in *Arthour and Merlin*, can shout by their very silence.

*Alisaunder* is, of course, a very different romance from *Arthour and Merlin*, incorporating a different range of incident. There is, too, the fundamental contrast from the perspective of nationalism. On the one hand, the Arthurian mythos is central to a specifically English national history, and Vortigern, too, is both prequel to that mythos and part of the dynastic succession in his own right. Alexander, on the other hand, is a foreign emperor engaged on a deliberately exoticized conquest of an alien Orient.

This is not to say, however, that there are no similarities between the two texts. On the contrary, there is a remarkable parallel between the stories of Merlin’s conception and Alexander’s. Alexander’s mother, Olympias, is seduced by a magician, Neptanabus, who, by forming an effigy of the queen in wax, sends to her a dream of a dragon that

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enters her room at night. The magician tells her the dragon is the god Amon, come to
father a son (Alexander) who will go on to be a great king. On subsequent evenings,
Neptanabus visits Olympias himself, disguised as the dragon, and while, after the first
visit, Olympias becomes complicit in the affair, she remains unaware that her nocturnal
visitor is no god, but the manipulative magician. There are differences from Merlin’s
story: the father is neither god nor devil, but a human magician, and, unlike Merlin’s
virtuous mother, Olympias is “Of hire neowe loue we l desirous” (Smithers, *Alisaunder*,
1:24.414), a moral failing the poet dismisses as a weakness typical of women.270 Still,
the parallels are too obvious to go unnoticed by any reader of the manuscript: the
conception of a remarkable child, effected by the nocturnal visit of a supernatural lover
who approaches the unsuspecting woman while she sleeps. Nor do the parallels end
there. Dragons abound in both texts, and where Merlin discovered and explained the red
and white dragons beneath Vortigern’s castle, seeing in them a prediction of Vortigern’s
coming military conflict, King Philip dreams of dragons that have their own allegorical
significance, as reported by Antision, than whom “Wiser clerk no lyued non” (1:34.583).
The dream-dragon “tokeniþ þeo quenis sone,” and its eye “is round and signefieþ / He
schal haue þe sourmountye / Þis is round þe myddellerd” (1:34.589, 590-592).

As the conception stories and prophetically glossed dragons parallel one another,
so too do the approaches to these episodes taken by the Hand B annotator – that is, he has
not marked them. The coincidence of story may suggest a reason why the original
compiler of the manuscript was inspired to include both texts, alongside one another in
the manuscript. We may be inspired, therefore, to view these aspects of the stories as

270 “So doþ wymmen after misdoyng / No connon no schame no repentyng” (ibid., 1:20.415–416).
significant in defining them for the manuscript compiler, if he was guided by these aspects of the story in selecting them. Yet for at least one later reader and annotator, the supernatural conception story stands as a shared object of noninterest, and by the manner of his annotation, he rather obscures than emphasizes the continuity of theme between the two texts, at least if that continuity is identified in the conception of a remarkable child – either prophesied or prophesying – by the deceptive infiltration of a locked bedroom by a supernatural father.

Rather than drawing attention in the text to the conception and youth of Alexander, the Hand B notes instead privilege his reign, a parallel of sorts with a tendency in Arthour and Merlin to focus on the military and political struggles of Vortigern’s reign. In Alisaunder, Hand B shows interest in Alexander-as-king and Alexander-as-adventuring-general, rather than in Alexander-as-son-of-Amon, whether his exceptionality may be viewed as an honest precursor of future greatness, or as founded on a lie of divine paternity, finally traceable to a mortal magician.

The end of the story, where notes are prematurely suspended, is similarly interesting, in that it actually maintains the theme of a love affair between a woman and a disguised lover – although in this case the woman, Queen Candace, is herself well aware of the deception, and it is Alexander himself who is in disguise, albeit merely by use of a false name rather than by supernatural means. It is Alexander, moreover, whose sexual compliance has been at least in part coerced, as Candace, confronting him with her knowledge of his identity, forbids him to leave.271 Still, the episode addresses

271 “O Alisaunder of gret renoun / Þou art ytake in my prisoun / Al þy streynþe helpuþ þe nouþt / For womman þe haueþ by couþt” (ibid., 1:416.6409–6412). It is unclear whether Alexander’s subsequent
Alexander’s actions as a private individual – his adoption of an underling’s identity ensures that the love affair is not a matter of state between his nation and Candace’s, and his concealed identity\textsuperscript{272} builds a dramatic tension similar in kind to that characterizing, for example, Yvain’s courtship of Laudine in the romance of Chrétien.\textsuperscript{273} The significance of the event is glossed within the text, by Candace herself, who understands the text’s meaning in terms of a moral lesson:

\begin{verbatim}
My tale þou myȝt leue
Adam was by swike of Eue
And Sampson þeo fort al so
Daliada dude him wrong and wo
And Dauyd þe kynq was brouȝt of lyf
Porouȝ þe gyle of his wyf
And Salamon for awommanis loue
Forsok his god þat syt aboue
And þou art yfalle in hond myne
Pe to solace and no pyne
\end{verbatim}

(\textit{Smithers, Alisaunder}, 1:416.6423–417.6432)

Alexander is no model of kingship here, but the model of man brought low by woman. While David and Solomon are kingly examples, suggesting that susceptibility to feminine wiles may not be irrelevant to the formation of a good or bad king, the examples of Adam and Samson broaden the application of the comparisons to encompass a female threat not just to good kingship, but to good moral rectitude. Alexander has been favored, whether acquiescence to the affair represents a genuine desire, or merely an unprotesting resignation to the inevitable.

\textsuperscript{272} He is presented in the text as an undesirable liaison in the eyes of Candace’s family, having killed the father-in-law of the queen’s son.

by God or chance or destiny, but a failure to protect himself against feminine intrigue has jeopardized that favor, on a level as much – and probably more – personal than it is public. As Alexander’s motivation in secretly visiting Candace is personal (sexual), so he remains in her thrall only until his regal identity is revealed.

As the story races onward towards its end, Candace’s claims to have brought Alexander low, in the pattern of a new Delilah, do not seem fully justified: Alexander’s death from poisoning comes at another’s hand, and without any overt causal relation between the events. Yet this incident’s occurrence late in the romance, very close to Alexander’s ultimate demise, contributes to an impression of correlation, even if causation remains elusive. The moral trajectory of the last episodes of the *Alisaunder* is one that reflects on the king’s human frailty, and susceptibility to the common lot of all mankind, a subjugation to the Wheel of Fortune:

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Jn þis world falliþ mony cas
Boþe lite blisse and schort solas
Jponydoun and Pallidanæs
And Alsolon þat so fair was
Pey lyued here bote lite ras
And sone vchon forȝete was
Þeo ladies schynen so þe glas
And þis maidenæs wiþ rody face
Passen sone so flour on gras
So stong [sic] so fair neuer non nas
Þat he no passiþ wiþ allas
Auentre so hæþ turned his pas
Àȝeynes þe kyng his mas
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(Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:426.6541-6553)

Ladies and maidens, biblical heroes and chivalric ones, all are subject to the changeability of fortune, a fate, like that of man by woman deceived, cast as a universal
one. Alexander’s death is inevitable, and the political accidents of its occurrence are subordinate to the recognition of this moral truth.

All of this, then, from Alexander’s conception, to his affair with Candace, to his death, lies in the unannotated sections of the text, and for reasons, we may speculate, not dissimilar from those that allowed Merlin’s conception and youth to languish unmarked in *Arthour and Merlin*. These portions of the text primarily concern Alexander as individual or individual moral exemplar, and do not showcase his actions as a military or political leader, or the events of national importance that characterized his reign.

2.4 People, Places and the Marvels of the East

What of the notes that do occur, however? Hand B’s practice here is both a continuation of some of the concerns he showed in *Arthour and Merlin* and, inevitably, an expansion on those concerns – inevitably, because the total number of notes is so much larger in *Alisaunder* that we may begin to get a rich feel for several different thematic strains in Hand B’s annotation. In *Arthour and Merlin* the notes were fairly narrowly focused, tracing the history of Vortigern’s kingship through the lens of the military and political corporate action that facilitated his rise to and fall from power. *Alisaunder* offers a wider array of notes, including a number of different leitmotifs.

The first of these is a direct extension of the pattern evident in the *Arthour and Merlin* notes. Proper names – both of people and places – remain central to Hand B’s notes, and the annotator maintains an interest in troop movements, often presented in terms of the movement of a named general (at the head of his implied military forces) to
or from a named location. A stretch of notes on ff. 41v and 42r is illustrative of the larger phenomenon:

f. 41v, at Smithers, *Alisaunfer*, 1:80.1407: “preparation to þe/ Sea
l & so into tracie”
41v, at 80.1414: “Att tracye Submitte”
41v, at 80.1418: “v\M/ knigtis”
41v, at 80.1420: “came to cicile”
41v, at 80.1429: “his host in cresid l of Sex M knightis”
41v, at 80.1432: “enterid venis & l so lumbardy to whom l they yeelded”
42r, at 84.1473: “Rowme also l yeelded to alexandre”
42r, at 84.1478: “Marcus sent l w\t/ a thowsand l knightis”
42r, at 84.1487: “goethe into libie”
42r, at 84.1497: “he wan libia l w\t/howt battaile”

The notes unfold, first of all, as a story themselves. Subjects are sometimes dropped (“goethe into libie”), with the subject “Alexander” presumably generally understood. The result is a progression of events that builds across several notes, rather than assuming that each note is read in isolation. The import of the notes is, moreover, not fully perceptible without reference to the text: it is clear that Alexander is the one who “goethe into libie,” because context – both of the text itself and the rhythm of annotation that proceeds and follows – makes it clear that this must be so. The notes track the stages in the narrative carefully, event by event. It is not enough to merely name the locations visited, but in many cases separate mention is made of Alexander’s journey there (“& so into tracie”), the yielding of the city to Alexander’s authority (“Att tracye Submitte”), and then the resultant increase in his military force (“v\M/ knigtis”). The notes do not merely distinguish the taking of one city from the taking of the next, nor even do they simply provide an easy reference list of all the locations visited. Instead, they make explicit the pattern of arrival, surrender and troop increase that repeats again and again at each locale.
Readers are alerted not only to Alexander’s itinerary, but to the nature of his progress, the repeating pattern that shapes the narrative.

The preoccupation with troop numbers is striking. Alexander’s journey is at this point more triumphal progress than violent military action, and his forces are swelled by the additional troops (five thousand knights, six thousand knights, a thousand knights) that join his muster in each new location visited. At least part of the impetus for noting these numbers in the margins must be the bias toward numbers, alongside proper names, as a perennial focus for annotators. The connection, moreover, between these indications of the numerical size of Alexander’s growing army, and Vortigern’s own “xx to one” outnumbering of his adversaries, is doubtless significant. The Hand B annotator, here as before, finds it important to emphasize the size – whether absolute size or relative size – of the military forces that are moving around the world map.

There is, finally, an interest carried over from Arthour and Merlin in the city that yields up its loyalties to a military commander that visits it. Like Winchester did for Uther and Pendragon, these cities throw in their loyalty with Alexander, and in so doing, tip the scales in his favor politically as well as militarily, strengthening his already overwhelming power even further. The success of a king or military leader is measured

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[274] The means of his conquest are largely passed over in silence, with the result summed up in the simple statement that “Per quik falliþ in to his hond / Alle þe citees of þat lond” (Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:80.1411–1412). Elsewhere, the peaceful nature of the campaign is actually briefly emphasized (“Pes men blewe and no loud sclaunder,” ibid., 1:80.1434; “Barouns and knyþis of þat lond / ʒolden heom to his hond / Wiþ oute bataille &þ ofer dunt,” ibid., 1:84.1495–1497), a circumstance that does not go unremarked by the annotator (“he wan libia wþ/howt bataile”).
for Hand B not only by his victories in battle,275 or by individual deeds of particular skill or prowess, but by the cities that yield to him.

What happens, however, when a city does not yield? We can see the outline of a somewhat different series of events in the episode of Alexander’s siege of Thebes.

In this passage, we can see very well how the Hand B notes lay out an episode. There is, first of all, the description of geographical movement (“to babilon”). There is the numerical measure of the size of Alexander’s force: this time, as the text records it, in the physical length of the marching column (twenty miles). There is a great deal of attention paid to the city of Thebes, both as a geographical place (“description of Thebes,” “The town destroyed”), and as a collection of citizens (“The Thebans exclamie,” “the people

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275 This is not to say that battles are not mentioned in the notes. There is, for example, “The maner of Daries battaile” (on f. 47v, at ibid., 1:116.2048). The Hand B notes, following, as they are, the action of the text itself, are bound to shift in their focus depending on the shifting focus of the text. Yet the city still does function as a major measure of achievement, and a convenient label for units within the plot. The maintained interest in cities makes this a point of continuity between the presentation of Arthour and Merlin and Alisaunder.
Slayne”). Of the fifteen notes in this episode, four notes mention the proper name “Thebes” or “Theban,” three use the common nouns “city” and “town,” and two mention architectural features of the city, invoking its physical presence. The city of Thebes dominates these notes as a geographical place. We may understand, too, a slight distinction between those cities peacefully surrendered, which appear in the notes more as bodies politic, and those cities that are, as here, taken by force. In the latter case, the description of the city weights more heavily toward the physical, the better to encompass its destruction.

There are other factors at work in these notes, however, than interest in Thebes as city. There is focus too on key objects within the text: Thebes’s large tower, the spear that cannot be moved, even the city gates themselves. These objects are items in the landscape to be acted upon, and represent the actions that are carried out. The tower is the strong defense of the city, the spear is Alexander’s military aggression and mastery of the art of war, while the destruction of the gates stands in for the destruction of the city as a whole.

Objects may here, as elsewhere, function as a transition into the subject of marvels, a motif that constitutes a strong departure from the Arthour and Merlin notes: Hand B is, in Alisaunder, far from immune to the draw of marvels. He does not, as we have seen, interest himself in the marvelous events of the conception episode at the beginning of the text, which most closely mirrored the marvels of Arthour and Merlin. But he does submit to the allure of the “marvels of the east” that are one of Alisaunder’s major plot-points, particularly in the section of text around ff. 73-77, where the text is
principally devoted to the description of these marvels, and his notes deal almost exclusively with the “beastli,” the “strang” and the “wonder full.”

Hand B’s approach to these marvels does not constitute a fully consistent program or treatment. Unlike other texts where, as we have seen, objects (like, for example, the arms of Arthur) hold a sort of talismanic importance in symbolizing or encapsulating a larger marvelous event, such objects are not major features of the Hand B notes. Still, nouns do play an important role in at least some of these notes, and sometimes it is the name of the creatures and peoples that he records, as with the label “Agiofagi,” imperfectly reproducing the adjacent textual naming: “Anoþer folk woneþ in þe west half / Þat eteþ neuer kow no kalf / Bote of Panteris and lyouns / [...] and oþir þer by / Clepeþ heom Agriofagy” (Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:336.5074-5081). The note (on f. 75r) stands beside the last of these lines, where the description of these people ends, and the name “Agriofagy” is given. It is the name, that is, that takes primacy in this note, as it is the name that forms Hand B’s entire comment on these people. In other cases, the name is unreported in the margin, and the strangeness of the description takes pride of place. In one exemplary passage, the foreign peoples fly by thick and fast:

He [Alexander] by sette þe see and þe lond
Wiþ botemay and mace strong
Taracountes and Magogecas

276 “beastli l people” on f. 74v, at ibid., 1:334.5030.

277 “A strang diet” on f. 73r, at ibid., 1:322.4850. See also “Cessus is l straung best” on f. 76v, at ibid., 1:346.5243 and “A strang people” on f. 77r, at ibid., 1:348.5307.

278 “A wonder full l diche” on f. 77v, at ibid., 1:352.5358.

279 The “Agiofagi” note is not unique in this. Cf., to name only two more examples among several, “macropi is l th[er] name” on f. 75r, at ibid., 1:338.5108 (the word “th[er],” effaced by wear, is now partly illegible) and “Tiger and l Cockadrill” on f. 77r, at ibid., 1:348.5297.
And afolk me clepiþ Vetas
Al blak so cole brond
And rowȝh as beore to þe hond
Turk he by sette wiþ heom
Grete werriours and dourȝty men
Schorte y swerred\textsuperscript{280} so Y fynde
And bounked\textsuperscript{281} by fore and by hynde
Durwes al so he by sette
Pikke and schort and grond sette
Ac non so hyȝ Y þe telle
So þe leyȝþe of on elne
Ac none betre \textit{y} no wot
Pan þey buþ God hit wot
Wolflinges þey by set al so
Merueillouse men buþ þo
Wolfus by þe nauel douward
And men þennes vpward
By robbery þey liueþ and skickyng
Jn cleues is heore wonyng
Wiþ heom he by sette Afowegogas
And al þe folk of Crisolidas
Afolk of Griffayn and Besas
And XXIJ oþerfolk noþeles xxij\textit{ti}/nations
Eueriche fouler folk þan oþir\textsuperscript{282}

Underlined in this passage are all the proper names of various peoples and the places they inhabit, a formidable list. None of these names, however, is reproduced marginally. Instead, two peoples are chosen from among the throngs, the Durwes (“dwarves”)\textsuperscript{283} and the Wolflings, and that which Hand B provides is the characteristic that makes them unique: that they are only a single ell long, or that they combine wolf and man in their form. It is unclear why these nations receive Hand B’s note, while the short-necked and

\textsuperscript{280}“Short necked” (ibid., 2:203).

\textsuperscript{281}That is, “having a hump” (ibid., 2:166).

\textsuperscript{282}Ibid., 1:330.4980–332.5006. The text is taken from Smithers (my emphasis), but the marginal notes are my own transcriptions, directly from the manuscript. The entire passage is carried on f. 74r.

\textsuperscript{283}Smithers offers “pygmies” (ibid., 2:174).
hunchbacked Turks receive no such attentions. Hand B shows, furthermore, a conspicuous avoidance here of the vocabulary of marvel, in spite of the textual prompt that the Wolflings are “Merueillouse men”: his annotation of these people makes no overt assessment of the Wolflings as “marvelous,” “a marvel,” or “a wonder,” leaving any surprise at their appearance to the judgment of the reader.

Other notes seem to combine these characteristics, including both name and description. Perhaps the most discursive is “monocerro\s/ w\t/ a \ horne sharper then \ a raser iiij feet long,” but it is by no means alone. “Archapitis \ wh do creope” stands beside the line naming a race of people who “creope þ on fot and honde” and must turn belly-up if they wish to see “þe wenche” (possibly a corruption of “welkin,” meaning “sky”). Elsewhere, while the “Tiger and Cockadrill” are merely named at the point of

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284 Once again, while I highlight this passage as illustrative, the same observations could be made of notes elsewhere. The earlier attention to the inhabitants of “Taracomete” and “þe lond of Magogas” (ibid., 1:320.4835 and 4837), as “black men \t/ | yellowe teethe as | bores toxes /” (on f. 73r, at ibid., 1:322.4846) may go some way toward explaining why they are not given special notice in the f. 74r passage. Their earlier note, however, makes no mention of a name, whether of the people or their region. On f. 76v, the “rinoceras” (not, as Smithers transcribes, “rinocertis,” ibid., 1:346.5253) is not named in the margin, but instead described as “a best \t/ will kill \ Lyons,” albeit standing in the text beside the creature’s name, rather than the statement that “þe olyouns he wol sle” (ibid., 1:346.5257). There are a few other notes besides these I have listed, generally with various semi-equivocal relationships to names in the text. Hand B seems to prefer to include names in his notes, but he does not always use them, whether because they are unavailable or for other reasons. Names, that is, are not essential to his project.

285 On f. 76v, at ibid., 1:346.5265.

286 Ibid., 1:336.5085. The note itself, on f. 75r, adjoins ibid., 1:336.5082.

287 Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 622, taken by Smithers as the superior text, here reads “walkne” (ibid., 1:337.6355). See ibid., 2:208 for Smithers’s terse treatment of the ambiguity. The Middle English Dictionary can only speculate that “wenche,” if it is taken at face-value and not as a corruption, must be exactly what it sounds, namely, the female of the species (Frances McSparran, ed., “Wenche, n.,” The Electronic Middle English Dictionary, http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.library.nd.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=byte&byte=238655337&egdisplay=open&egs=238664851). Hand B was either undisturbed by the strangeness, or else had no insight to offer. His note confines itself to the creeping, and ventures no opinion of the wench.
their initial introduction and *textual* naming, the “description of the l Cockadrill” merits a separate note in its proper location. And, finally, we learn “Cess is l straung best,” but that strangeness (an ox’s horns, a long beard, and human hands and feet) is not further elaborated. This last hybrid note – hybrid, that is, in incorporating concern for marking both the proper name of the animal and also the rehearsal of the beast’s more remarkable traits – demonstrates that Hand B’s failure to employ a vocabulary of wonder is by no means absolute. Peoples and creatures are, most frequently, “strange,” and on one occasion, Alexander encounters “A wonder full diche” (or so reads the note), described by the text as both “Merueillous and eke gryslich” (Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:352.5357), “awondur þyng” (1:352.5364) barren of all life but constantly echoing with screams, with both great heat and great cold – fire, ash and snow – issuing forth from holes in the ground.

As a rule, the text is far more free with this vocabulary of wonder than is Hand B. Most striking is the near-complete absence of any form of the word “marvel” from Hand B’s annotations. He uses it only once, and that to describe something that is neither a “marvel of the east,” nor indeed properly a marvel at all, in the way that we have been examining the phenomenon: “Quene candace l her Lettre to Alexander wh l is merveleis.” The critical point here is the letter, not the marvel, and while the letter

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289 On f. 77r, at ibid., 1:350.5328.
290 On f. 76v, at ibid., 1:346.5243.
291 On f. 77v, at ibid., 1:352.5358.
292 On f. 78r, at ibid., 1:354.5407.
293 I address letters in the *Alisaunder* notes, and in romance generally, at far greater length below.
itself is not such as one might receive every day, there is nothing in it that could strictly be described as outside the natural order. Queen Candace, the wealthiest and most beautiful of women, “louede Alisaundre priueliche / And he hire sikirliche,” despite the fact that they have never seen one another. Candace requests to be made Alexander’s queen, offering in return her personal service “to hond and fot” (1:356.5450) as well a vast wealth, enumerated in exhaustive detail: money, jewels, gold, silver, troops, thousands of retainers of various ranks, and hundreds of exotic animals.

Despite the avoidance of the vocabulary of wonder, the notes still foreground marvels themselves, even more than the text demands. It is possible to see in Hand B’s annotations an assimilation of the Candace episode into the previous “marvels of the east” narrative. Candace herself is cast here as one more among the exotic eastern marvels. Following the “wonder full diche,” the notes continue to preoccupy themselves with the marvelous:

f. 77v, at Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:352.5365: “Alexander goeth | from ethiope to | yende”
77v, at 352.5381: “quene candace | wh lo[u]ed alexander | prively”
78r, at 354.5407: “Quene candace | her Lettre to Alexander wh | is merveleis”
78v, at 358.5460: “king alex | picture”
80v, at 372.5686: “howe and | when Alex shall | dye”

Alexander, along with the troops and retainers following in his wake, moves from one region to another, but after this, the focus is not on Alexander’s actions, but instead on what he finds in the new territory. Queen Candace loves Alexander, but Alexander’s

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294 Ibid., 1:354.5386–5387. The statement of Candace’s love is further echoed and highlighted by one of Hand B’s notes, on f. 77v, at ibid., 1:352.5381.
reciprocal love (“And he [louede] hire,” 1:354.5387) is not mentioned by Hand B. Candace becomes in this way the aggressor, while Alexander remains an emotional cipher. Even more, in the context of the “marvels of the east” notes that have passed before, Candace becomes defined by her emotion, as possessing a particular quality presented as interesting and noteworthy for an observer. The reader is presented with her as the object of his (or her) examining gaze, as Alexander himself makes the simultaneous discovery of the queen as an inhabitant characterizing the new land. Christine Chism sees in the Alexander story the potential for presenting “a world where same-sex loyalties between men preempt and exclude the agency and capacity for social (re)production of women,” the transformation of “a world of unimaginable diversity into a network of masculine control,” creating a “pattern of dominance and subalternity” after the model described by Gayatri Spivak. Alexander’s wife Roxanne, as well as the “armed women, monstrous women, and [...] Amazons” that make up some of the eastern marvels fall into this pattern. But for Chism, the Alisaunder transcends this paradigm in the persons of Candace and Olympias, who, by their seizure of agency and control, facilitate Alexander’s very existence. Hand B’s reading of the Alisaunder is not, apparently, the same as Chism’s, however, for the redemptive detail that forms of Olympias and, especially Candace, such powerful characters is absent from his annotation. Following the letter episode, the progress of Candace and Alexander’s subsequent affair is not reported, falling as it does after the end of the Hand B notes. The


296 Ibid.
fact of Candace is the important thing for Hand B, not the actions she may take, nor the actions taken by Alexander in response.

Immediately following Candace’s love in the notes comes the letter, and with this object the marvels become even more overt. The invocation of Candace’s letter as “merveleis”– a terminology, as we have seen, going beyond the text’s own characterization on this point, and not, furthermore, usual for Hand B – is the explicit instruction to the reader on how to read the document: as an object of wonder, comparable to the “merueiles of Ethiope” described just above (Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:352.5367). So too, the succeeding object, “king alex picture,” the “queynte mon” (1:358.5459) functioning as Candace’s surrogate Alexander in his absence, is presented by Hand B to the reader as visual object, both as a rare physical item and as recipient of the reader’s gaze. As the narrative moves out of the “marvels of the east” proper, Hand B begins to mark other kinds of marvels, including the physical object of the “picture” or, further on, “Agret merueille” (as the text describes it, 1:358.5483), namely the prophetic trees that deliver a prediction marked “howe and when Alex shall dye.” Intriguingly, this prediction is never fulfilled in the notes themselves, as the Hand B annotations trail off several folios before the end of the text proper, with the note “Alex wold | fight hund to | hund w\t/ pors.”

The failure of Hand B to annotate the closing folios of the romance, including Alexander’s death, means that he has omitted comment on one of the most important aspects of the romance, namely, the moral lesson of Alexander’s demise. This lesson is, admittedly, rather ambiguous in Kyng Alisaunder. The conqueror’s murderer, Antipater,

297 On f. 83r, at Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:392.5982.
“vndurstod wel / Þat þe kyng is ful crewelle” (1:426.6559), an apparent narratorial condemnation of Alexander’s moral compass, but the lamentation on Alexander’s death seems sincere, his tomb is opulent (“neuer heþen kyng / Haue so riche aburyeng,” 1:442.6724-6725), and the narrator laments (in a closing unique to the Lincoln’s Inn manuscript), “Alisaunder me reowiþ þyn endyng / Þat þou nadest dyþed in cristenyng” (1:444.6745-6746): some considerable sympathy exists, that is, for the late ruler, and Alexander the Great seems pretty good, for a pagan. There is ambiguity between whether the moral should be that Alexander’s pride has brought about his inevitable fall, or whether, instead, the blame should lie with Fortune, Alexander being not so much culpable as cautionary. The closest the text seems to come to an explanation of the story’s moral is the following epilogue:

Þus hit fariþ in myddelerd
Among lewed and lerid
Whan þeo heued is doun yfalle
Acombred buþ þeo lymes alle
Þus eyndiþ kyng Alisaunder
Of whom was so muche sclaunfer
(1:442.6734-6739)

The slander, however, is not further detailed, and the moral remains an equivocal one.

If the text is somewhat coy as to how Alexander’s character should be read, Hand B is still more noncommittal. Notes with ethical significance are few and far between. Perhaps the most promising is “alexandre l in arage,” when Alexander, “anoied” by an insult made about Olympias, his mother, lashes out by hurling a cup at the offender. Olympias has at this point been set aside by Philip for her suspected infidelity in

On f. 38v, at ibid., 1:62.1096.
Alexander’s conception, and is on the verge of being replaced altogether: the incident occurs at a feast celebrating the crowning of a new queen. Alexander’s rage is thus bracketed in the notes by “Olim pias lamen l tinge her case”\(^\text{299}\) and “Olimpias deliuerd l owt of preson /.”\(^\text{300}\) His emotional outburst, while uncontrolled, is efficacious, equal parts hot-headed intemperance and just defense mounted by a dutiful son.\(^\text{301}\) While Alexander indulges in other rages, however, this is the only one that receives a marginal note, and its overt positioning in a local context of problem (signaled by Olympias’s lamentation) and resolution (Olympias’s restoration) emphasizes the instrumentality of his outburst, rather than its ethical implications.

The text of the *Kyng Alisaunnder* is itself somewhat reluctant to engage with the ethical, avoiding either wholehearted admiration or condemnation of Alexander’s character, leaving him an ambiguous exemplar. Hand B has the opportunity to impose his own reading onto the equivocal text, but chooses instead the other path, and, if anything, passes over occasions for moral exegesis or judgment. His notes focus on the “what” more than the “so what,” and privilege the incidents of the text, as well as the things and people encountered, over characterization or ethical interpretation.

\(^\text{299}\) On f. 38r, at ibid., 1:60.1043.

\(^\text{300}\) On f. 39r, at ibid., 1:64.1140.

\(^\text{301}\) Alexander’s action here may be compared, and perhaps contrasted, with Merlin’s defense of his own embattled mother in *Arthour and Merlin.*
2.5 *Romance, Chronicle and the Forms of Utterance*

So far, we have encountered notes of many types in Lincoln’s Inn 150: names and places, marvels and wonders, battles and troop movements. One final thematic strain, however, deserves particular examination, both as it appears here in Lincoln’s Inn 150, and as it runs throughout annotation in both chronicle and romance. It is this thematic strain that will ultimately be perhaps the most distinctive strain in the *Alisaunder* notes as a whole: an interest in incidences of utterance. The Hand B notes highlight utterance of every kind: spoken utterance, written utterance, utterances both functional and poetic. What all of these utterances have in common, however, is that they are both excerpted and excerptible. The reader is invited, sometimes by the text itself, and frequently even more powerfully by the annotation, to treat this utterance as possessing an independence, both of voice and of form, from the surrounding narrative.

*Alisaunder* is a text full of correspondence, with letters flying back and forth between Alexander and various other sovereigns. Such an interest in correspondence is not unexpected in an Alexander romance. The earliest sources, dating back to the Greek, mention letters and their contents, some clearly fictitious and others based on correspondence either historically attested or even still extant. Antique and medieval educational techniques included the composition of letters in the personae of figures both historical and legendary, as a rhetorical exercise, a practice that would have further

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increased the Alexandrian corpus.\textsuperscript{304} \textit{Alisaunder} stands, moreover, near the beginning of the English tradition for what one may term poetic love letters. Martin Camargo summarizes the history of the form:

The medieval love epistle, in both verse and prose, had by the turn of the fourteenth century already flourished for over two hundred years in what is present-day France. Numerous examples in Latin, Old Provençal, and Old French survive from as early as the late eleventh century, and were especially plentiful in the twelfth century. [...] In England, however, the love epistle blossomed late, and then only in verse. Not until the last quarter of the fourteenth century does it begin to resemble an established genre. Perhaps because the masterpieces of the genre, Chaucer’s \textit{Litera Troili} and \textit{Litera Criseydis}, came so early, the verse love epistle’s success in England was both immediate and, at least quantitatively, spectacular. Both Chaucer and Gower wrote love epistles in verse, and the scores of examples surviving from the following century led Rossell Hope Robbins to declare that “Without doubt, the love epistle is the main conventional form during the fifteenth century.”\textsuperscript{305}

Dating to c. 1330, the letter from Candace to Alexander is the earliest extant love-letter in Middle English literature, but belongs to a genre whose popularity would only grow. And this letter is only one among many in the romance, if love-letters are classed along with other epistles. Nor do these letters go unnoticed by the manuscript’s principal annotator, whose notes unroll in patterns extremely illuminating in their treatment of letters as intimately connected with other types of inset utterance.

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid., 449.

An interest in letters recurs at several points throughout the romance, but one series of notes in particular, in a passage relating Alexander’s negotiations with the city of Athens, may serve as representative of the larger trend. The series of notes begins even before Alexander’s arrival at that city, however, as the localized focus on utterance is kicked off with a note drawing attention to “The sainge of þe harper to Alexan.” Alexander, at this point in the story, is marching through Greece, conquering the city-states he encounters on his way. When he comes to Thebes, he besieges the city and ultimately takes it. When he has gained entry within the walls, it is at first unclear what Alexander will do. “An harpour” comes to him to plead for mercy on behalf of the Thebans, and it is here that we encounter the first of the notes I have excerpted above. The harper’s address to Alexander is described by the Hand B annotator as a “saying,” a term he uses frequently in these conversational exchanges, and whose precise meaning is difficult to pin down. We encounter here a note (“The sainge of þe harper to Alexan”) that itemizes the speaker of an utterance (the harper), and the addressee of that utterance (Alexander), but does not address the content of that utterance.

Nor is this content devoid of interest, particularly from a literary or intertextual perspective. The harper’s argument for sparing Thebes is, essentially, that the city’s proud history as a birthplace of gods should impress Alexander with its nobility and importance:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Kyng on ows haue mercy} \\
\text{Here men was y bore Amphion} \\
\text{Fadir of godis euerychon} \\
\text{Aliber þe god of wyne}
\end{align*}
\]

306 On f. 54v, at Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:158.2825.
And Hercules of kynne þyne
Here hadde þe godes of nor tour
Þis is toun þow shalt kyng honoure
Aȝeyns heom þy wræþþe adant
Æf heom mercy and þes heom grant

(Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:158.2828-160.2836)

The harper’s argument – that Thebes’s noble mythological past has earned Alexander’s forbearance – does not, however, carry the day. Instead, in a passage that Hand B does not mark (perhaps because it is couched as a third-person description rather than direct address?), “al þe cowntrey / Pat weoren of þe kyngis fe” step forward to rebut the harper in his own terms (1:160.2837-2838). Thebes may have a few positive myths associated with it, but these detractors are able to marshal a rival list of mythological allusions and intertextual references in which Thebes appears in a less flattering light, concluding that “Al Grece was of heom venymed” (1:160.2842). Oedipus, after all, is hardly a beacon of morality or an honorable forebear for a city to claim, and the incident of the Seven Against Thebes is likewise held up to the citizens’ discredit, since “for heom was slayn in fyþis / Of Grece all þe gode knyþþis” (1:160.2853-2854). Hand B’s notes do not, however, address any of the substance of the arguments for or against, nor take up the text’s invitation to engage in learned a game of name-the-allusion or spot-the-source.

It should be observed that literary allusion is by no means beside the point in this debate. The climax of the Seven Against Thebes, as it appears in Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes or Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale, is not the death of the flower of Greek knighthood, but the razing of Thebes itself by Theseus, when Creon, the new Theban king, refused
burial to the fallen Greeks. “That old Creon, fader of fellonye,” and, in both Lydgate and Chaucer, the real villain of the piece, is not mentioned in the *Alisaunder*. But “as my mayster Chaucer list endite, / Al clad in blak with her wymples whyte,” the widows of the Greeks approach Theseus, “To rewe on hem her harmys to redresse” (Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*, lines 4501-02, 4519). And, of course:

The Knyghtys Tale reherseth every del
Fro poynt to poynt, if ye looke wel,
And how this duk withoute more abood
The same day toward Thebes rood
................................................
He bete it downe and the howsys brente,
The puple slough for al her crying loude,
Maad her wallys and her towrys proude
Rounde aboute, even upon a rowe,
With the solye to be lade ful lowe,
That nought was left but the soyle al bare.
(lines 4531-34, 4556-61)

Directions of influence depend here upon the chosen perspective, as the *Kyng Alisaunder* text itself predates Chaucer, but Chaucer and Lydgate are both very much in the past for the Hand B annotator. However one wishes to view these circular intertextual relationships, however, it is clear that Alexander here has the potential to be viewed as a new Theseus. Where the Theseus of Chaucer and Lydgate acts out of compassion for the appeals of a delegation of virtuous widows, in *Alisaunder* the anti-Thebes delegation finishes with a decrual “Of wimen þe iniquite” (Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:160.2859), followed by the vengeful sacking of the city:


308 A fragment of the romance can be found in the Auchinleck manuscript, now famous as a manuscript Chaucer himself may have read (Loomis, “Chaucer and the Breton Lays”).
There is a potential further parallelism and cruel irony in that, following the burning of the city, it can be said of Alexander too that he “to Athenys the righte waye tooke / With laurer crownyd in signe of victorye / And the palme of conquest and of glorye,” although not with the same peaceful intentions of the Athenian Theseus: Alexander’s version of Theseus’s journey is an inversion, threatening rather than triumphal for the Athenians.

The focus for the Hand B annotator does not divert along such a literary path, however, making of our annotator (perhaps unsurprisingly) a very different sort of reader of the *Alisaunder* than Lydgate was of Chaucer – or than Chaucer may have been of the Auchinleck *Kyng Alisaunder*. Or, perhaps more to the point, Hand B is a very different sort of reader than Chaucer’s own annotators were, in their pursuit of source citation and intertextual cross-reference. In our search for potential parallels, we may turn To Sylvia Huot’s study of the apparatus in *Romance of the Rose* manuscripts, a text closer in form and ambition to the works of its imitator Chaucer, than it is to the romances that are the object of our current study. Huot uncovers in the rubrication of the *Rose*, however, an interest in dialogue and voice attribution that may be useful to the present problem. A

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careful distinction is maintained in these rubrics between the voice of *l'Amant* (the first-person narrator) and that of *l'Aucteur* (the third-person author):

Specifically, “l’Amant” is used whenever the protagonist speaks lines addressed to other characters within the fictional world, as well as for narrative accounts of actions that befall the protagonist or that he directly witnessed. “L’Aucteur,” in turn, narrates action that the protagonist could not have witnessed, such as the conversation between Bel Aceuil and la Vieille within the tower, or narrative digressions unrelated to the action of the dream, such as the account of the death of Adonis. With few exceptions, the rubricators are attentive to subtle shifts of voice.310

Huot’s *Rose* rubricators are placing quotation marks, of a kind, for the reader’s ease in navigating the jungle of shifting voice and authority within this very multivocal text, and it is part of a larger program on the part of *Rose* readers to simplify the text and locate within it a lone voice of authority and a single correct interpretation.311 Even more than this, though, the *Rose* rubrics participate in what Huot calls “the medieval editors’ fascination with the poetics of first-person narrative.”312 Such a model does not dead-end with the *Romance of the Rose*, but may have been deliberately imitated by Chaucer in his design for glosses on the *Canterbury Tales*.313 “Auctor” appears repeatedly in the margins of, for example, the Ellesmere *Man of Law’s Tale*. It is interesting that these markers of authorial voice – absent from, for example, Ellesmere annotation on the Wife
of Bath’s or Franklin’s tales – are in the margins of a text that, as Katherine Zieman observes, thematizes “tydynges,” messages both oral and written, and often misdirected or untrustworthy, that drive the plot. Chaucer may have favored source citation, but he seems to have engaged in genre experimentation within the marginalia of the Tales, as well as within the text of the Tales themselves.

*Kyng Alisaunder* does not, obviously, possess the same latent potential for polyphonic authority as the *Romance of the Rose* or the *Canterbury Tales*. There is no first-person narrator, except within moments of directly-reported speech or utterance. Still, there does seem to be a significant contrast between “The sainge of þe/ harper to Alexa,” in which the content of the harper’s speech is left unexpressed, and the succeeding note, “The towne destro[y]ed · the people Slayne”\(^{314}\) that reports the action of the text, without attention to the form in which it is offered. As we move forward in the annotations, matters become more and more exclusively taken up with the formalized exchange of utterance that is the sending back and forth of letters, an interest the romance likely inherits from its chronicle forebears. Alexander leaves Thebes and approaches Athens, and when he does so, he sends to the Athenian rulers a letter whose words are directly reported in the text: “Alisaundre þe stronge kyng / To Athenis sendiþ gretyng” (Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:164.2905-06). Letters are reported not only in the third person, but are actually reproduced or quoted, documents set within the larger narrative.

A similar interest in utterance is fully visible in chronicle, as well as romance, and can be explored there most readily by attention first to written utterance in the form of letters, epistles sent back and forth between characters and either referred to in the third

person or reproduced directly. There is a well-established tradition of the inclusion of letters within chronicles, frequently for purposes of verification and authentication. Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* employs the technique, as when Pope Gregory’s letter to king Æthelberht is quoted in its entirety. Bede says of it “Exemplar autem praefatae epistulae hoc est” (“This is a copy of the letter”), and preserves the apparatus of opening and closing formulae. The main body of the letter also insists on its particularity to a single, historical moment of communication between Gregory and Æthelberht, in its fossilized reference to an enclosure, now opaque and irrelevant to readers of Bede’s text: “Paua autem exenia transmisi,” (“I am sending you some small gifts,” *Ecclesiastical History*, I.32). Geoffrey of Monmouth uses a similar method to create verisimilitude for letters he has fabricated himself or drawn from some source in which they were, ultimately, fabricated. Founding hero Brutus, besieging the Greeks who held captive the Trojan prince Helenus, writes: “Pandraso regi Graecorum Brutus dux reliquiarum Troiae salutem...” (“Brutus, leader of the survivors from Troy, sends greetings to Pandrasus, king of the Greeks,” Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, I.8.92). Lucius, in his letter to Arthur, is less polite: “Lucius rei publicae procurator Arturo regi Britanniae quod meruit” (“Lucius, procurator of the republic, wishes Arthur, king of Britain, his just deserts,” IX.158.415).

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316 “Domino gloriosissimo atque praecellentissimo filio Aedibercto regi Anglorum Gregorius episcopus... Data die X kalendarum Iuliarum imperante domino nostro Mauricio Tiberio piissimo Augusto anno XVIII post consulatum eiusdem domni anno XVIII indictione III,” (“Bishop Gregory to his most worthy son, the glorious lord Æthelberht, king of the English... Given the 22 June, in the nineteenth year of the reign of our most religious emperor, Maurice Tiberius Augustus, the eighteenth year after his consulship and in the fourth indiction,” ibid.).
As Chris Given-Wilson argues, this preservation of documentary evidence in chronicles – or even the invention of forged documentary evidence – was not mere window-dressing. Such letters were at the very heart of the chronicle’s useful purpose, as a repository for ancient documents of precedent, property ownership, and so forth, that could be consulted as authoritative in the present day. I can do no better than quote the *Memoriale Super Visitatione Domini Laurencii Ratholdi*, by the Anglo-Irish author James Yonge, introducing such a letter, in this case the letter of introduction carried by Rathold on his pilgrimage: “Ut autem huius operis textura nonficta plus autentica solidetur tenor huiusmodi litterarum patet serius in sequenti” (“Moreover, so that the structure of this factual work might be made more firmly authentic, the tenor of this letter lies below as follows”). The letter authenticates his narrative, and ensures a reader’s acceptance of the work as “nonficta”: not made up or forged, and thus true. The reproduction of documents, such as letters between heads of state, both lends authority to the framing narrative (the story must be true, because records exist of the principals’ own first-person descriptions of events) and draws authority from that frame (the reliability of the reported – in some chronicles supposedly copied – document must necessarily depend on the reliability of the chronicler who reports it).

In the realm of Arthurian chronicle, one episode in particular affords a perfect opportunity to explore the role of letters in manuscript annotation, albeit in this case a letter more fanciful than documentary. We can see here the provision of a very specific

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317 Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 65ff.

kind of reading aid, and one that has very little to do with navigation on the level of the
codex. Instead, annotators break down a localized episode into its component structures,
with an eye toward speech attribution and the type of utterance used. The episode as it
appears in Arundel 58 is illustrative. During the reign of King Arthur, messengers arrive
from Lucye (Lucius), the “senator of Rome,” bringing a demand of tribute. After some
debate with his councilors, the king elects to reply with defiance rather than submission,
and subsequently embarks on a campaign of conquest that culminates with his
conquering of Rome and defeat of Lucye. In Arundel 58, this episode, the beginning of
the end of Arthur’s reign, is played out stage by stage in the scribal annotations:

f. 66v, at Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1:279.3984: “¶ Messagers of | Rome ·”
66v, at 280.3989: “¶ lucies lettre | the senatour ·”
67r, at 282.4031: “¶ Consail of Arthur”
67v, at 285.4059: “¶ Consail of | Howel ·”
67v, at 286.4077: “¶ Conseil of Angws | sel kyng of Scotlonde”
68r, at 289.4113: “¶ Answer to the | Messagers”
68v, at 292.4156: “¶ The bataille | of Dynabe”
70r, at 298.4249: “¶ Sancti Michaelis in mon / | te tumba ·”
71r, at 303.4307: “¶ The takyng of Pe · | treye the Romayn”
72r, at 305.4343: “¶ The busshement | of Arthur”
72r (no equivalent location in Wright’s edition): 320 “¶ Lesse nomen uallis”

319 This character is introduced as “Lucius rei publicae procurator” “Lucius, procurator of the
republic,” in the locus classicus in Geoffrey of Monmouth (Geoffrey of Monmouth, History, IX.158.415).
Lucius is, in the many cognate versions of this episode that translate or otherwise derive from Geoffrey,
variously represented as a Roman senator or even a Roman emperor, his exact rank as elusive as his
historicity – there was, of course, no historical emperor Lucius.

320 The note abuts a passage slightly different from that carried in Robert of Gloucester, Metrical
Chronicle, 1:305.4344–306.4360. The manuscript reads as follows:

with al his power by the weye / somwhar hym to kepe
that he dight hym hastely / in to a valeye
bytwyne the Cite and the Senatour / euene the myddel weye ¶ Lesse
So that he was thuder come / he gan his ostes shape
vij he shape / and euery a certayn nombre to take
The nythe ost he toke hym self / with many a legioun

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72r, at 307.4361: “Confortyng of Arthur l to his men”
72v, at 309.4387: “¶ Confortyng of l Lucie to his men”
72v (no equivalent location in Wright’s edition):\(^{321}\) (a series of Roman numerals, I-XII)
74r, at 316.4481: “¶ The burying l of Lordes”
74v, at 317.4499: “Hugh Mordred l bitrayde Arthur”
75r, at 319.4531: “¶ The deth of l wawayn”
75r, at 320.4533: “¶ Nota quod antiqui scripserunt l Gwalwanum cum G & quidam walwanum per v & sic Gal l wanus & walwanus idem sunt”

It is useful to compare the annotation of the equivalent passage in Royal 13.A.xxi:

f. 88ra, at Wace, *Brut*, line 10626: (*manicule*), “M essagers de rome ·”
88rb, at 10642: “Lettre Lemperur de rome l al rei artur ·”
88vb, at 10735: “¶ Cador ·”
89vb, at 10909: “¶ Hoel reis de norwege”\(^{322}\)

and let rere to fore hym there / his goldene dragoun
that stod as for a standard / yf eny wounded were
or wery / as in a Castel / he myghte be fonge there

\(^{321}\) This passage represents another interpolation into the standard *Metrical Chronicle* text. I insert the marginal Roman numerals into the transcription in their proper locations:

\(^{322}\) The “domestic confusion” surrounding the parentage of Hoel and lamented by Judith Weiss (*Wace, Brut*, 231, 1n) is here compounded. The description of “reis de norwege” adds information not provided by the immediately adjacent text, but the annotator has mistaken Hoel’s title: he is in fact the king of Brittany, not of Norway.
The lists of annotations in these two parallel passages is not, of course, the same.

Moreover, they neither should be nor could be, since the texts marked by these two apparatus are not themselves identical. Nor is it the case that all manuscripts carrying texts with an equivalent passage would have similar annotations, or even any annotations
at all. \(^{323}\) There are, furthermore, certain differences in annotation style between the two manuscripts.

The annotator who authored the Arundel 58 notes, for example, seems more engaged – even unusually so – in providing additional information to readers, beyond that available in the main text. We have already examined his tendency (if, as seems likely, the annotator is identical with the compiler) to supplement text and marginal apparatus simultaneously, by the provision of outside information, a practice he continues here by naming the valley described in an interpolated passage. On f. 72r, “¶ Lesse nomen uallis” (“‘Lesse’ [is] the name of the valley”) offers information not provided by the *Metrical Chronicle* itself, either in the standard version as it appears in W. A Wright’s edition, or as the text is carried in the manuscript. The name of this valley is reported in Geoffrey of Monmouth as “Siesia” (*History*, X.168.242), of which “Lesse” is presumably a variant. The annotator evidently knows this information from another source, and provides it, either to repair what he views as an informational oversight, or as a cross-reference to some other source (poetic, chronicle, or merely the fund of common knowledge) in which the valley Lesse has some meaning.

The annotator does not hesitate to clarify or supplement, however, even when the passage he marks is original to his main text. Later, on f. 75r, the Arundel 58 annotator again emerges as more of a glossator, explaining the text to readers by the provision of additional information. Here the focus is on an orthographical anomaly: “¶ Nota quod antiqui scripserunt Gwalwanum cum G & quidam walwanum per v & sic Galwanus &

\(^{323}\) Cf. the list of annotations in the Caligula manuscript of La3amon, as Weinberg reports them (“Latin Marginal Glosses”). Lambeth Palace MS 491 also lacks notes on this episode.
walwanus idem sunt” (“Note that the ancients wrote ‘Gwalwanus’ with a ‘G’ and certain [others] wrote ‘Walwanus’ with a ‘V’ [that is, with an initial double-u, or VV], and so ‘Galwanus’ and ‘Walwanus’ are the same”). It is difficult to identify the intended audience of this explanation: a lettered one, certainly, since the note is in Latin, although to say so merely begs the question of what “lettered” may mean. Does the annotator assume his Latin readers may not be sufficiently at home with the Arthurian cast of characters in their vernacular guise to recognize Gawain/Wawayn (Walwen) as a single individual? It would seem a rather dim Latin-reader who had not yet learned to recognize the G/W shift in proper names as a common one between Latin and English. Ought we to presume the opposite, then, a reader more comfortable with the vernacular and requiring some prodding to recognize the famous Gawain if he carries the wrong initial? Or, perhaps, the annotator is simply frustrated by the text’s own reluctance to choose a consistent orthography. In any case, the annotator has, for this note at least, stepped back temporarily from the events of the chronicle, and has approached instead the task of explaining the text’s words, providing additional aids to interpretation, rather than a simple reiteration of important characters or plot points.

Meanwhile, in Royal 13.A.xxi, we can see that the notes are more consistently of the usual kind, reproducing the language and events of the text in the margin. One note deserving of additional attention is perhaps the tantalizing “¶ oiez la treson moldret en contre artur ·” (“Hear the treason of Mordred against Arthur”). What is remarkable here is not the interest in Mordred’s treason, an interest not unique to the manuscript. Arundel 58, to choose a convenient example, marks the parallel passage with “Hugh

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324 On f. 102ra, at Wace, *Brut*, line 13015.
Mordred bitrayde Arthur,” extremely similar in the use of the proper names Mordred and Arthur, as well as the comparable terminology of treason/betrayal. Instead, what catches the eye in Royal 13.A.xxi is the form of the note, with its invocation, not to a reader but to a listener: “oiez,” “hear.” It is difficult to take this call to aurality seriously, and imagine a circumstance in which such a marginal aside would be inserted into the text during an oral delivery. Unlike a chapter heading or rubric, after all, such a note is placed at no particular break in the syntax, with no instruction or accommodation for its insertion provided. The apparatus of annotation is necessarily for visual, not aural consumption, even on those occasions when the person seeing the notes is simultaneously reading aloud for a larger audience. If, as Gabrielle Spiegel would have it, a written rather than oral transmission is the hallmark of prose rather than verse, it may then be unsurprising if this verse text carries, in its thirteenth-century notes, a certain tenacious attention to the oral. The annotations of our other, fifteenth-century, manuscripts may assume a visual legibility appropriate to their production some two or three centuries after the cultural shifts Spiegel describes.

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325 It is important to observe, however, that Mordred’s treason was not universally attractive to annotators. “Nota de fine Arthuris” (on Lambeth 491, f. 58r, at Brie, Brut, 1:90.18–19) is emphatically not equivalent in its content, paralleling more closely “Morz est artur ·” on Royal 13.A.xxi, f. 103va, at Wace, Brut, line 13281. Mordred is wholly absent from the notes of Lambeth 491. If I may be permitted a brief, extra-generic leap, the stakes of these minutiae, if not the precise explanation, become evident in the observation that Mordred is also absent from the margins of the Winchester Malory (British Library Add. 59678). How this omission may affect the reading of that work’s crucial denouement (literally crucial, as an interpretative crux) remains maddeningly enigmatic.

326 Spiegel’s treatment of the generic and truth-value affiliations of Wace’s Brut (affiliations we may, perhaps, extend to the Royal Brut as well), is, justly, not uncomplicated. Wace, she writes, “locate[s]” his tale “within a literary space suspended between history and fable,” and “the roman formulates its own reality, which exists somewhere in the interstices between fable and history” (Gabrielle M. Spiegel, Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993]).
If we set aside, however, these individual idiosyncrasies in the notes of Arundel 58 and Royal 13.A.xxi, the more powerful story is not one of difference, but of similarity. This is most conspicuous at the arrival of (on Arundel 58 f. 66v) “Messagers of Rome,” or (on Royal 13.A.xxi, f. 884a) “Messagers de rome.” Both manuscripts then also have notes following that report not the content of these messengers’ commission, but its source (“lucies [...] the senatour,” on Arundel 58, f. 66v or “Lemperur de rome,” on Royal 13.A.xxi, f. 88rb), and, even more importantly, its form (the notes in both manuscripts use the term “lettre”). The specific writtenness of this utterance of Lucius’s, its status as a document that changes hands between the messengers and Arthur, is not just a fact that both annotators find important to emphasize, but seems, too, to be part of the reason why this particular utterance is of such interest in the first place. The written document stands out in these annotations, beside visions and prophecies, as a particularly privileged form of utterance, attracting special notice from annotators, and again in a way similar to their treatment of prophecy and vision, with no reporting of the subject-matter or content of the letter. For annotators in these situations, the medium is the message.

2.6 Arthurian Utterance: Letters in the Morte Darthur

It might be easy enough to dismiss the attention paid to this letter as a coincidence of interest, occasioned by the parallelism between these incidents in Wace and Robert of Gloucester: the same letter arrives in both texts, and is an important catalyst for subsequent action in both cases. But as we stretch beyond the generic confines of

327 The emperor is named “Luces” (Lucius) in the text (Wace, Brut, line 10639).
chronicle into romance,\textsuperscript{328} we may begin to see not just the strength of this particular pattern of interest, but also the strong similarity between notes in chronicle and those of romance.

A brief glance at the Winchester Malory, therefore, suggests the pertinence of that manuscript’s final annotation:\textsuperscript{329} “How Sir Gawayn \l wrote a letter \l to Sir launce \l lot at the \l tyme \l of his \l deþ\e/.”\textsuperscript{330} Perhaps coincidentally, as Arundel 58’s annotator ends the Arthurian section with “The deth of wawayn,” rather than the perhaps more-to-be-expected death of Arthur,\textsuperscript{331} so does the annotator of the Winchester Malory. In this latter case, Gawain’s death is not the true topic of the note, but is merely incidental to it. Gawain has not died yet, but is in the process of dying, and as he does so, he sends to his fellow knight a letter whose contents are not, in the notes, made explicit:

\begin{quote}
Unto the, sir Launcelot, floure of all noble knyghtes that ever I herde of or saw be my dayes, I, sir Gawayne, kynge Lottis sonne of Orkeney, and systirs sonne unto the noble kynge Arthur, sende the gretynge, lattyngye the to have knowleche that the tenth day of May I was smytten uppon the olde wounde that thou gaff me afore the cité of Benwyke, and thorow that wounde I am com to my dethe-day. And I woll that all the worlde wyte that I, sir Gawayne, knyght of the Table Rounde, soughte my dethe, and nat thorow thy deservynge, but myne owne sekynge. Wherfore I beseche the, sir Launcelot, to returne agayne unto thys realme and se my toumbe and pray som prayer more other les for my soule [...]. Also, sir
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{328} This is not, in the case of Wace in particularly a large leap. Nor indeed is the Metrical Chronicle as it appears in Arundel 58 wholly divorced from romance. One of the many interpolations is a version of the romance Richard Coeur de Lion (Matheson, Prose Brut, 331).

\textsuperscript{329} I treat the annotations in the Malory manuscript at greater length in Chapter 5 below. For now, it suffices to comment that this note, like the others, is in the hand of the fifteenth-century scribe of the accompanying text, and was, in all likelihood, copied from the exemplar along with the text.

\textsuperscript{330} On f. 477r at Malory, Works, 709.41.

\textsuperscript{331} Cf. “Morz est artur” on Royal 13.A.xxi, f. 103va and “Nota de fine Arthuris” on Lambeth 491 f. 58r.
Launcelot, for all the love that ever was betwyxte us, make no
taryng, but com over the see in all the goodly haste that ye may,
wyth youre noble knyghtes, and rescow that noble kynge that made
the knyght, for he ys full straytely bestad wyth an false traytoure
whych ys my halff-brothir, sir Mordred.

(Malory, Works, 710.4-22)

The most notable thing about this document is its ultimate inefficacy. Gawain, regretting
the rift he has helped to foster between Lancelot and Arthur, seeks to repair his own
personal relationship with a colleague he once did – and by this present written
testimony, now again does – esteem as the “floure of all noble knyghtes,” and to repair
also the relationship between Lancelot and the king, on whose behalf he now requests the
exiled knight’s military assistance against Mordred. Lancelot does come, of course, but it
is too little, too late, given the apocalyptic outcome of the final conflict. Gawain’s letter
drives subsequent events only insofar as the suppression of Mordred’s rebellion can be
termed a successful one. The letter may be of benefit to the state of Gawain’s own soul
and personal legacy of character, but politically, Lancelot’s assistance fails to restore
Camelot, and the Round Table still dissolves.

As for the form of the letter itself, it is presented as a public and official
document.332 It is written in the presence of Arthur, of whom Gawain has requested
paper and pen: the note marking the passage is, indeed, located at the point of this
request, not beside Gawain’s written words. Gawain assumes, moreover, that the public
will have access to its contents, in his wish that “all the worlde wyte” that Lancelot
should be absolved of culpability in his death. Georgiana Donavin concurs in

332 This would not be unexpected or unusual in a medieval epistle; see Giles Constable, Letters
and Letter-Collections, Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976),
11.
emphasizing the appeal to a wider, public audience, in this letter, which she assesses as
embracing “social responsibility” as its “motivation and theme.”\textsuperscript{333} She argues, however,
that Malory’s letters (which are numerous, above and beyond those marked by the
annotator) are not universally public, but instead sketch out a trajectory of transformation,
from letters (like those between Isolde and Guenevere) that make an unhealthy rejection
of the wider public, to those that attempt to knit together the disintegrating Arthurian
community.

Such tension may be symptomatic of a broader theoretical paradox. Martin
Camargo, in his study of medieval letter-writing practices, identifies three main functions
for letters, namely “to render absent persons present, to preserve confidentiality, and to
ensure authenticity.”\textsuperscript{334} Such easy attribution of function, however, conceals the
contradiction inherent in this definition. If a letter conjures its writer’s physical presence,
it is only necessitated by that person’s initial absence. Even more troublingly, the
medieval appeal to the secrecy enabled by letters conjures images of private
correspondence between conspirators or illicit lovers, concealing their intimacy behind a
facade of distance, and communicating by the visual signal of the written word while
maintaining the public appearance of silence. But as Camargo points out, letters are
paradoxically less secure than a human messenger, as “A messenger could be instructed
to speak only to a specified person, but a purloined letter could not be prevented from

\textsuperscript{333} “Locating a Public Forum for the Personal Letter in Malory’s \textit{Morte Darthur},” \textit{Disputatio: An

\textsuperscript{334} “Where’s the Brief?: The \textit{Ars Dictaminis} and Reading/Writing Between the Lines,” \textit{Disputatio: An
International Transdisciplinary Journal of the Late Middle Ages} 1 (1996): 3. Camargo’s taxonomy of
function cites, as a particularly pithy articulation of this theory, the \textit{Summa de Arte Prosandi} of Conrad of
Mure, written 1275-1276.
‘speaking’ to everybody." Likewise, Camargo emphasizes the customary orality in both composition of letters (which were frequently dictated to professional letter-writers or scribes) and in their reception (as they would often be read allowed either by the courier or a trusted, literate professional). Finally, there is the matter of authenticity. On the one hand, written letters guarantee this quality in a way that a spoken messenger cannot: the sender’s exact words are reproduced *verbatim*, with no danger of faulty memory distorting the message. On the other hand, however, convention ruled the genre: “‘Personal expression’ and a ‘unique voice’ were antithetical to the goals of most medieval letter writers,” and “pressure to observe decorum and to align the letter’s ‘argument’ with an accepted, authoritative pattern of thought overruled all other concerns.” Such recourse to traditional forms and conventional language “could at times undermine the clarity of the letter’s objective message.”

Gawain’s concerns in his letter, while favoring publicity over privacy, do not neglect an attention to constructing a personal, physical presence, or to the verification of the document, guaranteeing its authenticity and circumstances of composition: “And the date of thys lettir was wrytten but two owrys and an halff afore my dethe, wrytten with myne owne honde and subscriybed with parte of my harte blood” (Malory, *Works*, 710.29-31). The image is a melodramatic one, certainly, but it is also one of formal sealing, in which Gawain’s blood, the physical evidence of his mortal wound, is inscribed

335 Ibid., 6.


338 Ibid.
into the document describing that fatality.\textsuperscript{339} Even Malory himself intervenes regarding this document, affirming its status as authoritative, as its authorship (Gawain) is genuine. The “Freynshe booke,” after all, “makith mencion” of the composition of this letter (Malory, \textit{Works}, 710.2-3), and the version that appears here in the \textit{Morte} has, therefore, the best provenance Malory can offer. If this is not enough, we are, finally, invited even to follow in Lancelot’s footsteps in his validation of the heart’s blood and pilgrimage to Gawain’s tomb, by our own pilgrimage to Dover Castle, where “all men may se the skulle of hym, and the same wounde is sene that sir Launcelot gaff in batayle” (710.39-40).

Such an appeal to the authenticity of the relic clearly held power for William Caxton, in his own guise as interpreter of Malory. To those critics who might discourage the publication of the “noble hystorye”\textsuperscript{340} of the Grail and of Arthur, questioning the historicity of that monarch, Caxton counters:

\begin{quote}
Fyrst ye may see his sepulture in the monasterye of Glastyngburye. And also in Polycronycon, in the V book the syxte chappytre, and in the seuenth book the XXIII chappytre, where his body was buryed and after founden and translated into the sayd monasterye. Ye shal se also in th’ystroye of Bochas, in his book De Casu Principum, parte of his noble actes and also of his falle; also Galfrydus in his Brutysshe book recounteth his lyf. And in dyuers places of Englond many remembraunces ben yet of hym and shall remayne perpetuall, and also of his knyghtes. Fyrst in the Abbey of Westmestre at Saynt Edwardes Shryne remayneth the prynte of his seal in reed waxe closed in beryll, in whych is wryton, PATRICIUS ARTHURUS BRITANNIE GALLIE GERMANIE DACIE
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{339} The fact of his dying may itself also contribute to the perceived authenticity of the document, as a deathbed confession (Donavin, “Locating a Public Forum,” 25).

Written record and physical evidence stand here side by side and mingled, perhaps most intimately in the image of the seal at Westminster Abbey, an object inscribed with writing, and intended too to be affixed onto a written document. Documentary authentication is conflated with the reliquary nature of the tomb, as Gawain’s own blood-ink served similar double duty in Malory’s text. It is unclear whether Caxton draws his information about the current location of Gawain’s skull from the text he publishes, or whether this fact constitutes a general and common knowledge, known separately to both Caxton and Malory. It is clear that for Caxton, at any rate, pilgrimage to view this skull (a pilgrimage readers are here too invited to take: “ye may see Gauwayns skull...”) verifies the truth of the legend, adding further confirmation, if any were needed, that this is Malory’s interest as well. As in chronicle, the letter works as a documentation of true events, and its function of authentication is bolstered by the simultaneous invocation of more physical evidence, in Gawain’s own corporeal relics of blood and bone.

One may contrast the insistent physicality and writtenness of Gawain’s letter with the letter from emperor Lucius, Malory’s version of the episode we have examined in Arundel 58 and Royal 13.A.xxi. I say “letter,” because it is possible to read between Malory’s lines and infer that Arthur learns of Lucius’s demands from a written document, rather than from the lips of the messengers. “Whan kynge Arthure wyste what they mente he loked up with his gray yghen and angred at the messyngers passyng sore” (Malory, Works, 113.9-10). If Arthur must “look up” at the messengers, he has until this
point been looking down, and the natural assumption is that he was looking down to read a document that has been given him. Letters, of course, were just as likely to have been read aloud and publicly to their recipient.\textsuperscript{341} In this case, however, Arthur’s request not only for a subsequent clarification by the messengers themselves – itself a common medieval practice\textsuperscript{342} – but for a repetition, implies that the terms of Lucius’s demands have not been generally heard. Arthur must have learned of the demand for truage from some source other than the messengers’ yet-to-be-spoken words. The letter is, however, not specifically referred to, and Lucius’s demands are never delivered directly, but only referred to by Malory’s third-person narration or relayed orally by the messenger. For all the parallelism of this episode with its chronicle equivalents, therefore, with regard to emphasis on the form of the written document, Gawain’s letter stands out as the more effective parallel. And, indeed, while the Malory annotator leaves a note beside Gawain’s letter, there is none beside Lucius’s. While we cannot know for certain, it is very tempting to see a cause for the annotator’s lack of interest in the absence of an overt letter to attract both notice and note.

A third letter in the \textit{Morte} is more difficult to classify. In a brief aside within the episode of Tristram’s battle with Sir Marhalte (also, likely coincidentally, a matter of truage), we learn of a correspondence conducted between Tristram and the daughter of the king of France:

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So in the meanewhyle ther com a messager with lettyrs of love fro kynge Faramon of Frances doughter unto syr Trysters that
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\textsuperscript{341} Camargo, “Where’s the Brief?,” 4.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid.
were peteous lettyrs, but in no wyse Trystrams had no joy of hir lettyrs nor regarde unto hir. Also she sente hym a lytyll brachet that was passyng fayre. But when the kynges doughter undirstooode that Trystrams wolde nat love hir, as the book seyth, she dyed ‘for sorou’.

And than the same sqyre that brought the lettyrs and the brachet cam ayen unto sir Trystrams, as aftir ye shall [here] in the tale folowyng.

The note that accompanies this event, its first line standing directly beside mention of the “peteous lettyrs,” does not, however, make any mention of these documents, highlighting instead the princess’s “enclosure,” reading “how þe kynge of ffrauncis doughter sente to sir Trystrames a fayre Brachette.” The conspicuous repetition of the word “letters” in the text makes the fact of the documents difficult to overlook, but we are never privy to their contents in more than general terms. Finally, the marginal attention to the physical dog leaves implicit that which the dog represents, namely the love sent by the unfortunate damsel that is contained in her unreported words.

As is the case with all of the Winchester Malory’s notes, annotation of letters is neither comprehensive nor regular. Many of Malory’s letters receive no marginal attention, and letters represent only a small minority of the manuscript’s many notes. Still, what annotation appears signals the author’s awareness of epistles as a category worthy of attention, particularly at those moments in the text where the letter’s medieval functions of authentication and communication across distance (whether geographical or chronological) are most conspicuously active. The true voice of the story’s characters is

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343 Malory, *Works*, 234.13–20. The persistent (if not strictly universal) ineffectuality of Malory’s epistles is remarkable: letter-writers seldom seem to have much luck in achieving their stated ends.

344 The brachet, removed from its epistolary associations, will appear again in the margins, and again too in this present text, as aftir ye shall here in Chapter 5 folowyng, when, now in the possession of Isolde, the dog “discreved Syr Trystramys” within his concealing madness and poverty (cf. f. 205r at ibid., 308.43).
transported in place, but transported too across time, to the expectant eyes of the manuscript’s readers. The letter speaks with a different voice than does the surrounding narrative.

2.7 Littera Troili: Annotation in Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde

The Morte Darthur is by no means unique among romances in containing letters, and neither is its annotator unique in drawing attention to them. Letters are, in fact, one of the more consistently-marked categories in romance annotation: a circumstance particularly significant in light of the fact that letters themselves are naturally less common in romances than are catch-all categories like names and places. This is nowhere more evident than in manuscripts of Chaucer’s Troilus and Criseyde, where letters are marked by annotations in most manuscripts, and the marking of letters represents perhaps the earliest layer of annotation to become associated with the text. David Benson and Barry Windeatt have published a transcription of the marginal annotations in the sixteen extant manuscripts of this work. The notes transcribed are those deemed by Benson and Windeatt to be either in the scribe’s own hand, or contemporary with it (the authors have intentionally omitted all marginalia provided by later readers).

Almost all of the glosses appear to be scribal [composed, that is, by the manuscript’s own scribe or copied from notes composed by the scribe of an earlier exemplar], though the several detailed

quotations from Joseph of Exeter in Book V in the St. John’s [St. John’s College, Cambridge, MS. L. 1; siglum J] and Cambridge Gg [Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.27] manuscripts may derive from Chaucer’s working papers.346

Annotation in these manuscripts varies widely: some are heavily annotated,347 others contain minimal notes or even no notes at all,348 and the rest exhibit every condition in between. No manuscript is identical in its annotation to any other, and the more heavily-annotated manuscripts each seem to display their own idiosyncratic concerns and preoccupations. Some manuscripts are annotated in Latin, others in English, and still others in a combination of the two languages. What is more, the function of annotations varies widely, both from manuscript to manuscript, and within a single manuscript.

H4 (British Library, Harley 2392), whose 251 notes and 22 interlinear glosses happen to be entirely in Latin, makes for an excellent case study in the full scope of variety possible for these notes. Some notes are glosses indeed, clarifying potentially unfamiliar vocabulary349 or even ambiguous pronoun reference.350 The H4 annotator also engages extensively with the mythological allusions of the text, marking names and

346 Ibid., 33.

347 S1 (Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden B.24, a “Late fifteenth-century paper manuscript containing, besides Troilus, a miscellany of English and Scottish verse”) and H4 (British Library, MS Harley 2392, “A fifteenth-century paper and vellum manuscript containing only Troilus”) are conspicuous for their extensive bodies of notes (ibid., 35).

348 H2 (British Library, MS Harley 3943, “A fifteenth-century vellum manuscript […] containing only Troilus”) has no notes, indicating emphasis only by the presence of large initials, while Cl (the Campsall manuscript, Pierpont Morgan Library M. 817, “An early fifteenth-century beautifully decorated vellum manuscript containing only Troilus and written for Henry V while Prince of Wales”) has only a single interlinear gloss: “id est destine,” at Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, in Benson and Robinson, Riverside, III.617, where it explains the obscure term “wyerdes” (Benson and Windoute, “Manuscript Glosses,” 35, 43).

349 Cl’s single note of “id est destine” above “wyerdes” in line III.617 is also carried by H4.

350 See III.621, where an interlinear “Cres” makes explicit the antecedent of the text’s “she.”
relationships in the margins, either to draw attention to the dropping of a potentially familiar name\textsuperscript{351} or to explain a less direct reference that might otherwise be obscure to a reader less well-versed in mythology.\textsuperscript{352} Source citation, one of the mainstays of annotation in the \textit{Canterbury Tales}, and perhaps the type of marginalia most characteristic of Chaucer’s \textit{oeuvre}, is also prominent in H\textsuperscript{4}. Citations there vary from the marginal repetition of an author referenced within the text, the better to emphasize \textit{Troilus}’s intertextuality,\textsuperscript{353} to the identification of a source unacknowledged by the text,\textsuperscript{354} to the silent reproduction of a quoted line, with no explicit identification of source.\textsuperscript{355} This very Chaucerian marginalia does not, however, eclipse other notes that

\textsuperscript{351} See IV.1188, where “Minos” appears in the margin, replicating the text’s passing mention of this judge of the underworld (“Ther as the doom of Mynos wolde it dighte”), or V.803, where “Tideus’ pater. diomed’” reproduces the text’s (“This Diomede, as bokes us declare / Was in his nedes prest and corageous / [...] lik his fader Tideus,” Chaucer, \textit{Troilus}, V.799–803).

\textsuperscript{352} See, for example, IV.1149, where “iupiter Ioue” makes clear the equivalence of the two variations on the god’s name next to a line employing the one perhaps less familiar (“O Jove, I deye, and mercy I beseche!”), or II.1062, where “Minerua dea Ingenii” explains that goddess’s particular jurisdiction, and thus the appropriateness of her invocation as a source of “wit my lettre to devyse” (ibid., II.1063).

\textsuperscript{353} The final note in the manuscript (“nota de gower,” at V.1860, but referring to the “moral Gower” of V.1856) singles out this poet as perhaps better known to the reader than the “philosophical Strode” of the following line – and thus the more powerful intertext. Also illustrative is “Lollius auctor huius libri” at I.394. This citation must be drawn from the text and nowhere else, as Lollius is Chaucer’s own invention. The act of source citation, even if disingenuous, still prompts the annotator’s endorsing marginal repetition.

\textsuperscript{354} See V. 1485, “Stacius thebaydos.” The text offers no indication of its source, but the passage is indeed a summary of Statius (Benson and Robinson, \textit{Riverside}, 1054–1055, 1485–1510n).

\textsuperscript{355} See IV.503, where “mors hominum felix” adjoins the English “For sely is that deth, soth for to seyne, / That, ofte ycleped, cometh and endeth payne” (Chaucer, \textit{Troilus}, IV.503–504). This is no simple translation of Chaucer’s text, but an exact citation of Chaucer’s source: “Mors hominum felix, quae se nec dulcis annis / insert et maestis saepe vocata venit!” (Boethius, “De Consolatione Philosophiae,” in \textit{De Consolatione Philosophiae et Opuscula Theologica}, ed. Claudio Moreschini, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana [Munich: K. G. Saur, 2000], I, m.1, 13–14). This may be rendered in English, “Happy is the death of men, which does not interject itself into the sweet years, but which, having frequently been invoked, comes into the sorrowful ones,” or, as Chaucer himself translated it, “Thilke deth of men is weleful that ne comyth noght in yeeris that ben swete, but cometh to wrecches often yclepid” (Geoffrey Chaucer, “Boece,” in Benson and Robinson, \textit{Riverside Chaucer}, 395–469). The annotator does not, however, provide the full reference, but assumes the partial quotation will be a sufficient flag to the intertextuality.
are less like what appears in the Ellesmere *Canterbury Tales*, and far more in line with what has emerged as more standard “romance” annotation. On the contrary, some notes seem to summarize and report the action of the text, in a manner we may recognize as fairly typical of the basic romance note type. So, we find the marginal comment “Quot .t. extraxit gladium vt ipsum interficeret” (“How T[roilus] drew his sword in order to kill himself”) besides lines describing that very action (Chaucer, *Troilus*, IV.1189).

Likewise, marvels are not neglected, as in the note “miraculum” beside Pandarus’s apostrophe “Venus, thow mayst maken melodie! / Withouten hond, me semeth that in the towne, / For this merveille ich here ech belle sowne” (III.187-189). And, most conspicuously of all, we find notes drawing attention to letters and, as an apparently associated type of utterance, *cantus* (songs).

Nor is this attention to utterance limited to H⁴. On the contrary, such labels are frequent presences, appearing in some dozen of the sixteen extant manuscripts, a central, necessary core to which additional notes may be added. Twelve manuscripts include some marking of “cantus Troili” or “song of Troilus” at one or more of the lyric monologues, like the one at Book I, line 400, beginning “If no love is, O God, what fele I

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356 *Troilus and Criseyde* is in this regard far more faithful to its romance generic affiliations than are the *Canterbury Tales*, even those tales generically affiliated with romance. The notes of the Ellesmere manuscript are among those most frequently studied, as they may date back to Chaucer’s own pen. Marginalia in the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* essentially continues the program taken up in her *Prologue*, completely ignoring the action of the Arthurian quest, and instead focusing on source citation (e.g. “Paupertas est odibile bonum [...]” at Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, III.1196, quoting the *Speculum Historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais; *Speculum Quadruplex sive Speculum Maius*, vol. 4, reprint of Douai, 1624. [Graz, Austria: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1965, X.71) or general identification of the topic of a peroration (e.g. “¶ de senectute” at “Now, sire, of elde ye repreve me [...]” Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, III.1207). Annotation in the Ellesmere *Franklin’s Tale* clusters joyfully around Dorigen’s litany of classical models, again rejecting interest in plot to focus instead on textual interaction. Other romances (the *Knight’s Tale*, the *Squire’s Tale*, the *Man of Law’s Tale*) receive treatment on similar lines. *Sir Thopas*, that exaggeration of the romance form, carries no annotation in Ellesmere at all.
so? / And if love is, what thing and which is he?  

Eleven manuscripts (including one that does not make the other list) have a marginal label “littera Troili” or “letter of Troilus” at one or more of the points when Troilus sends love-letters to Criseyde, or receives one in return. H³ (British Library, MS Harley 1239), a sparsely annotated manuscript which is the only to include littera markers but not cantus ones, is an interesting study in the form. In this manuscript, two letters are marked: “Litera Troili” (at V.1319) and “litera Creseide” (at V.1590). Both of these letters are among those frequently marked in manuscripts, with the same ten manuscripts showing a note at each place. It cannot, however, be simply assumed that these manuscripts all inherit marks at this point from a single common source. In S¹, the idiosyncratic notes “Here ansuerith Criseide by hir lettere strangely to the lettere of Troilus” and the now largely illegible “Troili <...> sho hade <...d>iomeid’” seem specially composed for the occasion. Furthermore S²’s “Cantus Troyli versus Criseide” – marking in fact a letter, not a song, strictly defined – blurs the line between these two types of utterance. This blurring is further illustrated by H³’s only major series of annotation besides the two letters, namely “Responsio Creseide” (IV.1527), “nota promissio” (IV.1534), “Troylus” (IV.1597) and “Creseide” (IV.1603). “Nota promissio” marks out a topic within Criseyde’s larger

357 These manuscripts are Cp (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 61), Dg (Bodleian Library, MS Digby 181), D (Durham, University Library, Cosin MS V.II.13), Gg (Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.4.27), H¹ (British Library Harley 2280), H² (British Library Harley 2392), H³ (British Library Harley 4912), J (Cambridge, St. John’s College MS L.1), Ph (Huntington Library HM 114; this manuscript is in the hand of the same scribe as copied Lambeth Palace 491), R (Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson Poet. 163), S¹ (Bodleian Library, Arch. Selden B.24) and S² (Bodleian Library, Arch. Selden Supra 56).

358 Omitted from that list are Dg and Gg, which have no littera markers in their margins.

359 The fiction of the inset letter is so pronounced that three manuscripts include an extra-metrical epistolary signature, “Le vostre T.” and four manuscripts (three of them not in the previous count) carry its equivalent “La vostre C.” (Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, V.1421, 1631; Norman Davis, “The Litera Troili and English Letters,” *The Review of English Studies*, N.s. 16, no. 63 [1965]: 243).
speech, alerting the reader to a critical moment in any debate over her culpability or faithlessness: “For thilke day that I [...] / Be fals to yow, my Troilus, my knyght, / Saturnes daughter, Juno [...] / do me dwelle / Eternalich in Six, the put of helle!” (IV.1534-1540). Attention to this promise alone of all potential circumstances or considerations strips down Criseyde’s infidelity indeed to its essentials, casting it in the least flattering light, with no room for extenuation. The other three notes in this series, however, seem to function more structurally, pointing out the moments when voice shifts between Criseyde and Troilus, as they trade extended monologues back and forth. As the letters within this series of annotations are set in a dialogue (Troilus sends a message to which Criseyde responds), here too their face-to-face conversation is presented as a series of orations delivered in turn, one after another.

A sort of equivalency exists between these types of inset utterance, in which passages marked “letter” in one passage may be “cantus” in another, and letters, cantus and monologic speeches are all treated similarly, even in manuscripts that do not provide other types of marginal annotation. These documents are placed like beads within the fabric of the larger textual tapestry, and the annotators attend above all else to setting these moments off from the rest of the text. Highlighting of letters in these manuscripts is so basic to perceptions of their function and purpose that it seems to act as a central, necessary core to which additional notes may be added.

360 This pointed nota is unique to H3: no other manuscript draws such particular and exclusive attention to this moment. R’s “How Cresseyd answered troilus & seyd that she wold not be fals to [th] hyr retornyng” at the beginning of the speech (IV.1527) is balanced by a much more extensive series of notes describing the various stages in her relationship with Diomedes, culminating in “How Cresseyd’ seyd’ she wold be trewe vnto diomed” (V.1065). S’s note at the key line says only “Criseid’,” and to all appearances represents merely another restatement of speaker, to match “nota Criseid’” in the previous stanza and “<C>riseid’” beside the stanza following, to name but three in an extended series of such speaker-marks.
Julia Boffey has sought in these notes evidence for the textual history of the *Troilus*, proposing that we may identify in these annotations evidence of some earlier compositional stage of poem:

[I]t comes to seem not impossible that various of the songs, and the letters as well, once existed as physically discrete fragments with headings which clarified their relationship to the text into which they were to be fitted. Such headings might then almost accidentally have become a traditional part of the poem’s apparatus. Later readers and copyists, perhaps taking them primarily as comments on the rhetorical rather than the physical structure of the text, may well have been inspired to search for and to highlight what seemed like similar passages. The accretion of extensive marginalia in later manuscripts, in contrast to the spare annotation in the earliest ones such as Corpus MS 61 [Cp], Pierpont Morgan MS M. 817 [Cl], and Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. 4. 27 [Gg], would seem to support the hypothesis of such a process.\(^{361}\)

Boffey’s compilatory scenario would seem to assume a special status for the *Troilus* letter-notes, demanding recourse to the special physical properties of a particular early (indeed, presumably *originary*) manuscript copy of the text, which alone inspired an otherwise unexplainable interest in letters and *cantus* as subordinate narrative units.

Robert K. Root, in his masterful study of the *Troilus* stemma, indeed offers some circumstantial support for such a view of the poem’s construction. He sketches out a model of rolling revision, wherein a single fair-copy manuscript was progressively corrected, altered and supplemented by Chaucer himself. All extant manuscripts of the

poem then ultimately derive from this single manuscript which had, over time, itself undergone physical change, giving rise to the stemma’s recension families.362

Boffey’s proposed inserted lyrics cannot, however, be identical with Root’s inserted revisions. Manuscripts of Root’s earliest (α) recension already include littera markers in their margins. Root’s proposed fair-copy original, then, must have included at least some of the letters later marked out by annotators. H³, for example, is of the α recension from a point starting in the middle of Book IV, precisely the stretch of text containing H³’s littera markers. The logical assumption seems to be that the notes themselves derive from some earlier exemplar manuscript within the pre-revision stemmatic family, while the exemplar of the post-revision part of H³ (of recension βγ) lacked these notes. Nor do these littera markers seem likely candidates for evidence of imitation by Boffey’s “later readers and copyists,” misreading evidence on “the physical structure of the text.” Both H³’s littera markers (at V.1317 and V.1590) are widely held across the extant manuscripts, including the early manuscript Cp. They are thus unlikely candidates for late additions.

*Troilus’* textual history of rolling revision, then, does not suffice to explain the presence of these littera markers. These notes were present in Chaucer’s fair copy from its earliest stage, and continued to be revisited, reproduced and expanded throughout the history of the *Troilus*’ stemma. When viewed in the context of chronicle and romance annotation generally, the pointed interest shown by annotators in the *Troilus* letter is no less marked, but integrated into a broader annotational tradition. Far from demanding

special explanation by recourse to the physical accidents of the original manuscripts, letters are normal magnets of attention for annotators in romance. Boffey is likely correct in her portrayal of the of Troilus annotations as starting with a basic core of early annotation paying particular attention to letters, and developing, in later manuscripts, more extensive programs of annotation that were likely the product of highly individual reactions to the poem.\textsuperscript{363} But these sparse early notes were prompted not by a process of integration – from authorial scraps and segments into a monolithic whole – but by one of segmentation, in which Chaucer’s narrative was mined for its moments of inset utterance, recognized as such by annotators alert to these concerns. Such a model accounts, moreover, for a potential inconsistency that Boffey herself addresses, namely, that the attraction of such moments of utterance is by no means reliant on the direct reporting of a letter’s very words. Five manuscripts place a littera Troili beside Troilus’s first letter to Criseyde, a document not quoted but only described by the narrator.\textsuperscript{364} Shortly thereafter, Criseyde’s reply, described in only a single stanza, earns littera Criseyde in four manuscripts.\textsuperscript{365} Studies of letters in medieval English literature frequently focus on the

\textsuperscript{363} The very earliest annotations on Troilus may not be these “letter” notes at all, but some Latin source citations in Gg and J that may be attributable to Chaucer himself (Boffey, “Annotations in Some Manuscripts,” 12). Sarah Baechle, in her forthcoming dissertation from the University of Notre Dame, explores these glosses, quotations from Joseph of Exeter’s Iliad, in greater detail. The likelihood that these quotations come from the same manuscript that was Chaucer’s actual source in writing the Troilus bolsters the case for their Chaucerian authorship, and would be additional evidence as to the type of gloss that Chaucer himself preferred for his works, both Troilus and the later and more well-developed Canterbury Tales; those annotations considered Chaucerian are largely source citation. The littera and cantus annotations, therefore, may perhaps represent the earliest reader, or professional reader, response to – rather than authorial presentation of – the text.

\textsuperscript{364} The notes are “littera troili cressaid’” (H\textsuperscript{4}), “littera Trolle” (H\textsuperscript{5}), “The lettyre of Troilus” (R), “prima littera Troilus missa ad Criseid” (S\textsuperscript{1}) and “littera troili” (S\textsuperscript{2}), all beside line II.1065. The wide variation in wording and orthography may suggest that these littera notes do not all date back to a single source, but were instead continually re-invented by multiple scribes.

\textsuperscript{365} “Littera Cressaid’” (H\textsuperscript{4}), “littera Cresseyde” (H\textsuperscript{5}) and “The lettyre of Crisseide” (R) all abut II.1219. S\textsuperscript{1} carries “prima littera cras<eid> missa troilys” beside II.1220.
formal rhetoric of the letters, as reflecting real fifteenth-century letter-writing practices, or as developments of earlier literary forms, themselves dependent on a model of argument inherited from classical antiquity. Such interest in rhetoric overshadows, however, the lessons of those letters not quoted in full, but only summarized in their content – and thus not susceptible to analysis of form along the lines of internal form (salutatio, exordium, narratio, petitio, and conclusio). As these letters make clear, the very fact of the epistle, and its status as written utterance, holds a privileged position and fascination independent of its contents.

2.8 Kyng Alisaunder Continued: The Letters and “Sainges” of Hand B

Having surveyed the role of letters in both chronicle and romance, we can return at last to the Lincoln’s Inn 150 Kyng Alisaunder, and the scene of Athenian negotiations: our examination here will help us to put the Troilus letters more fully in context. Hand B’s annotations are particularly notable in their full integration of letters and other types of utterance, and examination of the way these notes – characteristic, as we have seen, of a broader annotational tradition – will assist in fully illuminating the characteristics shared by these passages. The importance for the Hand B annotator in relating the back-and-forth of letters in the margin goes beyond the simple attribution of speaking voice,


but provides an additional emphasis on the fact that these letters are in fact documents, partaking in discourses of historical authority.

The series, beginning with notes on the fall of Thebes, and progressing through the Athenian correspondence and a subsequent council, unrolls as follows:

f. 54v, at Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:158.2825: “The sainge of þe harper to Alexandan”
55r, at 160.2864: “The towne destro[y]ed · the people · Slayne”
55r, at 164.2907: “Alexanders Letter to the athens & his demande”
55v, at 164.2925: “There aunswer to Alex Letter”
55v, at 166.2957: “Another Letter sent to the Athens”
56r, at 168.2986: “The sainge of the Emperoure”
56r, at 168.2994: “Aristotelys consalle”
56r, at 168.2996: “A description what Alexandre hath wonne ·”
56r, at 168.3010: “war”
56v, at 170.3021: “nota”
56v, at 170.3023: “Dabnadas sainge”
56v, at 170.3029: “pretty sainge”
56v, at 172.3057: “Themperors sainge to Dalmadas”
56v, at 172.3064: “Demostines sainge”
57r, at 174.3091: “Dalmadas repl[y] to Demostines”

Once again, it must be emphasized that the notes highlight form rather than content. And it is not because there is nothing of interest in these letters. Alexander, in his first letter,

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369 The text here has fallen victim to fading, as well as the re-binder’s knife.

370 “Dabnadas” is the name appearing in the adjacent text, but the character is likely identical with the one later named as “Dalmadas,” in both text and accompanying notes. Indeed, the reading of the adjacent line as it appears in Oxford, Bodleian MS Laud Misc. 622 is “After hym spaa Dalmadas” (Smithers, *Alisaunder*, 1:171.337; my emphasis). The name Dabnadas is not used again in Lincoln’s Inn 150, with the character silently changing to Dalmadas at ibid., 1:172.3058. The switch seems to have confused the Hand B annotator, who places a note (“Themperors sainge to Dalmadas”) at this point, although the emperor does not in fact speak again. The likeliest explanation for this apparent marginal nonsequitur is that the Hand B annotator has lost track of the speaker at this point, and is struggling to incorporate what he views as the “new” character of Dalmadas into the rhythm of the dialogue. The consequences of this confusion are, among other things, to caution us against too blind a faith in the infallibility of Hand B. When the text is obscure, he may be misled, and, further, clearly lacks the advantage enjoyed by the modern reader of Smithers’s edition: that of comparing the Lincoln’s Inn 150 text with another version of the story. Hand B knows no better than to accept Dabnadas at face value, and in so doing falls victim to obscurity several lines further along.
recalls the “XV kyngis” he has previously encountered, and requests the amount of “. C .
þousand besans” in tribute from the Athenians (1:164.2911, 2918). The Athenians, for
their part, (showing perhaps a poverty of tact) recall their hereditary freedom (“No kyng
of no parage / Neuer of vs hadde homage,” 1:164.2935-36), bolstered by their earlier
defeat of Alexander’s father Philip. Alexander’s ire is roused, and “Wod he wax nyȝh
out of wit,” sending a letter in reply that Athenians should send “X barouns,” and “Anon
Y wol don heom serue / Þe tonges out of þe hed kerue / Heore fet heore honden also / For
ȝe me haueþ dispised so” (1:166.2965, 2967-70). Scope exists for interest in the recall of
previous events, the dropping of significant names, the quotation of precise numbers and
amounts, and even the vividly-imagined violence of Alexander’s rage. Primary for Hand
B, however, is the status of all this as formalized written utterance. The content of the
arguments for and against a payment of tribute is subordinate to the form by which
demands and counter-demands are made.

The rhythm of formal dialogue is not interrupted by the end of letters within the
text. As was the case for the letter of Emperor Lucius to Arthur, Alexander’s epistolary
exchange with the Athenians sets the stage for a councilors’ debate, in which various
options are mooted in the form of formal, first-person speeches attributed to various
barons. In Arundel 58, this took the form of such notes as “Consail of Arthur,” “Consail
of Howel,” and “Conseil of Angwssel kyng of Scotlonde.”371 In Royal 13.A.xxi, the
annotation of the passage is more subtle, but still has the same force. Speeches by
“Cador” and “Hoel reis de norwege” are marked by these names alone, but they stand

286.4077.
here not just as further entries in the list of royal names that unfolds down Royal 13.A.xxi’s margins, where names generally fall either at a character’s first introduction or at his death. Indeed, both Cador and Hoel were introduced long previously. They are mentioned here exclusively as markers of their contribution to the debate, a system of annotation that presumes a focus on the local structure of the episode, rather than the navigation of the text’s macrostructure. Were a reader to skip directly to the note “Cador,” hoping to learn more about that character, he would not only be disappointed but somewhat confused, breaking into the middle of an episode. There may even be an assumed familiarity with note-makers’ interest in council dialogue, by which the more fully expanded “Lettre lempur de rome al rei artur” may act as a kind of explanation of the terse “Cador” following. The connection between letter and subsequent set-speech in debate is made even more intimate by the observation that letters themselves were perceived precisely as conversation, as a subordinate monologue within a more extended give-and-take of dialogue: one half, that is, of a conversation. Subsequent notes on ff. 90ra and 90rb make the councilors’ dialogue more explicit, and, unlike the Lincoln’s Inn 150 notes (or, for that matter, the Arundel 58 ones), give some hint of the content of the

372 “. . . Cador . . .” on f. 79vb, at Wace, Brut, line 9078 and “. . . Hoel . . .” on f. 80ra, at ibid., line 9159. The earlier note is indeed at the very line when Cador is first named. The latter note is less precise, falling several lines after Hoel is first mentioned, in the middle of the description of is commitment of troops to support his uncle Arthur.

373 On f. 88rb, at Wace, Brut, line 10642.

debate – although, once again, the attribution and, more importantly, identification of these set-speeches remains primary.\textsuperscript{375}

We see the same councilors’ debate playing out in Lincoln’s Inn 150, in the debate among the Athenians on how to respond to Alexander’s demands. The situation reverses that in the Arthurian context – here, the protagonist is the man making the demands, rather than the one defying them (and, indeed, ultimately the Athenians will prudently eschew an Arthurian defiance) – but the form of the debate remains the same, and so too does the form of Hand B’s annotation. The parallelism between the Arthurian and Alexandrian episodes is precisely one of form, rather than content – the very approach taken by annotators as their endorsed method of reading the passage.

If I have so far been somewhat imprecise in my terminology of “utterance,” such shifting is fully representative of the terminology employed by medieval annotators themselves. The capacious term favored by Hand B is “sainge,” employed repeatedly in the notes, through “the sainge of the Emperoure,” “Dabnadas sainge,” “pretty sainge,” “Themperors sainge to Dalmadas,” and “Demostines sainge.” The meaning, or rather meanings of the term “sainge,” as laid out by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne’s glossary of the literary-theoretical terminology of Middle English, run the gamut from a contrast between the spoken and written, to authoritative pronouncement, whether by Christ or the philosophers, to speech generally.\textsuperscript{376} And this is, too, a glossary whose forefronting of cross-reference between entries drives home the tendency of Middle English vocabulary

\textsuperscript{375}“Nowey dis Mil cheualers armez” (on 90ra at Wace, \textit{Brut}, line 10949), “conseil agusel le rei desco” (on 90ra, at ibid., line 10955) and “Descoce · doui Mil cheualers armez · e pedail sanz nom[bre]” (on f. 90rb, at ibid., line 11020).

\textsuperscript{376}Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al., eds., \textit{The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520} (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).
to shift between terms, as well as to shift between meanings under the rubric of a single
term.

The repeated “sainges” of the notes create a regular back-and-forth within the
debate, to an even greater degree than the text, upon closer inspection, supports,
parallelizing the written exchange sketched out by the letters. On closer examination, not
all sayings are created equal. The “sainge of the Emperoure” is not balanced by the
countermanding counsel of Aristotle, but is actually a heading that encompasses the
total subsequent section, including the text marked by the next. Aristotle’s counsel is
not like the counsel of Howel or Angwssel, a fully reported first-person speech
comprising one stage in a formal dialogue. Rather, Aristotle’s counsel is a benefit
habitually enjoyed by the monarch, referred to in absentia but not quoted either in full or
in part. It stands beside Alexander’s vast and successful military conquests as one of his
strengths, and thus a rationale for submitting to his demands.

The Hand B annotator shows interest, also in the poetics of the text. The referent
of the f. 56v “nota” is doubtless the semi-proverbial wisdom of “Betre is so Y ow telle /
Þan he ows alle aquelle / Who so nul by oþir beo chast / Ouer þrowe he schal in hast”
(Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:170.3019-22). These lines are effectively the burden of the
Athenian emperor’s argument for capitulation: pride goeth before a fall, and he who does
not submit to chastisement will soon be overthrown. Even more strongly proverbial is
the “pretty sainge” further down the page, where “Mak no goshauk of a kat [kite] / No

377 “Aristotels consalle,” on f. 56r at Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:168.2994.
378 Cf. Arundel 58, f. 67v.
379 On f. 56v, at ibid., 1:170.3029.
“Faucon mak of busard / No hardy knyx mak of coward” is picked out as a fully excerptible unit of speech. This “sainge” is distinguished from others not by the identity of the person speaking it within the text, but insofar that Hand B proposes that the reader treat it in isolation as possessing in itself and irrespective of context, an aesthetic value. The proverb, like the set-speech of Dalmadas or the emperor, possesses a genre and independence, and functions as a free-floating “sainge,” appropriate for special admiration and for excerption.

There is, in conclusion, a difference in the types of utterance that are picked out over this series of Hand B notes. Some are highlighting the unit of a proverb (“sainge”), others the unit of a speech within formal debate (“sainge”), and still others a written message (“letter”). The unfolding series of such notes in the margin to some degree obscures, however, the distinction between them, while simultaneously emphasizing their commonality as types or units of utterance. There is deep preoccupation with utterance in at least two of the chronicle manuscripts that we have examined (Arundel 58 and Royal 13.A.xxi) – manuscripts that, despite differences of text, time period and language, nevertheless partake in a consistent tradition of annotation type. This attention to utterance makes clear a particular pattern of political decision-making, exemplified by the Arthurian debate over the letter of the emperor Lucius: a letter (or letters) is exchanged by heads of state, and a council ensues in which advisors present opposing arguments as to the best course of action. This model of letter and councilors’ debate is visible too

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381 A useful point of comparison may be a similar emphasis on utterance, separated from the context of a letter, in Arundel 58, where Arthur and Lucius exhort their respective troops: “Confortyng of
in the romance *Kyng Alisaunder*, which, in Lincoln’s Inn 150, receives a treatment from its sixteenth-century annotator calculated to highlight this narrative structure. In the *Kyng Alisaunder* context, a juxtaposition with the Arthurian episode can be seen as furthering an agenda of problematizing Alexander’s character. He is the protagonist of the romance, but not a hero that readers are intended to uncritically admire. His high-handed treatment of the Athenians may meet with success, but a reader familiar with the British history of chronicle, and perhaps reminded of another letter exchange, may be aware that Alexander runs some risk of encountering the ignominious fate of the emperor Lucius. Meanwhile, if Arthur’s own aggressive retaliation is understood as an overreach of his own, the Athenians’ pragmatic capitulation presents the possibilities of the other path.

### 2.9 Excerpted Utterance in the Corpus Christi Prose Lancelot

It cannot be said that Lincoln’s Inn 150 represents a unique case. Rather, the pattern of annotation it shares with chronicle is also visible, as we have seen, in the Winchester Malory, as well as in manuscripts of *Troilus and Criseyde*. While the form is extremely well developed in Lincoln’s Inn, attention to all kinds of inset utterance, of which letters are only the most conspicuous example, is a recurring interest for annotators in manuscript after manuscript. In Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 45, there

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Arthur | to his men” (f. 72r, at Robert of Gloucester, *Metrical Chronicle*, 1:309.4361) and “¶ Confortyng of | Lucie to his men” (f. 72v, at ibid., 1:309.4387).
appear a few notes in a fourteenth-century hand,\textsuperscript{382} and for these notes too, utterance – spoken, this time, rather than written – is a primary concern.

The Corpus Christi annotator, writing in French, does not use the same vocabulary of “sainge” favored by Hand B, but his marginal flagging of “paroules” carries some of the same resonance. A note and a manicule appear next to a set-speech by King Claudas, laying out his theory of good kingship, as well as his lament that he himself has ruled by these principles and now suffers persecution as a usurper:

\begin{verbatim}
Quant claudas entent la parole si saut sus en pies & demande sespee & son hiaume & son escu . & commande toutes ses gens a apparellier . puis a dit oiant tous ses hommes & vns & autres . Ahi regnes de benoyc & cheli de gannes . tant maues pene & trauellie . Moulit fait grant folie auoec le grant pechie qui i est chis qui autrii desirite & tolt sa terre . Car ia asseur vne seule eure ni demourra ne par nuit ne par ior . & moulit a petite signorie sor son pueple . chil qui les cuers nen puet auoir . voirement est nature domee commander esse sos tous establissemens . Car ele fait amer son droiturier signor de sor tous autres . por che est fols & awles qui por couoitise de la terriene signorie qui si poi dure . se carge de pechies & de la pour de nul homme desireter . Car nule grans dolors ne puet entrer ne paroir en cuer mortel . que destre desiretes & essilies . fors seulement de perdre son carnal ami liol . Car a chele dolor ne se puet nule angoisee prendre . & Ie men sui bien apercheus (Sommer, Vulgate, 3:66.38-67.9)
\end{verbatim}

Startled by these words, Claudas called for his sword, helmet, and shield. He ordered all his men to make ready, then said before all of them, loud and clear, “Ah, you kingdom of Benoic, you kingdom of Gaunes, what affliction you have brought upon me! What madness, what sin inhabit the man who overthrows another and steals his land, for neither by day nor by night will he have a moment’s peace! And the king who fails to win the love of his people can have no mastery over them. There is truly something in men’s nature that is more persuasive than outside authority and

\textsuperscript{382} See the description of this manuscript in Chapter 1, pp. 108ff. To briefly reiterate, the manuscript itself is uncertain in its precise provenance, but judged “most probably written in England,” c. 1250 (Hutchings, “Two Hitherto Unnoticed,” 194). The annotations are identified by Hutchings as English and somewhat later: “(? fourteenth century)” (ibid., 193).
attaches them to their rightful lord far more than to any other. And so, a ruler is foolish and blind if, coveting so short-lived a thing as worldly mastery, he burdens himself with the foul sin of disinheriting another man, for no greater blow can strike a mortal heart than being dispossessed and exiled, except only the loss of his true flesh and blood: to that sorrow no other grief compares, which is a lesson I have learned all too well. (Lacy, \textit{Lancelot-Grail}, 3:14.144)

The note that marks this passage reads: “\textit{nota paroules | de grant sen | & de grant coer | [\&] de grant sa | uoir esprove | nota}” (“Note the words of great sense and of resentfulness, and of a great and proven wisdom; note”).\textsuperscript{383} Another note stands at the bottom of the page, further elaborating: “\textit{nota \cdot les paroules del roy claudas clamant.”}

The annotator has identified here a passage in which Claudas gives a pithy summation of the \textit{Lancelot’s} opening meditation on the nature of kingship. Claudas seems at this point to come to the realization that his life indeed constitutes a negative exemplar, an anti-type of good kingship. In this tale of usurpation, disinherition, appeal to feudal obligation and, through the intervention of the Lady of the Lake, the ultimate vindication of the true heir, the “attachment” of the people to the “rightful” hereditary lord – and that lord’s corresponding duty to his vassals – is very much the larger thematic point. It is striking that, while the annotator rather characteristically omits mention of the precise content of Claudas’s \textit{paroles}, he seems struck by the style of its delivery. Claudas possesses the wisdom of experience in uttering these words, and speaks with passion, from the heart.

As for how the annotator sees the formal aspect of these \textit{paroles}, it is more difficult to say. Claudas does not hold private dialogue with a single interlocutor, but

\textsuperscript{383} “De grant cuer” idiomatically means “resentful,” which may certainly be taken as the spirit in which Claudas’s words are offered. It is possible, however, that the annotator intends the more neutral “with great passion.” The identification of Claudas’s \textit{paroles} here as “great wisdom” certainly blunts any sting this note may bear against his words themselves, if not against his moral character.
makes a formal, public declaration: “puis a dit oia nt tous ses hommes & vns & autres.”
Moreover, while Claudas does draw explicit parallel between this general advice-to-
princes and his own contrary behavior (“Ie men sui bien apercheus”), and while the
annotator too is impressed by the experiential authority of Claudas’s wisdom (“grant
sauoir esproue”), many of Claudas’s words are proverbial in nature. Claudas does not
name names, nor confine his paroles to the situation of a single individual, even himself,
but speaks of those generally “qui i est chis qui autrui desirite & tolt sa terre.” “He who”
is Claudas’s refrain.

Some fifty folios further on, we see the annotator at work again, highlighting
speeches that, while they are far less compelling as examples of formalized utterance than
Claudas’s paroles, nevertheless reveal an attention to speeches by characters that
encapsulate important themes and turning-points in the text.

f. 154rb, at Sommer, Vulgate, 3:418.34-35:384 (manicule), “nota ·
bien i”
154va, at 418.35-36:385 (manicule just below), “coment la dame |
de lac parla a la roi | ne guenueur de lancelot · del lac | nota”
156rb, at 427.40:386 “nota boen paroles | damours parentre
lancelot & la Royn[e]”

384 “Mais moult a grant raison de sa folie que raison i troeue & honor,” “but one defeats his folly
who finds right and honor in it” (Sommer, Vulgate, 3:418.34–35; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 3:72.461).

385 The note is slightly above, but the words specifically provoking the annotator’s response are
presumably those to which the manicule directly points: “Car vous estes compaigne au plus preudome &
dame au millor cheualier du monde. & en la seignorie nouele que vous aues naues vous mie poi gaaignie,”
“for you are the companion of the worthiest gentleman and the lady of the best knight in the world, and in
your newfound power you have gained much” (Sommer, Vulgate, 3:418.38–40; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail,
3:71.462).

386 “[P]our lamour monseignor. & por la moie honnor que vous aues hui maintenue vous otroi iou
mamor & moi . si com loial dame le doit donner a loial cheualier,” “For the love of my lord the king, and
for my honor which you have today upheld, I grant you my love and myself, as a loyal lady must reward a
loyal knight” (Sommer, Vulgate, 3:427.39–428.1; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 3:71.484).
In succession, three separate events are marked. The first, the Lady of the Lake’s approving summation of Lancelot and Guenevere’s love receives two notes, as her speech straddles a turn of the page. The second event is a complicated moment of dramatic irony, in which Guenevere kisses Lancelot and publicly pledges him “mamor & moi,” “my love and myself,” which is understood on the surface as a fitting display of institutional gratitude from a queen to a knight who has served her husband well, but which is understood by Lancelot – and the reader – as carrying a more personal meaning. The third note stands by yet another utterance, this time Lancelot’s spontaneous offer to become Arthur’s vassal, and Galehaut’s immediate offer to join Arthur’s court as well, rather than lose Lancelot’s fellowship. All three events involve conspicuous speech-acts, and in the case of the first two, the speech is explicitly flagged by the note (“parla,” “paroles”).

There is, furthermore, a marked rhetoricism in these passages. All three speeches also involve some statement with general and proverbial force. In the first incident, it occurs before the main note, but is given specific and additional emphasis by a *nota bien* and a manicule: “moult a grant raison de sa folie que raison i troeue & honor.” In the second episode, Guenevere announces that “loial dame [s’amor et soi] doit donner a loial

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387 “My lord,” said Galehaut, ‘you won’t have him in this way! I prefer to be poor and happy instead of rich and miserable. Retain me with him, if ever I did anything that pleased you’” (Sommer, *Vulgate*, 3:429.4–6; Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 3:71.487).

388 The last few letters in these lines have been lost to an overenthusiastic binder’s knife. Precise orthography, therefore, is uncertain, but the sense is clear: “Note how Galehaut became a companion to King Arthur.”
chualier.” And, in the last, Galehaut’s pronouncement that “iaim mielx a estre poures et a aise . que riches a malaise” is placed in the first person, but has more general application beyond his own situation: from Galehaut’s perspective, it is better to serve in heaven than to reign in hell. One hears in these generalizing, proverbial paroles some echoes of the “pretty sainges” that preoccupied Hand B in Lincoln’s Inn 150. It is difficult, of course, to determine from such scanty evidence what about these particular passages distinguishes them from others, but certainly the performance of pivotal speech-acts is part of it, and especially speech-acts overdetermined in their function. The Lady of the Lake offers a succinct theory of fin’ amors from the feminine perspective, in which Guenevere accrues worth from her lover’s preeminence. Guenevere, meanwhile, utters a carefully-crafted double-entendre, in so doing personating both feudal lady and courtly mistress, while simultaneously accomplishing by a simple performative utterance389 a pivotal transformation into her identity as Lancelot’s dame. Likewise, while the annotator draws special notice to Galehaut’s performative speech-act, this marks too a pivotal moment for Lancelot, wherein he changes from a foreigner and sometime-rival into a fully integrated member of the Round Table. Between the moments of crisis and the proverbial poetics of these speeches, there is a great deal to choose from in terms of attraction.

Elspeth Kennedy may begin to offer us an answer as to the thematic draw for these notes. Her study of the CCCC MS 45 notes focuses largely on corrections, the scribe’s own attempts at untangling the ambiguities and inconsistencies created by an

389 I borrow this terminology from J. L. Austin, How to Do Things With Words (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).
evolution in the Arthurian mythos, the transference of the role of primary Grail Knight from Perceval to Galahad. She does observe the fourteenth-century notes as well, however, and characterizes them as follows:

Il y a aussi des notes marginales médiévales qui attirrent notre attention sur quelques phrases du texte qui expriment de beaux sentiments au sujet de l’amour, par exemple, ou au sujet de la loyauté ou de la conduite qui convient à jeune bachelier.  

The wording of the notes themselves (with their emphasis on *paroles*) foregrounds these moments as utterance, but they are also moments concerned primarily with appropriate conduct and loyalty. Claudas examines the obligations of a ruler, the relationship between Guenevere and Lancelot is examined as one between a “loial dame” and a “loial cheualier”: how they ought to behave, and what honor accrues to each as a result of the association. Finally, Galehaut’s loyalty to Lancelot results in his adoption of loyalty toward Arthur, in his new membership in the Round Table: an act that redounds, then, on Arthur’s honor. Nor is either significance in these notes – whether the rhetorical or the attention to loyalty – unnoticed by medieval readers. A later hand added a manicule some short distance further along, at a passage where Galehaut once again speaks:

Lor respondi il que il n’avoit onques tant gaaignié ne tant d’onor conquise, “kar il n’est pas, fet il, richece de terre ne d’avoir, mais de preudome, ne les terres ne font mie les preudomes, mais li preudome font les terres et riches hom doit tos jors baer a avoir ce que nus n’a.”

Then Galehaut answered, saying that that had brought him greater

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gain and greater honor than ever, “for riches,” he said, “lie not in land or goods but in worthy men, and land does not produce good men, but good men make land productive; and a truly rich man must always strive to have what no one else has.” (Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 3:72.2)

A king who surrounds himself by loyal and virtuous retainers – “buens chevaliers” – will be truly rich. Once again we can see both a consistency in content (What does it mean to be a good king/knight/lady?) and also a consistency in the form by which this content is delivered: a generalizing and rhetorical speech made by a character, ready-made for excetration from its immediate context and employment within a reader’s own rhetorical lexicon.

In this final brief exploration of CCCC MS 45, we may seem to have strayed some distance from the epistles that preoccupied our attention earlier in the chapter. It is in this regard, however, that the Hand B notes in Lincoln’s Inn 150 are particularly illuminating. The attention in that manuscript to a shifting and ill-defined – but still, for all that, recognizably coherent – collection of utterances, can alert us to the impact of this rhetorical sensibility across the romance corpus. The letters of Lincoln’s Inn 150 are marked, no doubt, in deference to a broader attention to letters characteristic of chronicle annotation, and we may detect a sustained interest in epistles within romance, in both *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Le Morte Darthur*. In the *Alisaunder* as in the *Brut* chronicles, however, an interest in epistles seems intimately connected with broader systems of formalized utterance, forensic set-speeches that stand out from their context both in their voice-attribute and in their excerptible encapsulation of a full argument. Within the more consciously poetic environment of romance, this idea of utterance can shift too to encompass what Hand B calls “pretty sainges,” moments of deliberately proverbial and
consciously aesthetic speech that carry an applicability outside of their immediate context. In CCCC MS 45, such moments enable the construction of a philosophy of loyal conduct, but the rhetorical nature of these moments is never fully lost and they are repeatedly emphasized as *paroles*. In all these cases, there is for annotators a heightened rhetorical awareness to these words that signals for them particular value, and encourages the marginal signpost. As modern readers, we may take a lesson from our medieval predecessors, and maintain an attention to these moments when utterance takes the center stage.
In the vast majority of romance manuscripts, when we are fortunate enough to have annotations that provide a window onto readers’ reactions to the text, these annotations come to us anonymously. Signatures sometimes do appear in margins, leaving us with records of readers’ names and perhaps some clues to their identity. In Longleat House MS 257, for example, an autograph of Richard III proves that this manuscript was owned and read by the future king while he was still Duke of Gloucester.392 London, Lambeth Palace 491 carries a large number and variety of signatures offering valuable clues as to the manuscript’s circumstances for use, likely by young readers, perhaps even in an educational environment.393 One manuscript of particular interest, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80, carries among its signatures one “anne hampton” (on f. 39rb), a tantalizing hint at a female readership for

392 Jordi Sánchez Martí, “Longleat House MS 257: A Description,” Atlantis 27, no. 1 (2005): 79–82. The signature falls on f. 98v, during the stretch of the manuscript dedicated to the romance Ipomedon. Other contents of the manuscript include Lydgate’s Siege of Thebes, Chaucer’s Knight’s and Clerk’s Tales, two etiquette manuals, and “A Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament” (IMEV 944/2). Sánchez Martí dates the production of the manuscript to between 1457 and 1469: that is, between five and seventeen years of Richard’s age. It is impossible to date the signature more exactly than to the nearly twenty-two-year span from 1461 and 1483, Richard’s tenure as Duke of Gloucester. The tentative dating of the manuscript, however, makes an earlier date for the signature somewhat more likely.

393 See Eddy, “The Romance of History.”
the text, but one which does not, unfortunately, provide any clues as to what, if anything, this reader may have found in the text to entertain or edify her.\textsuperscript{394} These signatures are not, however, generally associated with those marks of readership – like annotations – that directly comment on the text.\textsuperscript{395} Beyond the fact that these named individuals read a given manuscript (or at least had it open and in their possession, even if they did not attend to its contents), we have very few clues as to what about the manuscripts they found arresting or valuable. And for the annotations we have that do react to or comment on the text in some way, no associated signatures survive that could guide us to a particular individual: we know no more about these annotators than what we can learn from their treatment of the texts in question.

Anne Hampton’s is not, however, the only signature in MS 80. Here we are fortunate enough to have, at least this once, notes made on a romance text by an annotator who also gives us his name. It is possible in this one instance to treat an annotator as an individual, with a historical situation and life history, rather than as a shadowy and unknowable figure, his only body the body of notes. We may track, moreover, his scribal activity across all the manuscripts that carry his hand. In Chapter 4, I will examine

\begin{footnotes}
\item[394] As Carol Meale observes, “the linking of individual romances with female patrons during the earlier medieval period is, in some instances, traditional rather than proven, [but] the surviving evidence strongly suggests that Chaucer’s (or the Nun’s Priest’s) jibe against women who ‘holde in ful greet reverence’ ‘the book of Launcelot de Lake’ had some basis in fact.” The evidence of wills demonstrates that, in French at least, romances represent “the second largest generic grouping amongst women’s books in the Middle Ages as a whole,” after devotional texts (Meale, “‘Alle the Bokes,’” 139). The evidence for female ownership of English romances is harder to come by. Among her few examples, Meale cites the case of Anne Hampton, but laments that “It is hardly an unequivocal piece of evidence of female ownership or readership” (ibid., 141). Anne may have signed her name in a book belonging to someone else, or in a book she owned but never cared to read.

\item[395] Meale mistakenly attributes two substantive notes to Anne’s hand (“the genealogye of Nassci[ens]” on f. 54rb and “genalagie” on f. 87rb; ibid., 141). In fact, they are in the hand of the main scribe.
\end{footnotes}
Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80 in greater detail, with a special focus on Cok’s annotations. For now, however, the unique circumstance of this manuscript provides the opportunity to learn more about an identifiable annotator, and to get a feel for the man behind the notes.

3.1 John Cok and the St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary

John Cok (c. 1393-c. 1468), an Augustinian canon at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in London, was the rentar for the hospital, the clerk in charge of managing the rents of the many properties owned by St. Bartholomew’s. The nature of this post would have made Cok part monastic, part civil servant. It is important to remember that hospitals in the medieval period were not, as today, primarily medical institutions. They would, certainly, make provision for the maintenance and care of the sick, but records on the nature of medical care provided are few and uninformative. With the exception of leper houses (a special case), illness does not seem to have been either a criterion for entry or a primary concern. Instead, hospitals were often closely related, or in some cases even indistinguishable from, what we might more properly consider an “almshouse,” an institution primarily concerned with the maintenance not of the sick, but the poor. The “poor,” however, need not necessarily be taken too literally: it was sometimes necessary for prospective inmates to purchase entry into the institution with a not-insubstantial fee,


forfeiting in addition their property to the hospital in exchange for permanent, long-term maintenance in old age.\textsuperscript{398}

Hospitals in this regard could function very like monastic institutions, providing the support of a regulated community. The functions exercised by hospitals furthermore included – in addition to the care of the sick – organized worship (both by inmates and by the clerics affiliated with the hospital chapel), accommodation for travelers, clerical study, and even elementary education for boarding students or the local population.\textsuperscript{399}

The monastic comparison, while a powerful one, should not, however, contribute to a misleading impression of isolation from the larger society. On the contrary, hospitals, even in their very physical situation, bestrode the line between withdrawal and integration. Institutions were frequently located on the outskirts of communities: St. Bartholomew’s, in West Smithfield, had a technically suburban location, (just) outside London’s city walls. But hospitals were also frequently located along major thoroughfares and at places of high traffic in and out of cities, the better both to serve travelers and to solicit charitable contributions from passers-by.\textsuperscript{400} St Bartholomew’s itself included travelers and foreigners in its mandate.\textsuperscript{401} Cok’s association with so large and prominent a London hospital as St. Bartholomew’s would, therefore, place him in the center of a lively movement in and out of London, as well as in and out of St. Bart’s itself, among a varied community from a broad cross-section of society.

\textsuperscript{398} Marek Słoń, “Hospital and Old Age in Late-Medieval Wrocław,” \textit{Acta Poloniae Historica} 84 (2001): 31–52.

\textsuperscript{399} Orme and Webster, \textit{The English Hospital}, 49–68.

\textsuperscript{400} Ibid., 41–48.

\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., 43.
As for Cok himself, he is best known as one of the major scribes of the cartulary of St. Bartholomew’s, a two-volume compilation of documents including transcriptions of deeds relating to hospital property in and outside London (the earliest, copied by Cok, dated to 1418), a rental listing all the rents owned by St. Bart’s (also written by Cok and dated 1456) and a list of the masters of the hospital from 1123 to the mid fifteenth century. This is, first and foremost, a collection of bureaucratic documents, records necessary for the efficient management and administration of the hospital’s extensive land holdings. It is, furthermore, a communal document. While Cok is the only named scribe, and the scribe also of many of the cartulary’s stand-alone appendices like the rental and list of masters, out of hundreds of transcribed deeds, his hand can be identified in only ten.

Yet Cok’s is also a strong personality that pushes to the fore of the documents he both copies and, sometimes, authors or adapts. Unlike the other scribes who worked on the cartulary, he invariably signs his work, identifying those deeds he has himself copied. He also inserts into records of chronology personal milestones and anecdotes, connecting the documentary history he records to the personal history of his own career. Of one deed, he writes “Scriptum per Iohannem Cok per biennium ante professionem suam · qui seruiens cum Magistro Roberto Neuton’ · Anno domini · 1418 ·” (“written by John Cok in the two years before his profession, who was a servant with Master Robert Neutron’”)

403 Ibid., 1, 174.
404 Ibid., 3.
405 “[I]t does not appear that he copied out any deeds other than the ones he pointed out himself” (Ibid.).
Newton, in the year of the Lord 1418”). In a number of other notes, he focuses attention instead on his advanced age and physical decline. For example: “Scriptus per fratrem Iohannem Cok / In vespertina vite \ sue/ \ xxiiiij\o/ \ die \ Ab.: 3. Augusti cum Instabilitate manuum vt patet per litteram Anno l Domini Millesium \ CCC\mo/ \ lxvj \o/ \ Et Anno rr’ Edwardi quarti sexto †” (“Written by brother John Cok in the evening of his life, on the 24th day of Av, that is, of August, with an unsteadiness of the hands as is apparent in the letter, in the year of the Lord 1466, and in the sixth year of King Edward IV”). That is, the unsteadiness he speaks of is apparent in the shaky text he has written. Cok may be somewhat disingenuous here: despite his protest, his handwriting does not display any obvious deficiency. More importantly, however when Cok copies these deeds, he draws a direct connection between the chronology of St. Bartholomew’s administrative history, and the chronology of his own clerical career. Likewise, even as he engages in what might easily be treated as a rote and mechanical production of an artifact of bureaucracy, he – certainly not uniquely among medieval scribes – draws attention to his own identity and individuality, and its effect in the written

\[\text{406} \text{ St. Bartholomew’s cartulary, f. 382r. The deed is number 988 in Kerling’s Calendar (ibid., 99). Kerling records this and other colophons as a marginal note, but it is in fact fully incorporated in the main text block, as is normal for these signatures of Cok’s. Robert Newton is 28th in Cok’s list of the Masters of St. Bart’s (f. 69r): “Dominus Robertus Neuton <*****> xiiij die mensis Iunij Anno domini M\mo/ \ CCC\mo/ \ xiij\mo/ \ Et Anno rr’ henr’ \vti/ post Conquestum primo \ lure domino Ricardo Clyfford Episco\po londo l niense deuoluto qui cessauit ultimo die Mensis Maij Anno domini Millesimo CCC\mo/ \ xvt\mo/ \ Et l Anno rr’ \ henrici \vti/ tercio” (“Lord Robert Newton on the 13th day of the month of June in the year of the Lord 1413 and in the first year of king Henry, fifth after the conquest, with lord Richard Clyfford having lawfully inherited as Bishop of London, and he died on the last day of the month of may in the year of the lord 1415 and in the third year of Henry V;” the bracketed passage has been cancelled, and the original text is now illegible).

\[\text{407} \text{ Cok here transliterates the Hebrew month of Av or Ab. The explanatory gloss of “ \ id est \ Augusti” runs well into the margin, and may have been added later, to provide more information for an audience unfamiliar with the Hebrew calendar.}

\[\text{408} \text{ This is Kerling’s deed 60 (ibid., 19).}
text; he ages, he becomes infirm, he looks forward to death and entreats divine compassion.

One of the most interesting additions to the cartulary is Cok’s so-called “chronicle,” enumerating the kings from Edward the Confessor to Henry VI (see Appendix A). Cok’s personal intervention into the text (“ego frater Iohannes Cok qui Istam transsumpcionem \Regum/ [...] conscripsi”) has led to a traditional attribution of the chronicle to Cok’s own authorship. But the chronicle is not entirely his own composition, being largely based on a somewhat more extended chronicle that was written on a tabula (“tablet”) hanging in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London, and copied from that source into British Library, Harley 565. Given the close proximity of St. Paul’s to St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, it is likely that Cok would have known the cathedral very well, and, while it is certainly possible that both the tablet and cartulary chronicles spring from another, common source, it seems eminently plausible that Cok’s copy derives from the St. Paul’s tablet itself. The St. Paul’s tablet is no longer extant, and

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410 Euan Roger is currently at work on an article on John Cok’s superior, Master of the hospital John Wakeryng, and the administration of St. Bartholomew’s during Cok’s lifetime (“Blakberd’s Treasure: A Study in Fifteenth-Century Hospital Administration at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, London”). This work has yet to be published, but Roger has generously provided me with an early draft. He has, furthermore, independently identified the Harley 565 parallel for Cok’s chronicle, and agrees that both the Harleian and St. Bartholomew’s versions were likely copied from the St. Paul’s tablets. He informs me that the canons at St. Bartholomew’s likely consciously imitated their contemporaries at St. Paul’s Cathedral. The copying of tablets in St. Paul’s would, he argues, therefore be fully in character with a larger pattern of emulation.

411 Another, inverse case of literary production moving, in this instance, onto the walls of St. Paul’s Cathedral, would be the danse macabre painted in the Pardon Churchyard, together with verses by John Lydgate (the Daunce of Poulis) that translate text accompanying the painting’s ultimate model, the danse macabre painting in the cemetery of the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris (see Amy Appleford, “The Dance of Death in London: John Carpenter, John Lydgate, and the Daunce of Poulis,” Journal of

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Harley 565 the only surviving witness to this chronicle, but still it seems that the differences between Cok’s chronicle and its presumed source are – when they are not very minor variations in word order or syntax – almost entirely additions. While Cok faithfully copied his source, that is, he felt free to adapt his material, contributing details known to him, and which he apparently perceived to be either of interest or importance, making a rather dry chronicle more engaging.

The chronicle is formed of a series of entries constituting a sort of king-list. As such, it would make a very logical companion piece to the list of the Masters of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital that Cok also included in the cartulary (ff. 68r-69v), a list of national “masters” to match the institutional ones. In the full form appearing in Harley 565 (and so, presumably, the St. Paul’s tablet), this list is somewhat amplified by its placement in the context of a more discursive telling of early history, from creation, through the Trojan War, and up through the legendary kings of early Britain. The material is clearly derived from Geoffrey of Monmouth, to the point of including some verse stanzas drawn straight from the Historia Regum Britanniae. By the time the

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412 History, I.16.294–299, 305–312. The first stanza is a prayer by Brutus to the goddess Diana, perhaps unexpected interior decoration for a cathedral: “Diua potens nemorum, terror siluembris apris, / cui licet amfractus ire per aetheros / infernasque domos, terrestria iura revolute / et dic quas terras nos habiture uelis. / Dic certam sedem qua te uenerabor in qeuum, / qua tibi uirgineis templa dicabo choris” (“Mighty goddess of the forest, terror of woodland boars, / you who can travel through celestial orbits / and through the halls of death, unfold your earthly powers / and say in which lands you wish us to dwell. / Prophesy a sure home where I can worship you forever, and where I can dedicate to you temples and choirs of virgins”). In the second stanza, Diana responds to Brutus’s prayer, promising “insula in oceano [...] habitata gigantibus olim” (“an island of the ocean, where giants once lived”), where “de prole tua reges nascentur, et ipsis / tocius terrae subditus orbis erit” (“From your descendants will arise kings, who / will be masters of the whole world”). Despite the tablet’s situation within the environs of the sacred, the mythology of national history and foundation is paramount, seen, presumably, as a complement rather than a rebuke to ecclesiastical power and hierarchy. The cartulary itself partakes in a similar rejection of any divide between the bureaucratic and clerical. It is, first and foremost, an administrative document.

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chronicle reaches the historical period, however, the reporting of kings becomes more regular and formulaic, naming the king, the date of his coronation, the length of his reign, location of burial, and, in only a few cases, a significant event of his reign. It is this schematic portion of the chronicle that Cok reproduces.

In this abridged form, the chronicle is clearly a “contemporary” history – a history, that is, that makes no attempt to reach back to the origins of English nationhood, to reconstruct a mythologized past, but instead relates the reigns and important events of the centuries proximate to Cok’s own time, beginning with Edward the confessor, crowned by Cok’s reckoning (and that of his source) in 1042.413 It is a decidedly Norman history, as well as an evidential or even documentary one. Besides coronations and death dates, those events are emphasized which have left behind some monument or artifact as evidence. Edward the Confessor, for example, “in ecclesia westmonasterij quam ipse construi fecerat honorifice collocatur” (“was laid out with honor in the church of Westminster which he himself had caused to be built”). Other events noted include, by “willelmi Primi ducis Normannye,” (“William the First, Duke of Normandy”), the production of a documentary artifact, as “regni sui anno Xvij/· angliam describi fecit in vno volumine dicto Domesday” (“in the seventeenth year of his reign, he caused England to be described in one volume, called Domesday”). The result is an interesting displacement of the political transformation wrought by William’s conquest (unmentioned as such in the chronicle) onto the production of a text, itself useful as

413 Edward was crowned in 1043. With regard to these dates, Norman Moore cautions, “It will be observed that Cok’s dates are sometimes erroneous, and sometimes, from difference of reckoning, do not accord with those in common use at present” (History of St. Bartholomew’s, 2:40). Consequently, Moore alters many of the dates Cok has given, when he has done so either in error or in adherence to a pre-Gregorian calendar. In my own transcriptions, I reproduce Cok’s numbers without editorial intervention.
evidentiary witness of former times. Even the insistence on reporting the burial locations for these monarchs might be understood as an outgrowth of this emphasis on history as it has an evidentiary legacy in the author’s present: the tombs of these kings remain as physical proof of the chronicle’s facts.

Cok does not merely reproduce the chronicle word-for-word, however. There are a number of differences between the excerpt carried in the cartulary and the one that appears in Harley 565. It is impossible to be certain what led to these differences, but the most likely explanation is that Harley 565 reproduces the St. Paul’s tablet fairly faithfully, while Cok has expanded on this mutual source with his own additions. The other possibility, that Cok himself authored a chronicle that was subsequently copied and posted in St. Paul’s, strains credibility. When Cok actually inserts himself into the chronicle (“ego Iohannes Cok...”), it is unlikely that a copyist or adaptor working from a chronicle of Cok’s own composition would trouble to remove this eyewitness testimony. More likely, Cok has, in this case, added to an exemplar from his own personal experience. If he felt free to make additions at one point, it is simpler to assume that the other variations between the two versions are further additions of Cok’s, than to postulate a complementary abridger behind the production of the St. Paul’s tablet or the Harley manuscript. What is more, these additions are some of the most engaging and intriguing aspects of the terse chronicle.

To some degree, it seems like some of the added information Cok provides is simply information that appears to spring to his mind at the mention of a particular ruler – a key fact either that helps him fix the particular king’s identity in his mind, or that is inescapably called up by mention of the monarch. So, we learn that the epithet of Henry
I is “Bew clerk,” and that he “fecit parcam de wodestoke” (“made the Park of Woodstock”). True indeed, but it is difficult to tell what agenda these facts might serve beyond the development of a rudimentary personality and *curriculum vitae* for Henry, in addition to the dry facts of his coronation, death and burial. Park and epithet work too as a way of fixing Henry more readily in the memory, setting him apart from his dynastic peers as “the one who....” At the very least, he gains some measure of evidentiary verification, in the continued existence of the Park of Woodstock, which may function for him as physical legacy.

Others of Cok’s additions to the chronicle flesh out somewhat the text’s relationship with royal power and dynastic succession. The Harley 565 chronicle (at least the portion of it that Cok has excerpted) creates, by its minimalist listing of kings, the impression of a stately and regular progression of royal power. As has already been mentioned, the Norman Conquest is elided almost entirely, and another key moment, the transfer of power to Lancastrian rule with the deposition of Richard II, is ignored as well. This latter transfer of power is made more explicit in Cok’s version, where the death of Richard II is included (although not further elaborated), and Henry IV is explicitly identified as *not* the son of the king or his heir, but “filius Ducis lancastris”

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Edward the Confessor is treated as a point of division in the Harley text: “A natiuitate Jesu Christi vsque ad regnum secundi Edwardi Regis et confessoris fluxerunt diuisim in Anglia Centum Reges et Ixta et quinque Reges. de quibus Oswynus Oswaldus. Ethelbertus Kenelmus Edwardus Edwardus Martirizati. et Constans Cedwallus Sebertus Wynfridus Ethelredus. Edbertus. Offa. et Kynredus in Monachatu sepulti sunt” (“From the nativity of Jesus Christ up to the reign of Edward the Second, King and Confessor, one hundred kings plus sixty-five kings separately arose in England, of which Oswyn, Oswald, Ethelbert, Kenelm, Edward and Edward were martyred. And Constans, Cedwall, Sebert, Wynfrid, Ethelred, Edbert, Offa and Cynred were buried as monks;” Nicolas and Tyrrell, *Chronicle of London*, 178–179).
(“the son of the Duke of Lancaster”). Cok does not comment on the discontinuity, but at least makes it visible.

Even more interesting is the case of Thomas Becket. The Harley 565 version includes mention of Becket’s translation of Edward the Confessor, partly, no doubt, an update to the previous statement of the king’s place of burial, keeping track of the current location of his remains. The Harley 565 chronicle also shows, however, a larger interest in not just kings, but royal martyrs – which kings were Christian, and which were martyred or at least “in Monachatu sepulti sunt” (“were buried as monks,” Nicolas and Tyrrell, *Chronicle of London*, 179). Edward the Confessor is in some ways the gem of this collection, a monarch well-known and popular for his sanctity. As such, he is a worthy object of particular attention in the chronicle.415 In Cok’s revision, however, the significance of this particular passage shifts. Edward is still translated, but the brief mention of the agent of the translation (“beatum Thomam Cantuar’ archiepiscopum”) is expanded to emphasize Becket’s own status as martyr (“& postea per dictum Regem marterizatur · anno domini · M · C · lxxj/o/ · x die Decembris,” “and afterwards he was martyred by the said king, in the year of the Lord 1171 on the 10th day of December”). Edward could be understood as fully assimilated into a king-list, since he was a king as well as a saint. Becket’s martyrdom, however, briefly shifts the chronicle entirely out of the dynastic mode, and in a way that is somewhat problematic for the image of kingship.

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415 Cok is not oblivious to the importance of Edward the Confessor in his revision. One of his alterations changes out the straightforward reporting of the date of Henry IV’s coronation (“tercio Idus Octobr.,” ibid., 180) for the relevant feast-day, “in ffesto Sancti Edwardi · Regis & confessoris” (“on the feast of St. Edward, king and confessor”). In this way, Henry IV is reinvented as a new Edward, and Edward himself becomes a recurrent motif of pious kingship across the late Middle Ages.
The *rex dictus* here (Henry II) is not a saint like Edward the Confessor, but the persecutor of one. A glorious English and Christian kingship is made briefly problematic.\(^\text{416}\)

While Cok grants a fuller, and thus more complicated, picture of history in his revision, it is premature to attribute to him a facile motive of undermining regal dignity. He may increase the visibility, for example, of the Lancastrian usurpation, but he otherwise seems well-disposed toward the Lancastrian rulers. His comment that Henry V “multa inaudita bella exercuit & magnam partem francia suo imperio subiugavit” (“carried out many new wars and subjugated a great part of France to his power”) necessarily recalls the extended praise of Edward III, who is clearly a favorite with the chronicle’s original author, meriting an extended description of his foreign conquests, and earning the descriptor “flos Milicie Christiane” (“flower of Christian knighthood”).\(^\text{417}\) If Henry V is a new Edward III, then Cok’s alterations to the Henry IV entry cannot be anti-Lancastrian in their motive, even if their effect is a slightly less naïve reading of Henry’s rise to power. Cok’s motive seems rather that of providing additional information when he knows it, and when it seems to him necessary for the sufficiency of even a short chronicle. His additions, particularly in the case of the Becket martyrdom, seem perhaps free-associated, prompted by the mention of a familiar name.

This is even more clear in his most personal addition to the chronicle, the insertion into the king-list of his own self and identity. While his exemplar mentioned

\(^{416}\) It is perhaps within this thematic matrix that another of Cok’s interpolations should be understood: the report of the interdict placed on England. Historically, this occurred during the reign of John, but Cok rather unexpectedly seems to associate it instead with Richard I.

\(^{417}\) Ibid., 179. Cok’s version of Edward’s reign is identical to Harley 565 in its essentials. For Cok, Edward III is “flos milicie *christianitatis*” (“the flower of the knighthood of Christendom”).
the coronation of Henry V, Cok feels himself qualified to expand on this statement of
date and location even further; he was himself present:

Anno · M\o/ · CCCC · xiij · ix\o/ · die Mensis Aprilis · quo die fuit
Dominica in passione & dies valde pluuiosa Coronacio · henrici ·
quenti apud westmonasterium · in qua coronacione · ego ffrater
Iohannes Cok qui Istam transsumpcionem \Regum/ ad
reuiuicacionem memorie conscripsi · interfui & vidi

In the year 1413, on the ninth day of the month of April, on which
day was Passion Sunday, and it was a very rainy day, was the
coronation of Henry V at Westminster, at which coronation I,
Brother John Cok, who have written down the assumption of kings
for the renewal of memory, was present and saw it.

His is an evidentiary and testimonial approach to history, and he is not only able to add
some greater detail to these terse descriptions, but even succeeds in placing himself in the
history. His presence as an eyewitness at this coronation verifies it, while his attention to
the detail of the day’s weather is a fact unimportant from a historical perspective but one
wholly evocative of physical presence. Cok’s recollection of the coronation day is a
visceral one, and the reader does not experience the event as an objective observer, or an
historical analyst, seeking to identify crucial trends or turning points in national policy;
he experiences the event as John Cok.

More than this, however, his witnessing of the event is one with legalistic or
notarial overtones, evident in his language of “ego ... conscripsi, interfui et vidi.” Such
language does not strictly adhere to a formula, but recalls official signatures on legal
documents, identifying the witnesses to their validity. Compare, for example, the
formulae of signature on a contract of fealty between Pope Gregory VII and Landulf VI
of Benevento:

I, Bishop Johannes Portuensis, have undersigned in authentication.
I, Bishop Johannes Tusculanensis, was present and have undersigned. I, Bishop Hubertus Prenestinus, have written it. I, Desiderius, priest of the Roman church, was present and have undersigned. I, Peter, cardinal, priest and librarian of the holy Roman church, was present and have undersigned.  

Cok’s eyewitness account of the coronation fulfills the same functions as this legal signature, affirming its truth, and serving double-duty, as well, identifying his role as scribe of the entire chronicle (presumably the referent of the transsumpicio Regum). He may even imply that his witness (interfui et vidi) extends retroactively to the entirety of English history.

These formulae did not fall out of use after the eleventh century, and they can be located in contexts less exalted than papal and princely politics. Such well-established formulae were standard notarial practice in the fifteenth century as well. The Dublin notary James Yonge used a similar formulation in his notarial instruments:

Et ego Iacobus Yonge clericus coniugatus Cuius Dubliniti & Dublinii Diocesis publicus auctoritate Imperiali notarius premissis omnibus & singulis dum sic vt premittitur agerentur & fient vna cum prenominitis testibus presens interfui eaque omnia & singula sic premissi vidi, audiui, scripsi, publicau & in hanc publicam formam redegi, signo que & nomine meis solitus & consuetus signaui rogatus & requisitus in fidem & testimonium omni & singulorum premissorum.

And I, James Yonge, a married clerk of the City of Dublin and the Diocese of Dublin, public notary by Imperial authority, was present together with the aforementioned witnesses while all and singular of the preceding matters were carried out and took place just as they are set out above, and I saw, heard, wrote, made public, and rendered in this public form all and singular thus set down, and I, invited and asked for, signed it with my usual and customary sign and name according to the faith and testimony of all and singular here set down.419

The formal notarial usage followed by Yonge in the list of first person perfect verbs (interfui ... vidi, audiui, scripsi, et ... redigi) was no doubt a model for Cok’s somewhat modified form. Especially significant is the ego opening. The formula of “Ego” or “Et ego” invariably began each such notarial signature (eschatocol), and “each notary developed his own version of the capital E with which his eschatocol began as well as his own signum manuale,” a “line drawing, which was usually – though not always – in the general shape of a cross,” and which acted as a personal identifier individual to the particular notary.420 Cok’s formal identification of self means that he is acting as notary for the event of the coronation, affirming its truth, and making a formal record of what he has himself witnessed.

None of these details really grants access to Cok’s personality, however. They speak to the universals of the human condition – universals rooted, certainly, in physical presence, but commonplaces nonetheless. The reader is invited to compassion for the infirmity of the aging scribe, or to imagine himself present at Henry’s rainy coronation.

419 Trinity College Dublin MS 1477, no. 69; 16 March 1406 (O’Byrne, “Dublin’s Hoccleve;” the English translation is O’Byrne’s, as well as my thanks for her generosity in introducing me to the world notarial documents). This notarial instrument bears official witness to an arrest, and would have been intended to provide evidence in the case of later legal proceeding.

420 Ibid.
Our picture deepens, however, as we examine more of Cok’s interventions in the cartulary, in particular Cok’s description of the character and virtues of his superior John Wakeryng – the master of St. Bartholomew’s for much of Cok’s life – we are able to glimpse as much of Cok’s own individuality and personality as we do of Wakeryng’s. In a cartulary entry surely similar in its impulse to the “chronicle,” Cok provided a list of the masters of St. Bartholomew’s, from the hospital’s founding in 1123 up to his own present day. And, as with the chronicle, for those masters whom he knew personally, he was able to offer a more extended block of information. On Wakeryng, he wrote:

Ac per me ffatrrem Iohannem Cok toto tempore illius Magisterij qui omnia famosa opera sua redegi in scriptis Quia memoriter est recolendus miram sagacitatem eximie discreci

On Wakeryng, he wrote:

And I brother John Cok lived throughout his mastership, who put down in writing all his famous works. For the wondrous acuteness of his extraordinary discretion ought to be recorded. In the first
year of his mastership he recovered at law from the executors of Richard Whytyngdon certain goods of Sir John White, Wakeryng’s predecessor, who died in the house (i.e., the college on College Hill) of the aforesaid Richard Whytyngdon; because he was one of his (White’s) executors. First of all he recovered a cross with gilt base, worth £12. 13s. 4d.: also a great Antiphonary, with musical notation, lying in the choir, worth £8: also a great Breviary for the master’s room, worth £10: also another great Breviary with musical notation, containing the lessons, to wit a cochoir, worth £13. 6s. 8d.: also a new and great legend de sanctis and de tempore in one volume, worth £12: also a great Bible complete with a Psalter, worth £16: also a Manual worth thirteen shillings and four pence. Again, in the same year, he recovered from the executors of the said Richard Whittington a quit-rent of twenty shillings arising from his mansion in la Ryole existing for many years back, and therefore for compensation of the aforesaid annual rent thus existing so far back the executors of the aforesaid Richard built the great south gate of the hospital, putting up the arms of the aforesaid Richard with a stone column and a vault or arch in the wall adjoining the chapel of S. Nicholas out of the goods of the aforesaid Richard Whittington, at a cost for the mason’s work of £64: and also a glass window with its tracery, in keeping with the new work, and representing the seven corporal works of mercy, the whole sum recovered being £174. 14s. 4d.

The interesting thing about this description is the intensely practical nature of Cok’s praise of Wakeryng, his focus on Wakeryng’s business acumen and ability. Wakeryng possesses “miram sagacitatem” (“wondrous acuteness”) and “eximie discrecioniis” (“extraordinary discretion”), virtues Cok then illustrates by the enumeration of the many valuable pieces of property Wakeryng was able, through legal action, to recover for St. Bartholomew’s. Each of the objects is enumerated in some detail, with emphasis on the

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421 Whittington College was Richard Whittington’s charitable organization and hospital/almshouse. The Whittington Charitable Trust is still active today, providing housing and pensions for the elderly and disabled.

422 The manuscript reads Michaeli, and may possibly refer to St. Michael’s Paternoster, a major beneficiary of Whittington’s request.

richness of each piece and an appraisal of its monetary worth, leading up to the final, crowning report of the full recovered sum. Cok’s admiration for Wakeryng is based in his ability to provide tangible, material benefits for the hospital, benefits specifically obtained through a legal proceeding. And in this praise of Wakeryng, we can discern Cok’s admiration for values that he might hope to find in himself: the skill set such a legal action would require is the same skill set that Cok would himself need to display in order to be a good rentar. When Cok enumerates the virtues he admires in his superior, he does not invoke the man’s piety, works of mercy, or other spiritual virtues, nor of Wakeryng’s high birth or nobility of soul. Instead, he focuses on Wakeryng’s managerial virtue. The image we gain here of Cok is of a man not preoccupied by theological virtues but by bureaucratic ones; of a careful administrator who admires effective administration in others.

Cok relies on the formulae of a bureaucratic and notarial profession in shaping his adaptation. James Yonge himself employed similar formulae in his Memoriale, essentially transforming the text he authored into a huge notarial instrument. Likewise, Thomas Hoccleve, that most autobiographical of fifteenth-century poets, found literary inspiration in his more bureaucratic production. The civil service bureaucracy, of which

424 Roger, in his unpublished article “Blakberd’s Treasure,” goes so far as to compare Cok’s admiration for Wakeryng to “hagiography.” Indeed, it is as much Cok’s record of Wakeryng’s skills as it is Wakeryng’s own able management that contributes to Wakeryng’s reputation as, in Roger’s words, a “stand-out” administrator among the hospital’s masters. Once again, I thank Roger profusely for his generosity in allowing me access to this work-in-progress.

425 This attention to good bureaucratic administration is not limited to Cok’s praise of Wakeryng, but extends throughout the rental. In this regard, Roger particularly emphasizes marginalia in Cok’s hand “castigat[ing] a previous tenant of le Lampe on the hoop, a brewhouse in St. Ethelburga within Bishopsgate [...] as a ‘counterfete gentilman ac nevir thrifte,’ [...] implying that the property had been mismanaged in Cok’s eyes.”

426 O’Byrne, “Dublin’s Hoccleve.”
Cok was not a member, but with whose scribal activities and methods the St.
Bartholomew’s rentar had much in common, was in the fifteenth century a fertile
environment for literary innovation. We may see Cok (not, himself, an author) at the
nexus of such poetic and literary productivity on the one hand and, on the other, a
compilatorial impulse already explored in the case of the London, College of Arms,
Arundel 58 compiler/annotator. The impulse to gather together, to supplement a source
with additional information, is one that, for the Arundel compiler, colored his annotations
as well. In the case of John Cok, it is an impulse he does not fully abandon in his
approach to romance annotation.

3.2 Cok the Compiler: Cok’s Religious Miscellany, British Library, Add. 10392

The St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary, while probably the best-known manuscript in
Cok’s hand, is by no means the only one. Our search for John Cok in the manuscript
record brings us next to London, BL Add. 10392, a modest manuscript in his hand,
150mm x 210mm x 50mm including binding, with pages of slightly varying sizes,
averaging about 146mm x 205mm. It was, as is witnessed by Cok’s signing of the
manuscript, in his own hand throughout – both text and extratextual apparatus – and was
compiled in 1432. Its twenty-three quires are by and large eight folios, with a few
exceptions: these exceptions are invariably followed by a new quire that begins with a
fresh text at the top of its first page, so presumably they represent points when Cok

See f. 1v, “Ista sunt Contete in libello isto scripto/ a · ff. Johanne · Cok | Anno domini ·
Millesimo · CCCC · xxxij ·” for the date and one of Cok’s several signatures.

1 [7 folios], 16 [13], 21 [9], 22 [10] and 23 [3].
desired to create a neat break between quires, adding or subtracting pages from a quire in order to finish at the end of his final desired text.

The manuscript is not, however, divided into independent sections or booklets, with a long major text beginning at the head of a new quire, and continuing to its end, and then the final quire either being extended to accommodate it, or alternatively an added quire being filled with smaller, “filler” texts to make up the deficit. If this had been an organizing principle, one might expect to see evidence of it at, particularly, f. 112r, where a new text begins at the head of quire 15 [8 folios], which is followed by an extend quire 16 [13], before a new text begins at the head of quire 17 [8]. Yet this entire section of the manuscript, from as early as f. 108v, is taken up entirely with short items: prayers, hymns, and litanies. The text that begins at f.133r is somewhat longer, insofar as it represents an organized collection of prayers “secundum ordinem psalterij,” “following the order of the psalter” from 1 to 150, but it still seems very much of a piece with the text immediately preceding it. Rather than understanding the manuscript as a miscellany of independent or even semi-independent booklets, it makes more sense as an organizational scheme when looked at as a whole. The manuscript begins in quire 1 [7] with short pieces (lists of virtues and vices, and brief commentaries on the Song of Songs and Job), then beginning in quire 2 [8], embarks on a series of lengthier texts. This pattern breaks down around f. 68v, where short texts begin to appear mixed in among longer ones, until at f. 108v, following a homily on Mary Magdalene by Pseudo-Origen, the form of the contents shifts from treatises, classifications, homilies and commentaries

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429 Compare the booklet production technique outlined by Hardman, “A Mediaeval ‘Library In Parvo.’”
to prayers. These collections of short prayers continue until f. 141r, and the appearance of another longer text, “A Book on the Faith Directed to Peter; Or, On the Regulation of the True Faith,” along with other texts of moderate length likewise attributed to (although not, in the view of modern scholarship, actually by) St. Augustine. On f. 173, the last page of quire 21 [9], the short materials begin again, with a very interesting Latin poem carrying the title “versus ad omnem genus hominum,” “Verses on Every Race of Men.” The short texts continue, until, on f. 178v appear a number of meditation mnemonics, in the form of drawings of hands, one hand to a page, elaborately labeled. There is a sort of internal logic to the manuscript as it unrolls as a whole, and one that is not obviously linked to the physical sectioning of the manuscript as it was produced.

Leaving aside the contents for the moment, and to return to the material description of the manuscript, the main text is in black ink, with frequent red and blue rubrication, also in Cok’s hand. It has clearly been rebound in the modern era, as the spine is fully modern, with modern marble flyleaves and old boards. When the manuscript was trimmed to its current size, some of Cok’s own marginal annotations were lost – for in addition to copying the main text, he provided a complex layout apparatus. Still, it is clear that Cok must have copied with the quires already, if not bound together, at least placed together, since there are places where the pages were


431 A version of this poem, based on Cambridge, University Library Ec.vi.29, is edited in Thomas Wright and Edmund Goldsmid, eds., The Political Songs of England: From the Reign of John to that of Edward II, vol. 4, Rev. ed., Bibliotheca Curiosa (Edinburgh, 1884), 64–66. It is by no means certain that Cok considered this a “political song,” but to modern eyes it is clearly in the tradition of Gildas’s De Excidio Britanniae. The first stanza reads: “Ecce dolet anglia luctibus imbusta · 1 Gens tremit tristicia sordibus polluta · 1 Necat pestilencia viros atque brutae · 1 Cur · quia flagicia regnaat resoluta · ” (“Behold: England sorrows, flooded with tears; the race, polluted by sins, trembles and sorrows; pestilence kills men and beasts. Why? Because unbridled shames reign.”)
closed together with the blue ink still wet, where the ink has transferred from one page to
the other.

3.3 Per Suas Manus: In the Hands of John Cok

As for the contents, they make for a fascinating study. The book is described in
the British Library catalogue simply as comprising “tractatus varii theologici,” “various
theological treatises,” attributed to a few authors: Bernard, Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor,
and “aliorum,” “others.” While the general description of “theological treatises” is not
false, it is possible to determine with a great deal more precision the unifying theme
behind the choice of texts in 10392. I have made a survey of these contents, and for the
discussion that follows, it may be useful to refer to the partial description in Appendix B,
a list of the manuscript’s major texts. The manuscript is not, it is important to note,
composed entirely or even necessarily predominantly of long texts by named authors: on
the contrary, a significant portion of the contents are very short texts, varying in length
from a few lines to a few folios. Some of them are simple tables and charts, which, while
Cok may not have authored them himself – it is more likely he is copying them from
some source or sources – are unlikely to have ever had a particular acknowledged author,
or even a particular fixed text.

Some question may be raised whether Cok is copying this book in its entirety
from some exemplar, which circumstance, if true, would lessen the degree of Cok’s
agency in the project. The appearance of the manuscript is fairly unified, with the

432 List of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1836-1840 (London:
British Museum, 1843), 34.
beginning of texts marked off by large capitals in the same style (blue with red floriation), headings, rubrics and running titles applied not universally but with moderate consistency, and always in a similar style (red with a blue paraph). This could argue either way – one might propose, for example, that such consistency would be aided by the existence of a ready-compiled exemplar that Cok was reproducing with a format either borrowed from the original, or imposed so much the more easily, as he would have been able to envision the scope and shape of his project from page one. Both the observation of the unified consistency of presentation and the hypothesis of the ready exemplar would fit nicely with our previous observation on Cok’s production method as a totality rather than a series of quire or even multi-quire booklets.

Nevertheless, I suspect that this is not the case. Cok seems to assert his ownership of the book in a number of important ways: ownership, that is, not as a physical possession but as the product of his mind. Cok, as is frequently observed across his corpus of scribal work,\(^{433}\) compulsively signs his name when he feels he has made a contribution that should be recognized separately from the authorship of the text as a whole – a move that both makes clear to readers his own contributions to the manuscript and simultaneously marks the remainder of the text as not Cok’s own, but derived from the author himself. In Add. 10392, he extends this practice with the inclusion of notes throughout the manuscript and, among them, some consisting of a small flag-shaped mark that seems to function for Cok as a sort of nota bene.

\(^{433}\) Compare both his consistent signing of deeds in the St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary and the frequent signatures accompanying his annotations in CCCC MS 80.
The mark is not unique to Cok. A very similar form (although drawn much larger) is used in, for example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 102. On f. 11r-v of that manuscript, early in a *Piers Plowman* C-text, a flag or clef very similar in appearance to Cok’s is apparently used as a *nota bene* at four points. The notes accompany four passages in the manuscript:

Mede in the mot-halle tho on men of lawe gan wynke
(Langland, *Piers Plowman*, C.IV.148)

Loue lette of Mede tho lyhte and Leutee yut lasse
And cryede to Consience, the kyng myhte hit here:
“Ho-so wilneth here to wyue,” quod he, “for welthe of here goodes,
But he be knowe for a cokewold, kut of my nose”
(C.IV.156-59)\(^434\)

A shyreues clerk cryede, “A! *capias* Mede
*Et saluo custodias set non cum carceratis.*”
(C.IV.164-65)

“[..] Or Lumbardus of Lukes that leuen by lone as Iewes.”
The kyng comaundede Conscience tho to congeye alle his offeceres
(C.IV.194-95)

With such a brief *corpus* to work from, any conclusions about the annotator’s intentions here are necessarily purely speculative. All four moments are important ones in the unfolding of the scene: Mede ingratiates herself to the authorities; an argument is made against her by Leutee (Loyalty); her arrest is ordered; the episode ends with the dismissal of the “offeceres.” In all three instances, too, the moments are ones of highly charged rhetoric, whether in colorful language (“he be knowe for a cokewold, kut of my nose”), in

\(^{434}\) The passage is abutted by a note “† maryage for goodis.”
the Latin formula of arrest,\textsuperscript{435} the command of king, or, in the case of the first passage, a gesture that speaks a thousand words. The purpose of the “\textsuperscript{435}” here seems to be, like in Cok, part capitulum mark and part \textit{nota bene}. But these annotator does not, however, seem to be using the mark as a mark of personal identification. Because he associates one of the marks with a textual note, we can identify the writer with some confidence as the annotator Y2, a hand datable to c. 1500.\textsuperscript{436} Y2 is one of the manuscript’s major annotators, and includes notes throughout the text, most of them not accompanied by a clef like this one, nor does he sign his annotations. The difference between Y2’s usage and Cok’s, therefore, is Cok’s close association of the mark with his signature, and also the consistency with which he uses the mark as a sign of his hand at work, either in connection with a textual note or alone.

Perhaps a more suggestive parallel would be the use of a distinctive and personal trefoil mark by Cok’s contemporary, John Capgrave, in the correction and preparation of manuscripts of his own works.\textsuperscript{437} The trefoil is distinctively his: it almost invariably accompanies his signature within the text, and it has been suggested it may be a stylized form of his initials \textit{JC}.\textsuperscript{438} He uses it sometimes as a mark of authorization or stamp of approval, “after revising or rubricating the text”: it is, that is, in this usage a mark

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{435} See Langland, \textit{Piers Plowman C-Text}, IV.164–165n. Pearsall observes that “set non cum carceratis” is without formulaic precedent, and may be Langland’s own ironic addition.
\item \textsuperscript{436} Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, “Professional Readers at Work: Annotators, Editors and Correctors in Middle English Literary Texts,” in Kerby-Fulton, Olson and Hilmo, \textit{Opening Up}, 224. Kerby-Fulton includes an image from Digby 102, f. 11v, where Y2’s clef is visible.
\item \textsuperscript{438} Ibid., 10. It was, however, sometimes copied by other scribes along with the rest of the manuscript, and cannot, therefore, act as positive proof of his hand at work.
\end{itemize}
intended for others involved in the production of the codex, and its distinctive appearance provides for these other book-producers a useful way of identifying those things “passed” by Capgrave himself. There is a tempting parallel between this use and Cok’s own employment of his clef mark (τ) in a manuscript (the cartulary) whose production he oversaw, but with the handiwork of others marking a prominent contribution. His use of a distinctive marker of identity could have the practical purpose of identifying his own authoritative marginal voice as worthier of attention than the voices of those he oversaw.

Capgrave employed the trefoil with an eye toward readers, as well, as “a kind of personal nota bene mark of emphasis (and possibly of approval) comparable in function with the pointing hand found in a variety of manuscripts.”

Peter Lucas, by examining the types of passages identified with the trefoil, suggests that these trefoils, far from being leftover markers of production of interest only to others in-house, were actually, in the case of Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4. 12, intended to be directed at the manuscript’s most important reader (certainly the manuscript’s “public,” if not its audience), its patron King Edward IV. The trefoils stand beside passages that might be deemed of particular interest to the king: moments when the life of a king (Henry IV) was threatened, “important events in early English history,” and, perhaps most daringly, moments when the authority of ecclesiastical officials is emphasized over that of the king, when “the clerical point of view [...] seems to be implicitly upheld in opposition to

439 Ibid., 20.
440 The manuscript contains a copy of Capgrave’s “‘Abbreuiacion of Cronicles,’ otherwise known as ‘The Chronicle of England’ (completed 1461-3), probably the presentation copy intended for King Edward IV” (ibid., 3).
441 I use these terms in the manner laid out by Middleton, “The Audience and Public of ‘Piers Plowman’.”
Capgrave is tailoring his manuscript to a particular reader, both as a bid for attention to passages of particular interest and, perhaps, as an attempt to influence royal policy. Capgrave does not leave his trefoil *only* at passages of direct and specific interest for Edward IV, however; his trefoils also sometimes mark points of more general importance and appeal. It should come as no surprise, given that the contents of Gg. 4. 12 are a chronicle, that marvels are a significant subcategory among the passages so highlighted. Lucas argues that these, too, “could also be directed towards Edward IV,” but the marvels – especially the last, when “in 1338 willows bore red roses in January” – seem equally explicable as points of general interest. Marvels, as demonstrated in Chapter 1, were standard points of interest for chronicle annotators. Capgrave here, at least, works well within a larger, less personal tradition of annotation. John Cok’s clef mark is perhaps most comparable with this last use.

In CCCC MS 80, Cok uses his own mark sometimes in conjunction with his signature, but invariably as a way of marking his own marginal contributions. It may carry for him some meaning like “here is a note,” but it additionally seems to have the effect – no doubt recognized by its maker – of setting these notes apart as notes, as separate from the text they mark, as products of a single annotator’s pen, and thus, by its occasional association with his signatures, as distinctly Cok’s own. That Cok uses this mark in Add. 10392, and only as a *nota bene*, never, as he did in CCCC MS 80, as the marker for the beginning of a note, seems to indicate, first, that he felt comfortable adapting the apparatus in front of him in a way that was personal to him. Further,

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443 Ibid., 23.
however, it also means either that his apparatus was fully adopted from his exemplar
(and, thus, he did not mark as his own alterations that do not exist) or his adaptation of
the apparatus was so complete that it did not require further marking of personal
separateness. Given his use of signatures within the rubrics, the second alternative is the
more likely. Total forbearance from adapting the layout would seemingly be somewhat
out of character.

Indeed, his mark is used periodically throughout a manuscript where he is known
to have acted as a compiler and organizer, the St. Bartholomew’s cartulary. The
distinctive clef-mark appears, for example, on f. 10v of the cartulary. He uses the mark
on that page three times, once by itself, and, in two other cases, in conjunction with a
square bracket. Critically, however, the ink he uses for all of these marks is red: the clef
is not an afterthought or a subtle feature intended to be overlooked by most readers. On
the contrary, it leaps from the page. He intends the clef as a sort of nota bene, employing
it as part of the formal presentation of his page, fully integrated into the manuscript from
its origins and by its “managing editor.” These passages so emphasized are fairly
mundane in nature, dealing with rents owed to St. Bartholomew’s for various named
properties. Many of them begin, however, with admonitions of either “nota” or
“notandus est.”

To return, then, to the earlier question of the responsibility for the compilation of
Add. 10392, Cok’s own compiling impulse seems very present, reinforced by his
personal mark. The question of Cok’s compilatorial role can be further illumined by a
close examination not just of the manuscript’s contents, but of its table of contents. The
first item in Add. 10392 just such a table, in Cok’s own hand and – one seems invited to
Characteristically, he *opens* with a signature: “Ista sunt Contente in libello isto scriptō/ a · ff. · Johanne · Cok.” The attribution refers specifically (*scripto*) to the book as a whole, as, comprehensively, the product of Cok’s pen. Yet the signature seems also naturally liable to interpretation as a signing the table of contents, too, part and parcel of Cok’s other signatures of other parts of his layout apparatus. At the close of this table of contents, we get another attribution to Cok, this time affording him real “authorship” of a text in the manuscript: “Item in fine libelli · bone & notables distinctiones | octo manum · scripte · per manus · ff. · Johannis Cok.” “Item: at the end of the little book, good and notable ‘distinctions’ [in this case, likely meaning something like ‘categorizing systems’]” of eight hands, written by the hands of brother John Cok.” Cok has already, at the opening of the table of contents, asserted that the entire *libellus* is in his hand. When he writes here that the “distinctiones [...] scripte per manus Johannis Cok,” it is likely that he means by this to claim that he has in fact designed the diagrams, drawing, perhaps, on other sources or traditions, but creating them in a way that must be independently attributed to his own hand and direction.

In addition to this partial quire of diagrams, the first quire of the manuscript reflects what may well be late additions to the manuscript. The first texts follow directly on from the table of contents, a table that clearly must have been compiled after the content of the rest of the manuscript was set. Nor are these texts, significantly, listed in the table. There, the opening text is named as a “Speculum Consciencie” in four books, a

\[444\] A transcription of this table is in Appendix B, pp. 453-55.

\[445\] *Distinctio* can also mean a decoration or ornament, and so there is an outside chance it here refers to the hands *qua* illustrations. The hands are not, however, primarily ornamental in their purpose: it is more likely that division, rather than decoration, is paramount.
description that refers to the first long text in the manuscript, beginning on f. 8r at the
beginning of quire 2, a text given the title "Tractatus de Interiori Domus seu de Conscientia
Aedificanda" by the Patrologia Latina.\textsuperscript{446} The preceding texts, all very short, seem to
have been added by Cok to fill out the first quire after his table of contents, in the
manuscript’s one major exception to the "whole book" method of construction. Their
late addition explains their exclusion from the table of contents, and the correspondence
of a quire division with the opening of the manuscript "proper" at f. 8r and the
"Speculum Consciencie" implies that this feature is native to Add. 10392 itself, not
inherited from an exemplar, where physical size of texts in terms of page space used
would presumably be different.

All of this means, first, that Cok felt free to include additional texts to fit his own
codicological needs, not bowing to the precedent of some hypothesized exemplar. This
has the further implication that the text choices made in the first quire must be his own
choice, if anything in the manuscript is, since they were chosen for his own immediate
codicological ends and too, one must assume, to further his specific thematic aims, in
whatever light he viewed his manuscript production. Finally, there is perhaps the most
important point of all: Cok apparently did not know, when he began the project, what the
contents of his manuscript were going to be. Had he an exemplar in front of him, he
could easily have paged through, determined the texts it contained, and then made a
contents list at the beginning of his first quire, from which the subsequent texts of the
manuscript would then follow directly. Not only is this lack of foreknowledge evidence
that Cok’s table is not copied from some earlier table, but it seems even to suggest that

\textsuperscript{446} See \textit{PL} 184:507-552
the full contents of the final volume were unknown to Cok when he began. He may have
produced the book as a unified whole in layout design and even in theme, but it seems to
have unfolded progressively over time, not as the copy of a finished example. The
greater weight of circumstantial evidence seems to support Cok’s role not just as the
scribe of Add. 10392, but as its compiler as well.

3.4 A Book of Auctors: Bernard, Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, Richard Rolle and Others

Armed with this knowledge, the next logical step seems to be to look at this
compilation as the product of Cok’s mind, to attempt to discern from it Cok’s project, and
from this, hopefully to gain some insight as to Cok’s own values and personality. The
first way to attack the question of the contents and the reasoning behind Cok’s choices is
the table of contents itself. Since this is in Cok’s own words, it is conceivable that it may
offer some clues about how he himself viewed the manuscript. On the basis of this table,
the description provided by the British Library’s manuscript catalogue seems fair: “S.
Bernardi, S. Augustini, Hugonis de Sancto Victore, aliorumque tractatus varii
theologici,” “various theological treatises by St. Bernard, St. Augustine, Hugh of St.
Victor and others.” It is in fact probable that the catalogue entry was influenced by
this table of contents: those authors listed by name are all cited by Cok in his table. As a
point of comparison, on f. 6r, Cok includes a text he titles “Ricardus hampole super
Cantica,” but, perhaps because this text is not listed in the table, Richard Rolle is not
named by the catalogue entry.

447 List of Additions to the Manuscripts in the British Museum in the Years 1836-1840, 34.
From the view of the table of contents, named authorship indeed seems to be one of the major organizing principles of the manuscript. The first text is unattributed here, but is labeled on f. 8r “Speculum Conscienci Sancti Bernardi.” This is followed by two more texts Cok attributes to Bernard of Clairvaux, then one text attributed to Hugh of St. Victor (“hugo”), and two more to Bernard. Three texts are attributed to Augustine, then one is anonymous, both for Cok and for us. Item “xj” Cok credits to Origen, and then item “xij” is necessarily without attribution, comprising as it does a diverse collection of anonymous material. The manuscript ends, however, with three more texts attributed by Cok to Augustine and then the final item whose only reference to author is “per manus · ff · Johannis Cok.” Not only is an author mentioned for the majority of these texts, but the authors are from a fairly limited list – primarily Bernard and Augustine, with one text by Hugh of St. Victor and one by Origen – and they are grouped together, so that the manuscript opens with Bernard before turning to Augustine. The natural assumption is that Cok viewed this manuscript as an authored collection, with texts drawn from the two authorities Bernard and Augustine, interspersed with smaller texts – some listed in the table and some not – largely anonymous, but, perhaps, thematically related in some other way. Authors are very important to the vision of the manuscript constructed in the table of contents, and Cok must have similarly been influenced by author as a major principle, not only in organizing but in choosing the texts, or they would not fall so neatly into the two major categories of Bernard and Augustine. That these authors did not in fact compose many of the texts that bear their name in Add. 10392 is an interesting wrinkle. The manuscript does not, by virtue of these texts’ brevity and relative obscurity,
constitute a “greatest hits” of Bernard and Augustine. But still, Cok clearly believed in their authorship, and chose the texts at least in part for that reason.

How well, however, does this view of the manuscript’s construction hold up when the manuscripts real contents are considered, not just the contents Cok claims for his manuscript? To what degree is Cok’s table, that is, a fair representation of Add. 10392’s real contents? In some ways, the table is excellent. It includes every major text in the manuscript, and even some of the minor ones. Texts that are omitted tend to be very short, no more than a few folios long and often much shorter. They frequently are very miscellaneous in nature, difficult to catalogue exhaustively and often without any obvious title or author such as would make a listing in a list of contents practical or meaningful. After the unlisted short texts of the first quire, the first four major treatises of the manuscript correspond well with the announced contents (items i-iiiij). Then, on f. 68r, a text appears that is unlisted in the contents, despite its association with a known author, Henry Cossey. Cossey (also spelled Costesey or Costessey), was a Cambridge Franciscan active in the 1330s. His works sometimes appear in sermon collections, and he composed a commentary on the Psalms and another on the Apocalypse, the latter heavily influenced by Joachim of Fiore’s *Super Apocalypsim.*448 The excerpt carried in Add. 10392, however, is very short – only a page long – and perhaps because it is neither by Bernard or Augustine, Cok does not trouble himself to highlight it in his contents table. The contrast is obvious between his treatment of this text and that of items v and vj on his lists, where texts he attributes to Bernard are included among a variety of short

texts, comprising in all a total of two and a half folios (five pages). These texts with Bernardian attribution earn not one but two separate items in his table, presumably based entirely on their known and privileged authorship, or, at least, association. Similarly, item viij excerpts two works by Augustine for special notice among a number of other short texts. The close correspondence between Cok’s table and the manuscript’s real contents begins to falter a bit after item xj, the homily on the Magdalene by Origen. Here an anonymous two-folio text is followed by a long section of extremely various texts, or, as Cok himself put it, “quedam Meditaciones devoute · & Oraciones,” “certain devout meditations and prayers.” Then follow two more treatises faithfully reported, an excerpt from Augustine’s *De Ordine Libri Duo* (interestingly, anonymous in this manuscript, whether because of its short length or because Cok was unaware of the attribution) and a final Augustinian treatise. Finally, the last two quires of the manuscript are not specifically enumerated in the table, and only their most conspicuous element is featured, Cok’s drawings of mnemonic hands.

### 3.5 Virtue and Vice

The initial assessment, therefore, seems necessarily to be that the table of contents indeed fairly accurately represents the manuscripts contents, with major exceptions at the beginning, end and other points in the manuscript where there are large numbers of very short texts, unwieldy to comprehensively enumerate. So too does Cok’s practice in which texts he *does* choose to list seem to bolster the impression of authorial attribution as a major organizational principle in Cok’s presentation of the manuscript. And this does seem to be at least part of the story. Yet, if this is the *only* determining factor in his
choice of text, or in his vision for the project, why then does Cok choose to include so many of the short texts which form such a significant part of the manuscript? The simplest answer would be to dismiss these texts as haphazard, impulsive and opportunistic additions to a manuscript that Cok envisioned as principally intended for another purpose. I argue, however, that these texts are on the contrary extremely important to the thematic construction of the manuscript, which has a purpose beyond the mere accumulation of texts by Bernard and Augustine, a purpose toward which these texts too are directed and to which their authorial attribution is secondary. Add. 10392 is not just an accumulation of “tractatus varii theologici.” It is a practical handbook on vices and their corresponding virtues, on the appropriate classification of these traits and, once one’s individual vices have been identified, on the appropriate method of atonement, for the achievement of a specific spiritual benefit.

The first indication of this thematic preoccupation is in the contents themselves, albeit not always in the way that they are described in Cok’s table. Texts include a Tractatus ... de Conscientia Aedificanda (describing the makeup of the human conscience, how to maintain a clear conscience, and the vices that pose a threat to that conscience), a Speculum Peccatoris (on the nature of sinners and their sins), a Soliloquiorum de Instructione Animae Libri Duo (on self-examination and temptation), an excerpt of the De Contritione Cordis (specifically a section begging Christ’s mercy in

\[449\] The first chapter begins with “Secretis interrogationibus propulsabo animam meam et de suis eam occultis conveniam; ut ignorantem instruam, nutantem stabiliam, confirmem stantem, lapsam erigam et erroneam ad viam veritatis reducam.” “By inner questioning I will drive back my soul and will address it regarding its secrets; so that I might instruct its ignorance, steady its wavering, make firm its upright stance, raise it up from its fallen state and lead it back from error to the path of truth” (PL 198:843).
forgiving sin and lamenting the humble sorrow of a guilty conscience), an excerpt from *De Ordine Libri Duo* specifically addressing the temptations of the flesh and the necessity for a young man to study with the end of rising above them, and a *Liber de Vitiorum Virtutumque Conflictu* (a dialogue in which vices are refuted by their corresponding virtues). To these items it is possible to add certain texts that, while not necessarily centered on this theme, are nevertheless presented by Cok in this light. The *Liber Sententiarum* that begins on f. 159v covers a wide variety of topics, each treated in a short “sentence.” But Cok does not introduce the text in this way, choosing instead to give it the title of the first sentence: “De Vera Innocencia.” A diffuse text covering a spectrum of ethical topics is presented as a treatise on a single virtue. In a similar vein is “De Paciencia,” the first text in the manuscript, and among those Cok added late, filling out the first quire. Likewise the text he labels “in fine super Job” no doubt springs from this same impulse to explore virtuous patience in the face of suffering. A “Remedia Contra Omnia Vicia” rounds out the quire.

Recognizing this thematic strain in Cok’s choice of texts – somewhat capacious and shifting, but still recognizable – can also help to identify the rationale behind some of the other short texts, which may initially seem to be outliers. The Latin poem beginning on f. 173r is headed by Cok “versus ad omnem genus hominum,” “verses on every kind

450 This text has been traditionally, but dubiously, attributed to Augustine; Cok himself offers no attribution, but a belief in Augustine’s authorship may help to explain its presence, if any further explanation is necessary beyond the aptness of its subject matter (*PL* 40:943ff.).

451 “Innocentia uera est, quae nec sibi, nec alteri nocet, quoniam qui diligit iniquitatem, odit animam suam. Et nemo non prius in se quam in alterum peccat,” “True innocence is that which harms neither oneself nor another, since ‘he who loves iniquity hates his own soul.’ A person sins against himself as soon as he sins against another” (Prosper Aquitanus, “Liber Sententiarum,” in *Opera*, ed. M. Gastaldo, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 68A/2 [Turnhout: Brepols, 1972], 257).
of men.” The poem, as it appears in another manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, Ee.vi.29), is reproduced by Thomas Wright and Edmund Goldsmid among The Political Songs of England. This seems a wildly unlikely addition among the theological treatises, in a manuscript otherwise entirely religious in nature. A closer look at the poem reveals the line its subject matter walks:

† Ecce dolet anglia luctibus imbuta ·
Gens tremit tristicia sordibus polluta ·
Necat pestilencia viros atque bruta ·
Cur · quia flagicia regnant resoluta ·
† Heu iam totus uertitur mundus in malignum ·
Inter gentes queritur ubi cor benignum ·
Christus non recolitur mortua per lignum ·
Ergo plebs perimitur in vindicte signum ·
† Pax & paciencia penitus orbantur ·
Amor & iusticia domi non morantur ·
Errores & vicia gentes amplexantur ·
Pattrem per malicia permili necantur ·
† Pastorum pigricia greges dispersuntur ·
Insontes astucia mercantum falluntur ·
ffraus & auaricia sorores iunguntur ·
Diuitum nequicia pauperes plectuntur ·  (f. 173ra)

† Behold: England mourns, flooded with tears;
The gens trembles, its sorrow polluted by sins;
Pestilence kills men and beasts.
Why? Because unbridled scandals reign.
† Alas!, now the whole world is turned to evil.
A kind heart is sought out among the nations.
Christ, dead by the tree, is not worshipped.
People are therefore killed in a sign of vengeance.
† Peace and patience are thoroughly bereaved,
Love and justice do not remain at home.
The gentes embrace errors and vices,
They kill the Father by a thousand wickednesses.
¶ By the indolence of the shepherds the herds are dispersed.
Guiltless, they are deceived by the cunning of merchants.
Fraud and avarice are joined as sisters,
The poor are buffeted by the wickedness of the rich. 454

The poem continues on in this vein, too lengthy to quote in its entirety here. Even from this short passage, however, it is obvious that, while the poem deals with them on the scale of a full society rather than within the conscience of the individual, the same themes of sin, vice and virtue are all at issue. Society’s ills are explicitly termed “sins,” and connected with a turning away from Christ, the direct offense they cause to the Father, and the resulting suffering of divine retribution. In addition to general terms for iniquity (evil, scandal, error, vice, wickedness) some sins are listed specifically (indolence, cunning, fraud, avarice) and contrasted with absent virtues (peace, patience, love, justice). This familiar terminology of vice and virtue situates the poem as very much at home within its larger manuscript context. The poem is “political” after the model of Gildas’s De Excidio Britanniæ, although its narrative of the national disasters occasioned by sin is leavened at the end by an appeal on God’s mercy: “Nobis tua bonitas conterat solamen,” “may your goodness grant us solace” (f. 173v). The theme of the poem is the condemnation of sins and the absence of virtues and the divine punishment that this iniquity incurs, but also of the potential for redemption through divine compassion and, one must imagine, the repentance of sinners, both on the level of the individual and of the gens as a whole.

454 English translation is my own.
The poem is followed on f. 173v by two more extremely short texts. The first is another poem, fashioned as a list of paradoxes:

Nil valet ille locus \(\uparrow\) vbi nil patet humilitatis ·
Nil valet ille locus \(\uparrow\) ubi nil est societatis ·
Nil valet ille labor \(\uparrow\) quem nil premia secuntur ·
Nil valet eius amor \(\uparrow\) per quem sua diminuuntur ·
Nil valet dubium \(\uparrow\) quod premia nulla merentur ·
Nil valet ille decor \(\uparrow\) vbi nil probitatis habetur ·

That place is worth nothing, where nothing of humility is evident.
That place is worth nothing, where nothing of fellowship is present.
That labor is worth nothing, which is followed by no rewards.
His love is worth nothing, through which he himself is diminished.
The doubt is worth nothing, which earns no rewards.
That beauty is worth nothing, where nothing of honesty is held.\(^{455}\)

Once again, the poem continues on in much the same style. Once again, there is a clear investment in exploring a system of morals and ethics, perhaps best encapsulated here in the contrast of \(\textit{decor} \) and \(\textit{probitas} \), of, that is, the appearance of virtue and its reality. The contrasts at issue in the poem are not the simple binary of virtue and vice, but are still very much engaged in the exploration of the nature of virtue – and, likewise, the nature of vice. \(\textit{Labor} \) and \(\textit{amor} \) may appear to be positive qualities or good ends, at least where \(\textit{amor} \) is understood as \(\textit{caritas} \) rather than \(\textit{luxuria} \). Yet this poem examines the nature of \(\textit{amor} \) more closely, defining its light and dark aspect not in terms of a Christian terminology, but by the standard of a pernicious effect.

Virtues and vices form, therefore, one of the driving motivations for Cok in selecting his texts. He begins (excluding the first quire, added later) by consulting the

\(^{455}\) English translation is my own.
great religious authorities like Bernard and Augustine. He does not confine himself to these authors, however, but makes of the manuscript an eclectic collection from a variety of sources, including ones, like these Latin poems, more political or proverbial in their impulse. Poetry like this is deployed by Cok toward the same ends as the religious authorities he likewise excerpts, and nothing suggests that he viewed these texts as demanding a reading different or more guarded than that to be accorded to Augustine.

3.6 A Quiet Heresy: Wyclif in Jerome’s Clothing

Further down the same page as the poem on the worthlessness of empty virtue, falls a passage that speaks directly to it, even as it problematically conceals its own source. The passage presents some serious challenges in identification and in its implications for Cok’s theology and relationship with the patristic tradition. Cok writes, apparently in his own voice:

¶ Jtem Jeronymus in quadam epistol[a] ad clericos · Oportet nus clericos inquit clericatus honore non abuti · sed diligenti mandatorum · custodia hoc esse · quod esse videmur · Omnia inquit signa clericorum virtutes · in nobis esse representant · virtutes clausa · mant · clamat corona paupertatem · clamat uestis anime honestatem · clamat status puritatem · clamat cultus castitatem · clamat professio · religionem · clamat officium deuo · cionem · clamat studium contemplacionem · Et ideo nisi istis uirotibus pollemus · mentitur corona · mentitur habitus · mentitur status · mentitur cultus · mentitur professio · mentitur officium · mentitur ipsum studium · ac per hoc · non sumus nisi clerici ficti · & clerici mentiti · hec ille /

Likewise, Jerome [said] in a certain letter directed to clerics: “It behooves us clerics,” he said, “not to abuse the honor of the clerical office, but to be what we seem to be, by the diligent keeping of our mandates. All the outward signs belonging to clerics,” he said, “represent the virtues that are present in us. They proclaim the virtues: our coronal tonsure (corona) proclaims
poverty, our robe proclaims honesty of the soul, our estate proclaims purity, our veneration proclaims chastity, our profession proclaims conscientiousness, our recitation of the office proclaims devotion, our study proclaims contemplation. And therefore, unless we are strong in these virtues, the corona lies, the habit lies, the estate lies, the veneration lies, the profession lies, the recitation of the office lies and even study itself lies. And by this we are nothing if not pretended clerics and feigned clerics.”

The passage appears at first blush unremarkable, yet another passage drawn from an impeachable source, this time the patristic auctor Jerome. Despite Cok’s citation of source, however, Jerome has in fact written no Epistola ad Clericos.

Still, at least part of this passage can be found among Jerome’s opera. In his letter 51, “Epistula Epiphani Cyprii missa ad Iohannem episcopum a sancto Hieronymo translata,” Jerome does not write himself, but translates a letter written to John, the bishop of Jerusalem, by “Epiphanius the Cyprian,” that is, a contemporary of Jerome’s named Epiphanius of Salamis, bishop of the principal episcopal see (metropolis) of Cyprus. Epiphanius has, in John’s view, exceeded his authority by ordaining a priest to serve at a monastery that John believed to be within his own jurisdiction, and Epiphanus wrote, in Greek, in explanation of his actions. The letter was, by Jerome’s testimony, very popular “uel ob auctoris meritum uel ob elegantiam scriptionis,” “either on account of the merit of the author or on account of the elegance of the writing” 456, and one of Jerome’s colleagues requested that he translate it into Latin. Jerome obliged, and the opening lines of the letter, in his Latin translation, read as follows:

Oportebat nos, dilectissime, clericatus honore non abuti in superbia, sed custodia mandatorum Dei et obseruatione diligentissima hoc esse quod dicimur. Si enim sancta scriptura loquitur: «cleri eorum non proderunt eis», quae adrogantia clericatus conducere nobis poterit, qui non solum cogitatione et sensu, uerum et sermone peccamus – audiui quippe quod tumeas contra nos, et irascaris et miniteris scribere in extremos fines terrae, ut loca prouinciasque non nominem – ?

It behooved us, most beloved [friend], not to abuse the honor of the clerical office for pride, but, by the keeping of God’s mandates and by the most diligent attention, to be that which we are called. For if holy scripture says: “their cleri will not profit them,” what arrogance of the clerical office would it be possible for us to borrow, who sin not only by thinking and by feeling, but even in speech – doubtless I have heard that you bluster against us, and become angry and threaten to write into the furthest ends of the earth, to the degree that I might not name the places and provinces – ?

Epiphanius here quotes the Septuagint, Jeremiah 12:13, “σπείρατε πυρο/uni1F7Aς κα/uni1F76 κάνθας θερίσατε· οί κλ/uni1FC6ροι αὐτῶν οὐκ ὑφελήσουσιν αὐτούς,” “sow wheat and reap thistles; their κλ/uni1FC6ροι will not benefit them.” Here in its original context, the Greek κλ/uni1FC6ροι, translated directly by Jerome with its cognate cleri, must mean “allotments of land,” the word’s root meaning. Only later does the word acquire a secondary meaning within a Christian context, of “clergy.” In Jeremiah, then, the meaning is straightforward: the land will not benefit the sinners, since it will yield only thistles. Epiphanius, however, clearly intends κλ/uni1FC6ροι to be read as “clergy.” Any airs a cleric might adopt as a result of his position are vain, as the “clergy” are, if sinful, barren. No particular pride rests in the

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office itself. In his introductory sentence, then, it behooves the prudent cleric, mindful of this scriptural admonition, to shun a false pride in his position, but to adhere diligently to the mandates (mandata) God has set out for the clergy, and by so doing to maintain a congruence between his inner virtue and his title as cleric.

While the letter is not by Jerome, but merely translated by him, it would perhaps be too pedantic to insist on the distinction. The first sentence of Cok’s passage, then, is indeed, perhaps justifiably cited as “Jeronymus in quodam epistola.” Cok also includes, in slightly paraphrased form, the second clause, “sed custodia mandatorum Dei et observatone diligentissima hoc esse quod dicimur.” The ultimate source of at least this much of the passage is clear, and has been presented by Cok fairly accurately. However, the letter critically does include the remainder of the passage, which Cok marks by his repetition of inquit (“he said”) as part of the quotation. Where, therefore is Cok drawing this material? Not, evidently, from the original source of the “Oportet nus...” in Jerome.

The answer can be found in an unexpected source, the De Civili Dominio of John Wyclif. Wyclif writes:

Ritus siquidem clericorum, sicut ritus phariseorum fuerant devote inducti, quod si generacio adultera signa quesierit et non fructum, folia infatuant undique christianos. Quod notat Jeronimus in Epistola ad Pamachium: Sed, inquit, nos clericatus honore non abuti, sed diligenti custodia mandatorum hoc esse quod esse videmur. Omnia enim insignia clericorum virtutes in nobis representant, virtutes pollicentur, virtutem clamant; clamat corona paupertatem, clamat vestis animi honestatem, clamat status puritatem, clamat cultus castitatem, clamat professio religionem, clamat officium devocionem, clamat studium contemplacionem; et ideo nisi virtutibus polleamus tota vita nostra mendacium est et ymago deformis, quia nisi virtutibus polleamus, mentitur caput, mentitur habitus, mentitur status, mentitur cultus, mentitur professio, mentitur officium et mentitur ipsum studium, ac per hoc non sumus nisi clericus fictus et clericus mentitus; et licet scribitur quod omnis homo mendax, non tamen scribitur quod omnis homo
mendacium. Seculares namque homines mendaces sunt, quia mendacium dicunt, sed mendacium non sunt, quia non vivendo difformiter suo habitu contradicunt. Si ergo Deus perdet omnes qui locuntur mendacium, quomodo putas perdet eos qui sunt ipsum mendacium?  

In that the rites of clerics, like the rites of the Pharisees, had been introduced faithfully, but if an impure generation has striven for the signs and not the fruit, leaves are everywhere making fools of Christians. Which Jerome observes in his Epistula ad Pammachium: “But,” he said, “we do not abuse the honor of the clerical office, but are what we seem to be, by the diligent keeping of our mandates.” For all the outward signs belonging to clerics represent virtues in us, promise virtues, [and] proclaim virtues; our coronal tonsure (corona) proclaims poverty, our robe proclaims honesty of spirit, our estate proclaims purity, our veneration proclaims chastity, our profession proclaims conscientiousness, our reciting of the office proclaims devotion, our study proclaims contemplation; and therefore unless we possess virtues in abundance, the whole of our life is a lie and a shameful image, because unless we possess virtues in abundance, the head lies, the habit lies, the estate lies, the veneration lies, the profession lies, the recitation of the office lies and even study itself lies, and by this we are nothing if not a pretended cleric and a feigned cleric; and although it is written that every man is a liar, nevertheless it is not written that every man is a lie. For laymen are liars, because they speak a lie, but are not a lie, because they, by their living, do not belie their own dress. If therefore God destroys all those who speak a lie, how do you think he destroys those who are the lie itself?

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460 Wyclif here invokes the distinction between the outward sign of the folia (“leaves”) and the promised inner reality of the fructus (“fruit”), in an image perhaps drawn from Matt. 21:19 (“et videns ficiarborem unam secus viam venit ad eam et nihil invenit in ea nisi folia tantum,” Douay-Rheims translation “And seeing a certain fig tree by the way side, [Christ] came to it, and found nothing on it but leaves only”) and Mark 11:13 (“cunque vidisset a longe ficum habentem folia venit si quid forte inveniret in ea et cum venisset ad eam nihil invenit praeter folia,” Douay-Rheims translation “And when [Christ] had seen afar off a fig tree having leaves, he came if perhaps he might find any thing on it. And when he was come to it, he found nothing but leaves.”). Similarly resting behind Wyclif’s language here must be the distinction, drawn by Augustine in the De Doctrina Christiana, between the sign (signum) and the reality it signifies (res), as well as that between the things to be enjoyed for their own sake (frui) and those to be used (uti) in order to achieve enjoyment of some superior end, with God as the one true and appropriate fructus. I thank Lesley-Anne Dyer for her invaluable help in alerting me to the complexities of Wyclif’s allusion here, as well as for her guidance throughout this passage. Any persistent ambiguity or obtuseness in the translation is, however, my own.
While Wyclif claims to take his quotation from Jerome from an “Epistula ad Pammachium,” in fact he must draw it not from letter 57, but from its original source in letter 51. Letter 51 includes the clause “sed custodia mandatorum Dei et observatone diligentissima hoc esse quod dicimur” “but, by the keeping of God’s mandates and by the most diligent attention, [it behooved us] to be that which we are called,” a quotation not included along with the “Oportebat nos...” when Jerome revisits his translation in the later letter. Wyclif’s inclusion of this clause therefore tags the true source for his quotation: “sed diligenti custodia mandatorum hoc esse quod esse videmur,” “but [we] are what we seem to be, by the diligent keeping of our mandates.” Wyclif has rephrased, but the sense and even the wording is still manifestly rooted in Jerome. More important, however, than quibbles over Wyclif’s own phrasing or precise source within Jerome’s letters, is the obvious descent of Cok’s paragraph quotation not, as he seems to claim, from Jerome, but from this passage in Wyclif. He follows Wyclif’s change from “quod dicimur” to “quod esse videmur” in the quotation from Jerome. Even more tellingly, the entire clamare passage, enumerating the various attributes and appurtenances of the cleric, along with the inner virtues they are intended to symbolize, is Wyclif’s, applying the “Oportebat nos...” quotation to a new context that neither Jerome nor Epiphanius would recognize.

461 See Jerome, “Ad Pammachium.” It indeed includes the sentence “Oportet nus...,,” but merely as an excerpted quotation from the earlier letter, part of a discussion of translation theory. Jerome had been challenged by some (in his view, hyperliteral) critics on his translation of this letter, and wrote the “Ad Pammachium” in defense of his practice.

462 Cok’s use of the introductory “Oportet” seems to indicate a manuscript tradition within Wyclif that maintained this portion of Jerome’s sentence as well, unlike the indirect statement construction favored by Loserth.; Wyclif, De Civili Dominio Liber Tertius, 4:494.
The inclusion of this additional material is far from beside the point, however. It is doubtlessly this portion of the passage, with its focus on clerical virtue and breakdown of the virtues important and emblematic in a cleric, that drew Cok’s eye in the first place. It is impossible to know where Cok found the passage – or whether he knew Wyclif to be its author, since he seems to believe (or to wish to lead his audience to believe) that the attribution to Jerome includes not just the “Oportet nos...” quotation, but the *clamare* section that follows. It seems clear, however, that what must attract Cok to the passage is not the whiff of anticlericalism in the image of the “pretended cleric” – the cleric who, as Wyclif goes on to say, does not merely speak lies, but is in fact *himself* a lie – but rather the list of *paupertas, honestas, puritas, castitas, religio, deuocio* and *contemplacio*, and the outward symbols that proclaim these the particular virtues appropriate to a cleric. The symbolism of tonsure, habit, posture and the rest stands as a physical reminder to the cleric of the specified virtues he should maintain within, and the mnemonic serves to prevent a falling-off from these virtues through ignorance or inattention.

Still, the larger Wycliffite context for the passage renders it problematic, especially as it wears the disguise of a more sedate Jerome. Wyclif and his teachings were repeatedly condemned after his death, were heavily implicated in the revolt of Sir John Oldcastle in 1413-1414, and were denounced at the Council of Constance in 1415. In 1428, Wyclif’s body was exhumed and burned for heresy. The writing of Add. 10392 is only four years after that date, at a time, therefore, when the espousal of Wycliffite positions would have been no light thing. If Cok knew of the Wycliffite

source, then his quotation of the passage here, disguised as Jerome, is a loaded one, even
if the passage has been rendered more palatable to a clerical audience. If (as is perhaps
more likely) Cok did not know of the true origin of the passage, still that suggests that his
compilatorial drive is more encyclopedic than careful. He has gathered together texts
from a number of sources of widely varying auctoritas and even orthodoxy. Yet the
problematic passages stand silently beside the authorized ones, forging a taxonomy of
virtue and vice that owes more to an impulse for presenting all the available material
bearing on the issue, than it does to a need to weed the authorized from the (potentially)
heretical. Cok somehow has access to a passage lamenting an empty appearance of
virtue on the part of the clergy, and so appends it as an appropriate handmaiden to a Latin
poem about empty virtues.

3.7 The Practical Handbook

The Wycliffite passage and the two Latin poems all seem very much of a piece
with many of the shorter texts that Cok introduces into the manuscript. They form not
just a small series on sin, virtue and vice – with, always, an interest both in close
examination of the precise nature of fault, and in contrition for fault as an avenue toward
atonement or absolution – but part of a larger pattern woven across the manuscript, in the
small texts that Cok has chosen. In many ways, these smaller texts seem even more
obviously thematically unified than do the larger treatises. They provide, furthermore, a
more clear model for the use of the manuscript. Cok does not merely gather together
texts on a single theme. Rather, he has created a very practical guide for a penitent
sinner, to understand the nature of virtue and vice and then apply that knowledge in his spiritual life through prayer and meditation.

A significant feature of the opening of the manuscript is the collection of classifying tables, listing various categories. So, on f. 2v appears “Septem sacramenta cum efficibus eorum,” “the seven sacraments together with their effects.” The most prominent topic for these categories, however, and one that recurs again and again in tables that both compliment and sometimes even subtly contradict one another, is that of virtues, vices, and the creation of taxonomies for their better classification. Examples include “Septem vicia per hec curantur,” “the seven vices are cured by these things” (f. 2v), “vicia comparantur · tur · vij · bestij · propter eorum · proprietates,” “the vices are compared to seven beasts on account of their properties (f. 3r), “Temperancia,” “Temperancies” (f. 3r), and “Gaudium intra,” “inner joy” (f. 3v). These lists seem to come from a variety of sources, and have clearly not been made over to enforce a single, unified taxonomy – one of the septicem vicia appears as cupiditas in one list (f. 1v)

464 “Baptismus · mundat intrantes · | Confirmacio · Roborat pugnantes ·” etc., “Baptism washes those entering [the faith] / Confirmation strengthens those fighting [in the faith]....”

465 “Superbia per humilitatem · | Jnuidia · per caritatem · | Jra · per paciencianm · | Accida per amorem & sollicitudinem · | Cupiditas · per paupertatem spiritualem · | Gula · per sobrietatem · | luxuria · per castitatem” “Pride through humility / Envy through charity / Wrath through patience / Sloth through love and concern / Greed through spiritual poverty / Gluttony through sobriety / lust through chastity”

466 Cok attributes this list to Aquinas: “Superbia · leonj · | Jnuidia · Canj · | Jra · lupo · | Accidia · asino · | Auaricia · hericio · | Gula · Vrsuo · | luxuria · Porco ·” “Pride [is compared] to the lion / Envy to the dog / Wrath to the wolf / Sloth to the ass / Avarice to the hedgehog / Gluttony to the bear / lust to the pig.”

467 “1 Modestia · 2 Abstimencia · 13 verecundia · 4 Castitas · 15 honestas · 6 Moderacio · 17 Paritas · 8 Sobrietas · 9 Pudicicia,” “1 Modesty, 2 Abstinence, 3 Reserve, 4 Purity, 5 Honesty, 6 Moderation, 7 Equitability, 8 Sobriety, 9 Chastity”

468 “Judicium · | Dominium · | Vnitas · | Incupor · | tibilitas · | Claritas · | Subtilitas · | Agilitas,” “Judgment, Lordship, Unity, Incorruptibility, Perspicuity, Subtlety, Quickness.”
and *avaricia* in another (f. 3r); the meaning is essentially the same, but the terminology is unstandardized. The lists do not, that is, create a single consistent system for understanding vice or virtue, but instead present a collection of taxonomies, sometimes complementary and sometimes apparently rivaling one another. The lists are created in table form, neat rows and columns making a highly organized impression of straightforward simplicity. They are often numbered in groupings of seven, nine or ten.

A longer text “de decem plagie & preceptis,” “on the ten plagues and commandments” (f. 90rff.) seems to partake of the same *esprit*. It joins each of the ten plagues of Israel (carefully numbered in the margin, one to ten) with one of the ten commandments as a point of theologically productive comparison. In all of these texts, the lasting impression is one of an interest in simplifying *schemata*, in terminology, and above all in the close examination and study of the nature of vice and virtue through the mechanism of categories.

Cok revisited the table format at the end of the manuscript, as well, with even more lists of virtues and sins, and with one text in particular that seems to bring this recurring theme to its greatest state of development. On f. 174r, following directly on the quote from Jerome discussed above, an even more lengthy table of sins appears, stretching over four and a half folios:

*O Mne peccatum opponitur*

*alicui uirtuti theologice id est uel fidei · uel spei · uel carita ti · uel pluribus simul · uel & omnibus simul · ¶ Inquiratur ergo penitens in primis circa fidem · (f. 174r)*

Every sin is theologically opposed to some theological virtue, that is to faith, or to hope, or to charity, or likewise to more, or also likewise to all. Therefore let the penitent first be investigated regarding faith...
What follows is a guide for the better understanding of individual sins, as sins against particular virtues, specifically the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. One must sin against this virtues individually or against two of them at once, or against all three collectively. In any case, however, the key is that this represents a full systemization, bringing together both sin and virtue in a single *schema* and using the system to better understand the nature of the sins involved. So too, what follows is not a treatise, but a true table, where Cok has employed a complicated table layout to create a sense of firm and logical categories, of a taxonomy straightforwardly applied and symmetric in its description of human behaviors. As in his introduction, Cok continues to use underlining to draw out the successive categories:

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### Peccat contra fidem

*Male senciens de fide* · uel contradicens

*scripture sancte* · uel *sanctis* · uel ecclesie catholice ·

*Omnis excommunicatus* ad *minus* maiori *excommuni* /

cacione *scilicet* ille que separat a deo & ab ecclesia

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### Est alia Excommunicacio

*minor* † que separat a deo

tantum · ut omne mor /

tale *peccatum* ·

*Maior* † que separat

*sacrimentis* & *ingressum ecclesie* ·

*Maxima* † que separat

ab *omni communione ecclesie* ·

et *fidelium* ·

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### He sins against faith

The one understanding poorly about faith: either contradicting holy scripture or the saints or the Catholic church

*Every excommunicate*: at least, by a greater excommunication, namely that which separates from God and from the church

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### One Excommunication is

less: that which separates from God, as much as [does] every mortal sin
Grammatically, the table consists of full periods, with each of the subordinating options acting to complete the syntactic construction opened by the governing line. The “Male sanciens de fide” sins against faith, just as “Omnis excommunicatus” also so sins. “Alia Excommunicacio,” “one variety of excommunication” is the minor excommunicatio, “Alia Excommunicacio,” “another variety of excommunication” is the major ex communicatio, and the third is the maxima. This careful is entirely directed toward the better understanding of the nature of the sin contra fidem, as distinct, that is, from sins contra spem or contra caritatem, or likewise against some combination of the three. By understanding the nature of each of these individual sins, it is possible for a person to understand his own transgression, and for sins perhaps less severe than the ones invoked here as meriting excommunication, it holds out the promise for future avoidance of these pitfalls. Knowledge is power, and the careful reader of such a chart will find himself forearmed against lapses in virtue along the lines here detailed.

The key to understanding the role of virtues and vices in the manuscript is, however, perhaps in understanding the section from ff. 110r to 132r. This portion of the manuscript seems at first somewhat mysterious, belonging more to a psalter or book of hours than to a collection of treatises such as those that dominate the rest of the codex. The common factor in these texts seems to be Marian devotion, an appeal to Mary as

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469 If the collection of prayers “secundum ordinem psalterij” is understood as a fundamental part of this subdivision, the section continues through f. 141v.
intercessor, an addressee appropriate to the contrite sinner in search of merciful absolution.

This explanation for the prayer book subdivision in the manuscript is perhaps best articulated by Cok himself. At the bottom f. 132r appears a paragraph that, while unassuming in its content, nevertheless is emphasis awarded by Cok a presentation perhaps more emphatic than that afforded any other text in the manuscript. He highlights the text with red ink and encloses the entire paragraph with a square bracket in the right margin. A “Nota bene .” in the right margin adds an additional marker of emphasis, one repeated in the “Nota bene” with which the text itself begins: the paragraph seems to be not so much a “text” proper, as it is an extended note by Cok himself, introducing a subsequent section of the manuscript, designed around the psalter:

Nota bene de psalterio | beate marie virginis / \| Si quis dicit quotidie psalterium beate marie virginis habebit quolibet die | xxiij annos · xxxij · septimanas · & · iij · dies indulgencie · Jn septimana vno · C · lxij · annos · xij · septimanas · & · vj · dies indulgencie · Jn anno vno · viij · l · milia · ix · C · xiiij · annos · xliij · septimanas · & · iij · dies · indulgencie · Creditur quod nullus erit dampnatus qui cotidie dicit psalterium beate marie virginis · Bernardus | super salutatione angelica dixit · Celum ridet · angeli letantur · terra gaudet · infernus tre · mescit · demones effugiant · cum dicitur Aue maria · vnde Vurbanus quartus · l · concessit vniuerso seculo omnibus uere confessis & contritis de peccatis suis quotienscumque | & qucumque in fine salutationis beate marie ihesum · nominauerit · lx’a/ · dies indulgencie de iniuncta poenitencia sibi relaxantur ·

Note well regarding the psalter of the blessed virgin Mary. ¶ If anyone recites the psalter of the blessed virgin Mary every day, he will have, for a given day, 24 years, 33 weeks and 3 days of indulgence. In one week, [he will have] 162 years, 12 weeks and 6 days of indulgence. In one year, [he will have] 8 thousand 9
hundred 13 years, 43 weeks and 3 days of indulgence. It is believed that no one will be damned who says the psalter of the blessed virgin Mary every day. Bernard, [writing] on the Angelic Salutation, said Heaven laughs, the angels are happy, the earth rejoices, hell trembles, demons flee when Ave Maria is spoken. Wherefore Urban IV has yielded to all those in every age who, having confessed and being penitent about their sins, however often and whatever they may be, has named Jesus at the end of the salutation of the blessed Mary, that 60 days of indulgence are eased from the penance assigned to him.

The most striking thing about this paragraph is its conspicuous practicality. The recitation of the psalterium of Mary has a very real purpose, in the earning of indulgence. How could one neglect to recite these prayers when, at the cost of a bit of effort every day, it would be possible to rack up thousands of years of reprieve from the time to be served in purgatory? While the practice advocated here is not necessarily predicated on the other prayers and hymns that have preceded this paragraph, here for the first time Cok gives a clue as to the purpose behind such prayers. Prayer (here in the form of the psalterium of Mary, but presumably to an equal degree in the preceding texts) is presented as an object not of aesthetic or literary interest, but of praxis, with an eye toward the spiritual effects of recitation. Cok provides prayers and hymns specifically so

\[470\] It is interesting that Cok’s numerology is apparently incorrect here. Exact calculations are difficult without knowing what system (if any) Cok should be assumed to use to calculate the appropriate leap years, but such variables do not explain the degree of Cok’s discrepancy. One would expect one of two systems: Cok might provide exact equivalence, where one week’s prayer equals seven times the indulgence of a single day’s prayer; or, alternatively, he might imagine some sort of consistency bonus, where a full week’s prayer grants a greater indulgence than would seven disconnected days. Neither system holds, however. Cok advertises 24 years, 33 weeks 3 days of indulgence for one day of prayer. Multiplied over a seven-day week, this ought to yield a total of around 172 years, 25 weeks, 3 days. The actual indulgence Cok quotes, however, is 162 years, 12 weeks, 6 days, a full ten years less indulgence than one would have anticipated. The yearly calculation is also off: 24 years, 33 weeks and 3 days multiplied by 365 days in the year gives a total of 8,994 years indulgence, but Cok’s text only promises just over 8,913 years. These figures seem chosen to create the appearance of a bureaucratic exactness, but do not appear to have been worked out in any real system of accounting.

\[471\] That is, the Ave Maria prayer, reproducing the angel Gabriel’s greeting of Mary at the Annunciation.
that they may be *used*, as a way of guaranteeing absolution – or, in this case, a very utilitarian indulgence – for the vices he elsewhere categorizes. The manuscript is not merely a collection of theological treatises, but seems intended as a handbook, a practical tool for the sinner. Cok gives tremendous weight to this small paragraph, highlighting it in a number of different ways: a large, emphatic square bracket, two *nota bene* marks (one in the margin and one in the text), and full rubrication. He must, therefore, see both the *psalterium Marie* itself as well as this text that invokes it as central to his program for the manuscript, worthy objects of a reader’s focus. It serves, moreover, as an advertisement for the psalters that follow the note in the manuscript. Cok does not seek vague, unspecified spiritual benefits, but envisions prayer as part of a specific, end-driven program of repentance. Having properly identified his vices, and the sins these vices inevitably incite, a sinner may turn to this manuscript as well for guidance in the adorational protocol to ameliorate his spiritual position.

In the final pages of the manuscript, Cok, “per [suas] manus,” added another section very clearly practical in its rationale: drawings of hands, labeled as mnemonic diagrams for meditation. To examine one example, the hand on f. 178v, labeled at the wrist for the “Meditacio Nocturna,” has a thumb that includes the following labels between each of the major joints:

¶ Meditare *quod* | mortaliter | peccauers
¶ Ignoras | quociens ·
¶ nescis quam | grauiiter
¶ Abusus | est dei | paciencia

¶ Meditate that you have mortally sinned

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472 See Cok’s table of contents, f. 1v
The subsequent fingers then each enjoin meditations on the uncertain efficacy of penitence (index finger), the inevitability of death (middle finger), the unpredictability of that death (ring finger) and the fact that penitence will not be possible after death (fifth finger). The value of a hand as a mnemonic device is obvious, providing a convenient visual/spatial reference point by which to organize information, by major theme (the palm) and subordinate categories (the fingers). Nor is it a mnemonic unique to this particular application. The far better known mnemonic hand is the Guidonian hand, a method for music theory instruction named for the eleventh-century Guido of Arezzo who first described the technique, “Radically transforming and improving a device [already] present in an embryonic form” in a treatise some century older still.” 473 These hands were, by the time they reached their fullest development in the thirteenth century, “the most fundamental conceptual equipment shared by all musicians” in the Middle Ages, devices both widespread and immediately recognizable. 474 Diagrams of the period would depict them marked with the various notes of the medieval musical scale or “gamut,” and like the Add. 10392 meditation hands, they were always the left, rather than the right, facilitating an oral explanation accompanied by gestures made with the dominant right hand. Nor is the pedagogical use of the hand limited to musical instruction. John Holt, the schoolmaster, grammarian and sometime tutor to a young Henry VIII, included two hand diagrams in his c. 1500 Lac Puerorum, laying out the

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474 Ibid., 89.
conjugation of the pronoun *hic*, with each finger representing a grammatical case. Nicholas Orme describes the hands in the *Lac Puerorum* as “unparalleled in schoolbooks from England, either manuscript versions or printed copies of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries,” and speculates that they may find their source in teaching aids for the computus and “manuals [...] explaining the ecclesiastical calendar.” The usefulness of the hand as an aid to pedagogy was clearly recognized in the late medieval and early Modern period, and the stretch to other potential mnemonic applications is not a large one.

In the Add. 10392 *Meditacio Nocturna* hand, the mnemonic device is fully emphasized *qua* hand by a label on the frilled cuff, a quotation from the Vulgate Bible, “Leua eius sub capite meo” (Douay-Rheims translation, “His left hand is under my head,” Song of Sol. 2:6 and 8:3). The left hand supports the memory, as the left hand of God supports the sinner and leavens, perhaps, the impact of a somewhat bleak meditation exercise (“¶ Meditare quod mo / | rieris necessarie ·,” “Meditate that you will necessarily die,” base of the middle finger). On either side of the wrist sit two further lines of text. The first expands on the *Meditacio Nocturna* heading, introducing the audience of the diagram: “¶ Dat manus hec doctis que sit meditacio Noctis,” “This hand offers to the learned things which may be a meditation for the night.” The second is even more interesting: “¶ vt lex prima datur · manum scriptura legatur ·,” “as the first law is given, let the hands’ writing be read.” This admonition may refer to the “first law” of Gen.

475 My profound thanks to Eleanor Pettus, whose insights on Cok’s hand have been invaluable. It was she who, in a private communication, drew my attention to the parallel offered by the Holt hands.

2:16-17, barring Adam and Eve from the tree in Eden, a law whose violation constituted the original sin that can be understood as occasioning the penitence and death that sit at the center of this meditation.\textsuperscript{477}

Not only is the connection with penitence obvious, but Cok here provides even more obvious proof of the importance he places on a penitential praxis. This \textit{Meditacio Nocturna} guide is, by inscribing its topics on the outline of a human hand, an invitation to employ this meditation actively, to use the hand as a way of carrying the guided meditation away from the text, into the spiritual practice of the real world. At the same time, the order and subordination inherent in such a diagram reflects again Cok’s affinity for lists of all kinds, for systemizing information into simple \textit{schemata}. Nor is this \textit{schema} a mere superficial quirk of layout: it is clear that the meditation is actually planned out carefully with each finger joint as a distinct and clearly defined perspective on the topic. The palm introduces the general topic of meditation. Then the first joint addresses the physical fact of the topic under meditation: the number of sins (thumb), that the quality of confession is suspect (index finger), or that the exact time of death is unknown (ring finger). At the second joint, meditation moves from the what, where and when toward the how, in what way: the unknowable severity of sin (thumb), the unknown manner of death (ring finger). Finally, at the fingertips, meditation moves outward from the self toward the nature of the divine and the consequence of sin in the hereafter: the effect of sin on God (thumb), that you cannot, as the saying goes, “take it with you,” (middle finger), that you will be forgotten by those you have left behind (fifth finger).

\textsuperscript{477} Pettus, in a private communication, proposed to me this significance of \textit{lex prima} as defining its relation to the rest of the diagram.
These levels of meditation are not strictly prescriptive, but with some scope for variation, there does appear to be a fairly regular progression that creates levels of equivalence across, joint to joint, as well as a topical unity running along the finger itself. Cok’s diagram breaks down a meditation on sin and penitence into a carefully ordered system, while all the time maintaining a hard-headed attention to, on the one hand, the practical realities of sin as a feature of daily life and, likewise, an equally practical eye toward the ultimate outcome for a sinner. Cok notes at the tip of the thumb that sin is to be avoided as an “abuse of God’s patience,” but the real urgency of the Meditacio Nocturna comes instead from the imminence of death and the resulting uncertainty that this schema attempts to control.

Examination of the contents of Add. 10392, therefore, yields a deeper picture about both Cok’s project in assembling the manuscript and about the personality of the man behind the manuscript. It is already clear from the records contained in St. Bartholomew’s cartulary how much Cok favored an orderly and bureaucratic approach, a schematic breakdown of information into lists and tables. The “chronicle” history and the list of St. Bart’s masters reflects this interest in lists, while his praise of Master Wakeryng for business acumen rather than piety seems to foreshadow, not an impatience with lofty theological speculation, but rather an eye toward the bottom line. In turning to Add. 10392, it is clear that the manuscript is designed around a number of organizational principles: the assembly of texts by named authors like Augustine and Bernard, a specifically Marian devotion, and a concentration on understanding and identifying the virtues and vices. It is this last interest that is the most complex and compelling, and which does the most toward explaining the impetus behind the manuscript. Cok does not
merely wish to contemplate virtue and vice, he wishes to categorize it, to systemize its nature, through a combination of diagrammatic tables and more discursive treatises. Then too, this knowledge is clearly not sufficient for its own sake, but is directed at a practical end, aiding a sinner in understanding his wrongdoing, atoning for it, and then avoiding future transgression. Prayers and meditation mnemonics direct the reader in a program for atonement and, as outlined in the f. 132r *nota*, indulgence. The image of Cok that emerges from this evidence is fully in keeping with the picture from the cartulary evidence: a man logical, businesslike and utilitarian, but one also for whom utilitarianism meant personal practice, the enacting of theological theory within a life. Cok’s diagrams are logical and systemizing, but not cold – the inscription of meditation instructions on a hand are a way of making an abstract meditation physical, of writing the truth of theoretical understanding onto the flesh of the body. The treatises of Bernard and Augustine are meant to be read, but also to be lived, and the schematic tables Cok includes are a way of concretizing the abstract.

What emerges in these manuscripts is a picture of Cok’s usual mode of scribal practice, but it is also a window on his personality. In the St. Bartholomew’s cartulary, he placed himself directly into the bureaucratic record, his eyewitness testimony simultaneously an authorizing device and also a method of drawing a connection between national or institutional history and his own life. In his description of John Wakeryng, he forefronted the bureaucratic virtues of administrative competence and legal savvy, valuing them as much and possibly more than spiritual virtue. Add. 10392 brings his zeal for organization and taxonomies to the forefront again, but we gain also an impression of his management of miscellany. Texts from a wide variety of sources, some orthodox and
patristic, others heretical and still others poetic stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the
manuscript. All are deployed for the same project, once again a practical one. Cok’s
piety in Add. 10392 is meditative (as shown in the mnemonic hands), but it is also
mundanely practical. He collects theological treatises, but does so apparently for the
same reason that he gathers the taxonomic *schema* of the tables, the poetry and the
prayers. All work together for a single program, with the aim of pursuing virtue,
avoiding sin and achieving absolution for past missteps. The manuscript envisions a
reader with the leisure for meditation and study, but the program provided has, for all
that, a deeply practical vein of pious praxis. The manuscript is intended to be *used*. In
the following chapter, it will be clear that, in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80,
while he adapts to the circumstances of a new genre (romance), he still carries forward
some of the traits that have characterized his scribal career in other areas.
CHAPTER 4:

A STUDY OF CAMBRIDGE, CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE, MS 80: MARGINAL NOTES ON HENRY LOVELICH’S MERLIN AND HISTORY OF THE HOLY GRAIL

The in-depth examination of John Cok’s scribal activity that has preoccupied the previous chapter offers a fascinating window onto the personality and practices of one late medieval bureaucrat. Meticulous and organized, he had a very hard-headed and practical approach to religion. He had, moreover, an ecumenical approach to genre and authority, gathering together texts from a variety of sources and a variety of forms, but integrating them into the larger project. The St. Bartholomew’s cartulary, for example, is the richer for its chronicle, an expansion of the scope of the hospital’s institutional record to include the entire nation. The real value in this portrait for our present study, however, comes when we are able to see him react to and interact with a romance text, and to sample those things he found, literally, worthy of note. Coming full circle, we approach again the manuscript that first drew us to Cok: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 80. Here we find the meticulous compiler at work once more, placing his mark on the text. The notes he makes reflect a style of reading, moreover, that is engaged with the pathos of the text, but which also situates it within romance generic norms. The opportunity to glean more encyclopedic information or taxonomies is, moreover, far from
despised, and he seizes his chance, even within the packaging of a romance, perhaps an unpropitious one for a more exacting theologian.

MS 80 is both paper and vellum, but primarily paper: the vellum appears in the form of endpapers reused from an earlier, 12th century manuscript. A sizeable tome, it measures 39.5 × 27.9 cm and contains 200 folios, each laid out in two columns. The manuscript is missing its head, beginning part-way into the first text. From surviving medieval foliation, it is assumed that the missing material comprises a quire and a half, and of the second (now first) quire, the first two extant pages have been bound out of place, much later in the manuscript, where they now form ff. 197 and 198. The contents of the manuscript are the sole extant copies of two romances by Henry Lovelich: The History of the Holy Grail and the Merlin. These are verse translations of the Vulgate cycle French prose texts L’Estoire del Saint Graal and Merlin, now considered anonymous, but which Lovelich attributes to Robert de Boron. Lovelich was not a


481 Lovelich reproduces the attribution from his source text, which internally claims Robert de Boron as its author (see, for example, Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:27.102). Robert is the real author, or at any rate the traditional authorial attribution, for a verse Joseph of Arimathea (Le Petit Saint Graal), later adapted into a prose Joseph (Le Grand Saint Graal). Linda Gowans has recently disputed this ordering of influence, traditional in modern scholarship. She argues instead that the prose Joseph had priority, springing directly from Robert de Boron’s pen. This prose text then would have been later adapted into verse by an anonymous poet (Linda Gowans, “What Did Robert De Boron Really Write?,” in Wheeler, Arthurian Studies, 15–28). One or both of these works underlies the Vulgate Estoire as a major source. An unsigned and now-fragmentary verse Merlin was associated with the verse Joseph from an early date, and is an early source for the Vulgate Merlin. The attribution to Robert of the Vulgate Estoire and Merlin themselves, however, is every bit as problematic and internally inconsistent as the other named “authors” of these texts: Merlin, Blaise (Merlin’s amanuensis), Walter Map (specifically for the Lancelot, Queste and

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particularly skilled poet or storyteller, and the poems themselves are neither beautiful nor engaging, characterized by a long-winded and repetitive style that moves the story along at glacial pace, and by the use and abuse of innumerable “filler” lines and half-lines, serving no end but the completion of rhyme and meter. Still, the value of the manuscript as a witness to fifteenth-century romance readership is undeniable, particularly in the annotation springing from two sources: the manuscript’s anonymous main scribe, and its major annotator John Cok.

It is interesting that these two annotators do not work in tandem: or, rather, that John Cok does not seem to have followed the scribe’s advice slavishly. These passages that the scribe instructs a reader to “note” are not always those that attracted Cok’s pen. Still, between the readings of these two members of the contemporary reading audience, each a scribe in his own right, we may enjoy two distinct approaches to the same text, demonstrating some of the range possible annotators of romance.

The scribe’s notes, which I will discuss in the final section of this chapter, are limited in both number and length, cryptic gestures toward larger interpretive concerns. They display an acute awareness of the place of these romances within a larger Vulgate context. He presents the tales as ones of pomp and chivalry, precursors of a glorious Arthurian Britain. The notes in John Cok’s hand are, for their part, by far the most substantive in the manuscript, and while they tend heavily toward what Carl Grindley has

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Mort Artu) and even Christ. Robert stands alongside these other fictive parties to textual transmission, and was likely included among them in a bid to increase the text’s authority, as the named author of an important contributing source. See E. Jane Burns, “Introduction,” in Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, vol. 1, esp. xxiii–xxvi.
classified as “Narrative Reading Aids,” subtype “Summation,” the question of what precisely Cok takes it upon himself to summarize has deep implications for his views on the meaning and, presumably, the value or pleasure of the text. Cok is, after all, far from annotating MS 80 comprehensively – itself, perhaps, at least some indication of the attitude he brought toward annotation. Cok is certainly capable of sustained systems of annotation. British Library Add. 10392 is remarkable for the thorough consistency both of Cok’s programs of notae and of his systems of headings, numberings and organizational subordination. That he does not bring this same comprehensive approach to CCCC MS 80 may be interpreted either as an indication of the lesser status he affords this manuscript and its contents of “frivolous,” albeit pious, romance, or alternatively merely as evidence of a more casual approach taken to a manuscript not his own, in which he acted primarily as reader rather than scribe. In MS 80, his annotations are irregular but detailed, reflecting a style of reading in which he lavishes close attention on stepping through the minutiae of narrative structure within a local context, but in which such attention is paid only to certain passages and, within a passage, only to certain aspects of that passage. When Cok does annotate, he does so densely: an stretch of heavy annotation between ff. 21r-25r totals 25 separate notes in Cok’s hand, in a distribution ranging from one note on f. 22r to five notes each on ff. 21r and 24v. Following this passage, however, Cok’s hand does not appear again until another three notes on the recto

482 Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman,” esp. 82, 86-87. Most romance annotations, when they are substantive and directly textually-related, are of this Summation type and, as here, tend also to be within Grindley’s categories of Textually-Gleaned or Paraphrased Marginal Rubrics.

483 Throughout this chapter, I quote – in full or in part – those notes most relevant to the immediate discussion, for ease of reference. For the complete picture of his contribution to the manuscript, however, please refer to my a full transcription of all John Cok’s notes in MS 80, which can be found in Appendix C.
and verso of f. 30, succeeded by another silence until f. 56v. Large gaps punctuated by periods of close attention seem to be the norm.

It only remains, then, to examine more closely those points in the text that Cok does annotate, and to attempt to discern any patterns in his practice that may reveal his priorities. Cok is clearly interested in a range of issues, ones that seem very congruent with the picture of Cok that emerged in Add. 10392 and the St. Bartholomew’s cartulary. Cok is, as always, somewhat bureaucratic in his approach, interested in lists and taxonomies. He seems most engaged, also, not with the martial aspects of the text, nor with its implications for a later Arthurian mythology, but with its pious character. Lovelich’s two romances apparently speak to him at moments of pious drama, where he is able to engage affectively with the text, but in a way specifically nuanced by an identification with the romance’s pious Christian heroes, cast as suffering and visionary martyrs. Finally, on a technical rather than interpretational level, Cok evidences a concern for reporting the authorship of the text, for preserving information about its historical circumstances of composition.

4.1 Lovelich and Cok on Authorship

The Middle Ages had a rather conflicted attitude toward issues of authorship, authority, attribution and anonymity. With some notable exceptions, most authors of romance texts remain anonymous. Chrétien de Troyes is perhaps the most famous named author of romance, but not the only one. Thomas Malory’s Morte Darthur, though by no means generically straightforward, is nevertheless deeply implicated in the romance tradition, and Geoffrey Chaucer tried his hand at the genre on several occasions. Still,
anonymity is tantamount to a generic marker for many Middle English romances, particularly those in a “popular” or orally-based tradition. Rosalind Field draws a distinction between “popular” and “courtly” romance, but does so along lines of an “open” versus “closed” binary, with “courtly” romances the products of named authors within a coterie environment, contrasted with a popular literature produced in the “open,” outside a coterie.  

This is not to say, however, that medieval scribes and readers were uninterested in the authorship of texts, when that authorship was known. On the contrary, as Alastair Minnis has ably demonstrated, authorship and the circumstances of composition were in the medieval period a dominant contextualizing theory. In the scholastic theological tradition, prologues highlighting the biography, as well as the purpose, of an author would precede collections of his works, creating an auctoritas around the name of the auctor as interpretational key. This practice began in the schools, but moved progressively into a literary context, first in classical scholarship, and finally colored reception of contemporary and near-contemporary vernacular auctores like Chaucer and Gower. The question of the nomen auctoris was one of the first questions to be asked,

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484 Rosalind Field, “Popular Romance: The Material and the Problems,” in A Companion to Medieval Popular Romance, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu and Cory J. Rushton, Studies in Medieval Romance 10 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 12. In this binary, Field borrows her terms from Anne Hudson, “Lollard Book Production,” in Griffiths and Pearsall, Book Production and Publishing, 125-142. While Field explicitly presents authorial attribution as one of the key markers of courtly coterie production, it is not one universally present, as one may witness in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a “closed” romance by Field’s definition.

485 Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship.

486 Ibid., esp. 161ff. Minnis sees Gower’s auctoritas as self-conscious and self-fashioned, but argues that Chaucer in contrast rejected such status, finding “the role of compiler [...] particularly congenial to him” (Ibid., 209; my emphasis). Any such role, however, whether auctor or compilator is necessarily a deliberate and literary pose, nor is the denial of an overt Chaucerian bid for auctoritas wholly convincing.
if not necessarily answered, by any medieval literary exegesis. In light of the importance of questions of authorship in prologues, it is notable that the romance annotation I have examined so far has not interested itself in these issues. What medieval literary interpreters have given us, that is, in the form of direct instruction on how texts ought to be read has little to do with the methods apparently actually adopted by romance annotators. This, no doubt, may be laid variously at the door of generic difference and distinctions in textual prestige (romances, after all, do not typically carry scholastic prologues such as make up the larger part of Minnis’s evidence), as well as romance’s more varied audience.

Still, while authorship and authorial attribution are not dominant strains in romance annotations, these concerns are far from absent from the minds of either the creators or readers of MS 80. Lovelich does not necessarily share the skill or nuance of some of the named literary lions (Geoffrey Chaucer, Jean de Meun, Chrétien de Troyes, etc.) that might dominate a discussion of romance as either a courtly or a coterie phenomenon. He does, however, share their insistence on poetic signature and attribution. At the close of his History of the Holy Grail, by way of a transition into the Merlin, Lovelich both records his own name and that of the author of his source, whom he takes to be Robert de Boron, an attribution not now generally accepted. The real

487 In cases where no author was known, one would sometimes be invented, as in the attribution of the Old French Vulgate cycle to Walter Map.

488 This passage naturally represents a genuine interpolation on Lovelich’s part, albeit one prompted by the Vulgate. Lovelich begins by translating the Estoire’s own authorial attribution: “Si se taist atant li contes de tout les lignies qui de celydoine issirent . & retorne a vn autre branche que len apele lestoire Merlin quil couient a fine force adiouster a lestoire del saint graal . por ce que la brance i est & i apartient . Et commenche messires robers de boron icle branche en tel maniere,” “Now the story is silent about all the lineages that came from Celidoine and returns to a branch called the Story of Merlin, which should be joined carefully to the History of the Holy Grail because it is a branch of it and belongs to it.
authorship of the text is not the point, however. It is significant simply that Lovelich
believes he knows the author of his source, and further, that he takes care to transmit this
information to his readers, with the added information of his own identity:

Now Of Al this storie haue I mad An Ende
That Isswed Of Celidoyne; & now forþere to wende,
And Of Anothir Brawnch moste we be-Gynne,
Of the storiy that we Clepe Prophet Merlyne
Wiche that Maister Robert of Borrown,
Owt Of latyn it translated hol & Som,
Onlich Into the langage Of Frawnce
This storiy he drowgh be Aventure and Chaunce,
And doth Merlyne Iusten with Sank Ryal;
For þe ton storiy the tothir Medlyth withal,
After the settyng Of the forseid Robert,
That somtyym it translated in Middlerld.
And I, As An vnkonning Man treWely,
Into Englisch haue drawen this Story;
And thowgh that to 30w not plesyng It be,
3it that ful Excused 3e wolde hauen Me,
Of my neclegation and vnkonnenge
On Me to taken swich A thinge
Into Owre Modris tonge for to Endite,
The swettere to sowne to More and lyte;
And more Cler to 3oure vndirstondyng
Thanne Owre Freunsh Operator latyn, to my sopposing;
And þerfore Atte the Ende Of this Storye
A pater noster 3e wolden for me preye,
For me that herry Lonelich hyhte;
And grethet Oure lady ful Of Myhte;
Hertelich with An Ave that 3e hire bede,
This processe the bettere I myhte procede,
And bringen this book to A Good Ende.

(History, LVI.509-537)

And my lord Robert of Boron begins the branch in the following way” (Sommer, Vulgate, 1:296.16–19;
Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:41.307–308; I have integrated some readings from Sommer’s footnotes, where
necessary, to bring the passage in better line with Chase’s translation and with the version used by
Lovelich). The emphasis on translation – Lovelich’s own addition – doubtless owes something to the fact
that Lovelich is a translator in fact, while the “translation” of the Vulgate’s anonymous author, from Latin
into French, was fictive and, at best, at several removes.
Lovelich’s verse is never notable for its concision. Nevertheless, it is possible in this passage to pick out several important points that Lovelich makes, and to map out a collection of statements, fairly standard prologue fare, covering his own identity, that of his literary predecessors, and the nature of his present project.

One might expect at this transitional passage, falling at the end of the *History of the Holy Grail* and introducing the upcoming *Merlin*, that Lovelich might “tease” the content of the coming romance, and he does do this a bit, naming Merlin twice (lines 512 and 517), and the all-important “Sank Ryal” once (517), “just[ing]” (literally, “bringing together”) the story that has just passed with the one to come. Lovelich focuses at even greater length on the idea of translation, both the original “translation” made by his source author “Owt Of latyn ... Into the langage Of Frawnce” (514-515) and his own. He casts his own project as equivalent to Robert’s, mirroring not only Robert’s juxtaposition of *Estoire* and *Merlin* stories, but also his (fictive) translation project. Lovelich’s own English translation is perhaps even back-figured as the natural *telos* of Robert’s translation, by the setting of the Latin-to-French transition within the distinctly Anglo-Saxon “Middlerd” (< OE *middangēard*; line 520). In a striking direct address to his readers, Lovelich speaks not only of English as “Owre Modris tonge” (527), but “supposes” it “more Cler to /.../ Thanne Owther Frensch Oþer latyn” (529-530), a standard justification for projects of translation. In addition to translation and a possible latent invocation of a Latin-French-English *translatio studii,* Lovelich

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489 Compare the opening lines of *Cligès* by Chrétien de Troyes : “Li livres est molt anciens / Qui tesmoigne l’estoire a voire: / Por ce fet ele meulz a croirre. / Par les livres que nos avons / Les faiz des anciens savons / Et dou siecle qui fu jadis. / Ce nos ont nostre livre apris / Que Grece ot de chealerie / Le premier los et de clergie, / Puis vint chevalerie a Rome / Et de la clergie la somme, / Qui or est en France venue. / Dex doint qu’ele i soit retenue / Tant que li leus li embelisse / Si que ja mais de France n’isse /
also invokes the standard medieval humility *topos* (524-525) and requests the prayers of his readers, both for, presumably, the salvation of his soul (532) and, perhaps more daringly, for the success of his literary project (534-536).

This passage has drawn a large amount of reader-response in the manuscript, but it is none of these aspects, however, that draw the bulk of that response. Rather, readers’ focus is clearly on names: Lovelich takes care to name both the author of his source text (as he supposes, Robert de Boron; lines 513 and 519) and himself (533). Both his own name and Robert’s are underlined in the manuscript in red, part of a larger concentration of underlining around ff. 87-89, straddling the changeover between the *History* and the

L’ennors qui s’i est arestee. / Dex l’avoyt as altres preste. / Que des Grezois ne des Romains / Ne dit en mais ne plus ne mains. / D’eus est la parole remese / Et esteinte la vive brese,” “The book containing the true story is very old, therefore it is all the more worthy of belief. Through the books we have, we learn of the deeds of ancient peoples and of bygone days. Our books have taught us that chivalry and learning first flourished in Greece; then to Rome came chivalry and the sum of knowledge, which now has come to France. May God grant that they be maintained here and may He be pleased enough with this land that the glory now in France may never leave. God merely lent it to the others: no one speaks any more of the Greeks or Romans; their fame has gone silent and their glowing ember has gone out” (*Cligès*, trans. and ed. Charles Méla and Olivier Collet, *Lettres Gothiques* 4541 [Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994], lines 24–44; *Arthurian Romances*, 123). Despite Chrétien’s prayers for the permanent place of France as the seat of “chivalry and learning,” the passing of Greece and Rome into obscurity suggests that French cultural preeminence may also be a loan, preparing the field for a new cultural shift, a model left open to appropriation by future, English poets.

There is an inherent ambiguity in many medieval scripts – including that used in MS 80 – between *n* and *u*, both of which are represented by two minims, and which, due to a widespread lack of precision in consistently connecting these minims at the top or bottom, can be very nearly interchangeable. Without further evidence, therefore, it would be a matter of pure speculation or personal whim whether to read the author’s name as “Louelich” or as “Lonelich”: Furnivall here preferred “Lonelich.” Robert Ackerman definitively solved the riddle in 1952, however, when he observed that in the *Merlin*, Lovelich himself provided a coded answer, naming himself “Gallina Ciligo Amo Similis” (Lovelich, *Merlin*, line 21596): “We do not need the editor’s marginal note to tell us that [the line] is a cryptogram, crude and unsyntactical as it is, nor is it necessary to consult a glossary of mediaeval Latin to interpret the line as *hen rye love like* – that is Henry Lovelich, not Lonelich” (“Henry Lovelich’s Name,” *Modern Language Notes* 67, no. 8 [1952]: 532). Michelle Warren suggests that this line may be the hand of the annotator John Cok rather than that of the main scribe, and may therefore represent Cok’s naming of the author rather than Lovelich’s own self-styling (“Lydgate, Lovelich and London Letters,” in *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown [Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008], 113-138). I disagree, however, and consider any minor difference in script to be due to the change from English to Latin, rather than to a change in hand (f. 171v). What’s more, the line is fully integrated in both the rhyme and meter of the text. It is Lovelich’s.

490 There is an inherent ambiguity in many medieval scripts – including that used in MS 80 – between *n* and *u*, both of which are represented by two minims, and which, due to a widespread lack of precision in consistently connecting these minims at the top or bottom, can be very nearly interchangeable. Without further evidence, therefore, it would be a matter of pure speculation or personal whim whether to read the author’s name as “Louelich” or as “Lonelich”: Furnivall here preferred “Lonelich.” Robert Ackerman definitively solved the riddle in 1952, however, when he observed that in the *Merlin*, Lovelich himself provided a coded answer, naming himself “Gallina Ciligo Amo Similis” (Lovelich, *Merlin*, line 21596): “We do not need the editor’s marginal note to tell us that [the line] is a cryptogram, crude and unsyntactical as it is, nor is it necessary to consult a glossary of mediaeval Latin to interpret the line as *hen rye love like* – that is Henry Lovelich, not Lonelich” (“Henry Lovelich’s Name,” *Modern Language Notes* 67, no. 8 [1952]: 532). Michelle Warren suggests that this line may be the hand of the annotator John Cok rather than that of the main scribe, and may therefore represent Cok’s naming of the author rather than Lovelich’s own self-styling (“Lydgate, Lovelich and London Letters,” in *Lydgate Matters: Poetry and Material Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown [Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008], 113-138). I disagree, however, and consider any minor difference in script to be due to the change from English to Latin, rather than to a change in hand (f. 171v). What’s more, the line is fully integrated in both the rhyme and meter of the text. It is Lovelich’s.
Merlin. These underlinings are tantalizing in their suggestive opacity. They are most likely Early Modern, from the hand of Matthew Parker (1504-1575), Master of Corpus Christi College Cambridge (1544-1553), Archbishop of Canterbury (1559-1575) and the avid book collector whose 1574 donation to Corpus Christi College is the core collection of the current Corpus Christi Parker Library, and included MS 80.\footnote{491} The underlining shows a definite bias, both here and elsewhere in the manuscript,\footnote{492} toward underlining proper names, frequently names of important characters – or, as here, the names of the poet and his major source,\footnote{493} names emphasized by the manuscript’s extra-textual apparatus in other ways as well (more on that below). However, just when it seems that Parker has a definite program in mind of emphasizing names within the text, and names that he may possibly see as of particular interest or importance, a word or phrase appears underlined that seems utterly without sensible motivation. Words underlined on f. 89r include “gy\(n\)eng,”\footnote{494} “\(l\)y\eur\(t\)le\(c\)he”\footnote{495} and “\(p\)ety\(t\) \(\&\) graunt,”\footnote{496} words not only not proper Parker’s “\(r\)ed ok\(r\)” (red ochre) has been remarked by readers of Corpus Christi’s library since as early as 1600, although it must be stated that attribution to the archbishop is largely traditional, and marks in this distinctive medium may be more accurately ascribed to a circle of Parkerian readers including “other members of Parker’s household,” united by Parker’s aims and intellectual guidance (Benedict Scott Robinson, “‘Darke Speech’: Matthew Parker and the Reforming of History,” \textit{The Sixteenth Century Journal} 29, no. 4 [1998]: 1075). The red underlining of MS 80 has been explicitly associated with this larger body of Parkerian marginalia by Michelle Warren (“Arthurian Romance in London: Reforming Readers” [presented at the 32nd Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval Studies: Think Romance!, Fordham University, New York, April 1, 2012]). Parker’s project of acquisition was directed in part toward an agenda of locating traditions of Protestantism or proto-Protestantism in British antiquity. See David J. Crankshaw and Alexandra Gillespie, “Parker, Matthew (1504-1575),” \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography} (Oxford University Press, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2132.

\footnote{492} Another major concentration of underlining in the same red color appears on ff. 114r-v, and a few isolated examples occur at other locations.

\footnote{493} “& now for\(p\)here to wende, / And Of Anothir \(B\)rawnch mo\(s\)te we be-Gynne, / Of the storye that we Clepen Prophet Mer\(l\)lyne / Wiche that Maister \(R\)obert of Bor\(r\)own, / Owt Of latyn it translated hol & \(S\)on” and “A pater noster \(\)e wolden for me preye, / For me that herry \(L\)oful\(e\)lich hyhte” (Lovelich, \textit{History}, LVI.510–513, 532–533). The underlining here replicates Parker’s.

\footnote{494} “Now, grete Foles weren they Every\(c\)hon, / that am\(g\)es hem cow\(d\)e not know\(e\)n on / how that God knew wel alle th\(y\)ng, / bothe gy\(n\)eng, Mid\(wa\)ris, and En\(d\)yng!” (Lovelich, \textit{Merlin}, lines 115–118).
names, but not on the surface of any particular significance whatsoever. It is dangerous, therefore, to read too much into this underlining even on those occasions when the underline seems explicable by some straightforward and logical cause. Still, the temptation remains to understand this evidence as pointing to the primary purpose of this passage for one early reader, not in the theme of translation (Lovelich’s own priority, if one accepts as definitive the number of words spent on the topic) or in the author’s humble plea for his readers’ forbearance, but in the dropping of names.

There are, unfortunately, no reader-response marks on this passage of a less ambiguous nature that might help guide us out of our quandary. However, this admittedly shaky evidence is hugely bolstered by notes elsewhere in the manuscript, in the hand of John Cok, demonstrating that he, as did, perhaps, Parker, found names to be a notable subject. On f. 68va, Lovelich writes:

& to þat Abbey Mordrains scholde comen to se; 
and ek to visiten, as it seith here, 
the story of Sank Ryal In this Manere; 
and also as myn sire Robert of Borron,  
Whiche that this storie Al & som  
Owt of the latyn In to the frensch torned he, 
be holy chirches Comandement sekerle;

495 “[S]che answerede: “With non thing so sone, j-wys, / as only be wraththe, with-owten Mys; / For Ryht lyhtleche he wile wroth be, / as j the telle now ful sikerle” (ibid., lines 149–152).

496 “[A]nd a word of anger spak he thore, / wheche after repentyd him ful sore, / and be-took the devel al the Remmaunt, / That him be-lefte, petyt & graunt” (ibid., lines 183–186).

497 One particularly strange instance of apparently nonsensical underlining is that of “thussone” on f. 89va (“and so ofte thedyr he gan to gon, / that thussone he hadde ouercomen the ton,” ibid., lines 233–234) and again on f. 117vb (“And thussone as they hym Sye, / Gretly they Merveilled, Sekirlye,” ibid., lines 7843–7844). The underlining not just of a seemingly unimportant adverb, but of the same unimportant adverb appears to defy mere coincidence, and cries out for some explanation. Yet there is no connection between these passages that I can identify, nor any particular significance to the adverb’s use that sets it apart either from the rest of the sentence in which it appears, or from the many other appearances of thussone throughout the manuscript (e.g. ibid., lines 1097, 1128, 1695, 2565, 3292, 3303, 3565, 4561, etc.).
and as holy chirche Afermeth Also, 
how longe king Mordrains lyvede þere tho, 
Two hundred yer & More Aftir sire Nascien....  
(Lovelich, History, XLVI.495-503)

It is possible in this passage, falling many folios before the comparable passage previously discussed, to see, first, the formulaic nature of Lovelich’s method of versification. Compare “and also as myn sire Robert of Borron, / Whiche that this storie Al & som / Owt of the latyn In to the frensch turned he” with its equivalent twenty folios later: “Wiche that Maister Robert of Borrown, / Owt Of latyn it translated hol & Som, / Onlitch Into the langage Of Frawnce” (XLVI.497-99, LVI.513-15). The two passages correspond not only in the citation of source, but in the basic idiom of expression. In this earlier section, there is a slightly different emphasis on the fact of Robert de Boron’s “translation,” however. In chapter LVI, Robert de Boron’s translation prefigures Lovelich’s own, with the emphasis on these two men as authors, occupying and actively working within the same world as the audience, who may be implored to pray for the successful completion of the present book. In chapter XLVI, however, the writing of the

498 This rhetorical move may perhaps be usefully compared and contrasted with Malory’s invocation of his own source, “the Freynshhe boke” (cf. Malory, Works, 676.1, etc.). Malory does not cite the author of his source (as the French Vulgate Cycle is anonymous, albeit in the Middle Ages sometimes falsely attributed to Walter Map, perhaps this is because he had no name to cite), nor does he emphasize the status of that French book as itself a translation.

499 Furnivall’s chapter numbers have no consistent basis or equivalent in the medieval manuscript, but are instead applied in analogy to the French Estoire that Lovelich translates. Penciled Roman numerals marking the head of some of Furnivall’s chapters have been added to the manuscript at certain points, and reflect a modern attempt to aid in navigation according this scheme, but would not have been available to medieval readers (cf. ff. 53va, 55vb, 57va, etc.). With this caveat, however, I continue to employ the chapter numbers as a useful reference shorthand.

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French text is figured as part of the story itself, not set beside Lovelich’s project, but beside Mordraynes’s adventures within the tale.  

This minor passage might easily pass without remark, however, if John Cok had not so emphatically marked – and remarked – it. He marks it first with a manicule, one of only three in the entire manuscript. The hand points directly at the line “and also as myn sire Robert of Borron,” and lest any uncertainty remain about the source of the manicule or its specific referent, Cok places one of his distinctive personal flags on either side of the line, and, in the margin to the right of the second flag, signs his name, “I Cok.”  

Then, in the left margin, directly below the manicule, Cok writes: “Sir Robert of Borroun lþ\t/ turnyd þis l ouте of latyn l in to ffrensche.” Cok has read forward two lines, and fully expects the reader to as well, with his adaptation of “Owt of the latyn In to the frensch torned he.” Still, the emphasis of pointing hand and signature provide sufficient fanfare that it is clearly the name of Robert de Boron that draws Cok’s notice. Lovelich’s dropping of Robert’s name seems to bring Cok up short, to elicit from him a powerful response, and the desire to transform the manuscript for subsequent readings, either by himself or another, such that it inevitably provokes a matching notice. The impact of

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500 This approach likely derives from the treatment afforded the imagined “translation” of the story into French related in the Old French *Estoire*. The relevant passage is absent in MS 80, which in its present state is missing the beginning of the romance, and opens with the story already in full swing, on f. 197ra, one of two folios misplaced at the end of the manuscript but belonging to its head. Furnivall reproduces the equivalent passage in the French from London, BL Royal 14.E.iii: “Ichele nuit m’auint vne auisions, ke li grans maistres uenoit deuant moi en autel habit com il auoit fait a l’autre fois. Et si me disoit ‘au premier iour ouuraule de la semaine qui enterra demain, te conuent a commenchier a escrire en autre lieu le liuret que ie te baillai, si ke tu l’aies escrit ains l’ascentration.’” “That night a vision came to me: the Great Master came before me dressed in the same clothes as the first time and said, ‘On the first workday of the week that begins tomorrow, you are to begin copying the book I gave you elsewhere, in order to finish it before Ascension...’” (Lovelich, *History*, Prol., p. 24; Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 1:1.38). See also Sommer, *Vulgate*, 1:12.21ff., for a differently worded version of the same episode. In this introduction, the author’s search for the supposed original Latin text of the *Estoire* is cast as a new quest for a literary Grail, with the author-“translator” as successful Grail knight. It is impossible to know whether Lovelich included this passage in his translation, but his comments here suggest that he knew it.
Cok’s annotation might be seen to be somewhat lessened by the fact that this passage falls at a point when Cok is clearly already reading the text with close attention: another constellation of annotations appears just at the top of this same page. Yet no other line in the manuscript draws from Cok four different and distinct annotation markers: a manicule, an isolated flag, a flag-and-signature combination, and a fully-formed verbal note. In light of this clear interest in Robert de Boron’s name, it might be something of a surprise that the later chapter LVI passage did not draw similarly extravagant notice from Cok. One might speculate that, having drawn reader attention so forcefully to this earlier citation of Robert de Boron, Cok did not feel it necessary to mark the name again. If true, this might indicate that Cok viewed the importance of the name not in its status as a literary trope or a theme to be revisited, but as a discrete fact that, once learned, need not be pointed out again. This may seem obvious, but is an important check on our analysis, when the method used involves recognizing patterns of interest and emphasis within notes.

These two History passages are not, however, the only time Cok addresses the matter of authorship and of the name of the author. On f. 127rb, another authorizing passage appears:

of the Merveilles that aftyr befalle,  
j hope to declaren to 3ow alle,  
3if that God wile granten me grace & myht,  
helthe of Body, and myn Eyen syht,  
ownt of Frensch jnto Englysch now wyl j fonde  
hit to drawen, that 3e Moun vndirstonde.  
Therfore for herry Louelyche that 3e preye,  
that til this be Endid, he may not deye,  
but lyven jn helthe and prosperite;  
Now, good lord, grante hit Moot so be.  

(Lovelich, Merlin, lines 10245-54)
This time there is no mention of Robert de Boron, only Lovelich himself, and the translation is not from Latin to French, but from French to English. Next to this passage appears what is perhaps the best-known note in the manuscript, and the only note of Cok’s to fall within the *Merlin* section of the manuscript: “`henre louelich skynnere | þt/ translated þs/ boke oute | of ffrensshe into englysshe | at þe instaunce of harry | bartoun.”

W. W. Skeat assumed that the note was in fact written by the scribe of the main text, no doubt due to the fact that his primary interest was in the *Merlin* section of the manuscript and he had therefore not studied the *History* in detail. He was perhaps unaware of Cok’s other notes earlier in the manuscript, and did not realize that this annotator had elsewhere signed his name.

It is tempting to imagine that Skeat may have been correct, and the note both Cok’s and the scribe’s, by identifying the scribe as Cok himself. The hands are similar in many ways: the *d* in particular is very similar in Cok’s hand and that of the scribe. However, many differences appear as well: the *w* is very distinctive in the scribal hand, while Cok’s *w*, even in his highly cursive script, is far more conventional; while both scripts employ an inverted *e*, Cok’s hand tends to bisect the *e* on the diagonal, tending

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502 W. W. Skeat, “The Translator of ‘The Graal’,” *Athenaeum*, no. 3917 (Nov. 22, 1902): 684, cited in Ackerman, “Herry Lovelich’s *Merlin*,” 476. Both Ernst Kock and Robert Ackerman apparently shared this belief. Kock has transcribed the note as “`J henr’ louelich kynnere | þ tranþlated þ boke oute of ffrenþhe in to englyþhe at þe instaunce of harry bartou,”, a transcription followed by Ackerman (ibid., 475–476). Inherent in this transcription is the assumption that the note is in the first-person voice of Lovelich himself: “I, Henry Lovelich....” It is presumably supposed that the scribe here recopies an authorial note. A. I. Doyle was the first to observe the misattribution of this note, as well as the mistranscription, a corrected reading followed by Warren: A. I. Doyle, “More Light on John Shirley,” *Medium Aevum* 30 (1961): 99, 44n and Warren, “Lydgate, Lovelich and London Letters,” 120. Kock and Ackerman were unfamiliar with Cok’s flag mark (\(\uparrow\)), used like a paraph or bracket to mark off his annotations. It is this mark that has been misread as a *J* in these earlier transcriptions, and which simultaneously makes the attribution to Cok not only certain but clear. The underbracket beneath the note, identical to those employed by Cok at, for example, f. 21r, clinches the attribution.
toward the horizontal, while the scribal e is bisected most frequently on the vertical axis; Cok’s t always ascends above its crossbar, while that of the scribe never does. These differences might be dismissed as variations in the formality of the hand, between a bookhand and a casual annotation. However, comparison between the script of the main text and the Latin bookhand used in BL Add. 10392, where Cok was the main scribe, reveal many more key differences from the MS 80 scribe, including, perhaps most damningly, a universal use of the high-ascender t. The identification between Cok and the MS 80 scribe is not impossible, but very unlikely, and I have therefore resisted the temptation of identification and treated Cok and the scribe as separate individuals.

To move past the now settled issue of attribution, the first thing to remark here is, first of all, Cok’s continued interest in authorial naming. At a point when Lovelich again offers his own name in a request for readers’ prayers, Cok once more finds it literally note-worthy. Seen alongside Cok’s penchant for self-naming, in the repeated signing of his name to his annotations, even to the point that “I Cok” itself is sometimes the entirety of the nota bene, such attention to authorial naming may assume a pronounced significance. Cok, for whom his own name is the single most striking unifying theme of his notes, is one of the few annotators to pick up on the internal authorial attribution of a romance. Or this circumstance may be nothing more than a happy accident: for many romances, as for many Brut chronicles, no authorial attribution is present in the text for annotators to pick out. Cok may simply respond to an impulse frequently felt by romance annotators, but only relatively infrequently provided for by romance authors.

503 It is interesting to compare, for example, the treatment of the author in Malory’s Morte Darthur. Attribution to Malory is not internal to the text, but carried in colophons, and already therefore separated out from the main text in the layout of the Winchester manuscript. Intriguingly, when Caxton
Examination of the language Cok used here raises even more questions than the earlier notices of authorial attribution, however. Back on f. 68va, Cok’s note was very clearly textually gleaned: only the facts he reported but the words he used were drawn directly from the immediately proximate text. Here, however, the same cannot be said. While Lovelich indeed repeatedly inscribes his name, both openly and in code, nowhere does he name his profession of skinner, nor information about his patron. One might speculate that this information may have been provided in the missing head to the manuscript, lost to us but perhaps still available to Cok. Yet the relation of information textually gleaned from a passage over one hundred folios away seems out of keeping with Cok’s usual practice. This note seems very much prompted by the textual naming of Lovelich, not as some sort of companion note to an earlier, more information-rich passage. Both here and on f. 68va, Cok seems fired by the mere dropping of a name, regarding these authorial citations as valuable nuggets of information, not as reiterations of information that would be well known to all readers of the manuscript.

All of this raises the question, then: from where does Cok draw the information about Lovelich’s profession and Barton’s relationship to the text? If he does not glean this information from the poems themselves, still the information must come from somewhere. It is necessary to assume that he had some outside knowledge of the

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added his prologue, he followed the model described by Minnis insofar as he highlighted the circumstances of the text’s production. In this case, however, it was his own “authorial” (or compilatorial) role, not Malory’s, that received the lion’s share of his attention. Carol Meale, however, notes a similarity in language between Cok’s wording in “þe instaunce of harry bartoun” and some of Caxton’s other prefaces, connecting it to a commercial rather than personal model of patronage (Readings in Medieval English Romance [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994], 219).

504 I borrow this term from Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman.”

505 See Lovelich, Merlin, line 21596.
circumstances of Lovelich’s composition that would enable him to relay this information. The most likely explanation is that Cok knew Lovelich, or at least knew of him, and was part of the London literary circle of which Lovelich also seems to have been a part. A closer examination of Cok’s ties to the fifteenth-century literary scene, therefore, will grant us better insight not only on Cok himself, but also on the original circumstances of MS 80’s reception.

Part of the reason that the *Merlin* note is so well known is that it has been for decades a lynchpin in our picture of the contemporary London literary world, in which Lovelich and Cok both moved. A number of different scholars have contributed to the picture and, most recently, Warren has provided an excellent summary of the emerging picture, drawing together the various pieces of documentary evidence cited by others, creating perhaps the most comprehensive picture of fifteenth-century literary London to date.\(^\text{506}\) I will not detail all aspects of Warren’s summary here, but will reproduce some of the most relevant points. John Shirley was an important figure in the fifteenth-century London literary scene. He was once imagined to have been a kind of commercial book publisher, but his manuscripts are now considered more likely to have been coterie productions, for private, not commercial use, within a circle of friends and associates.\(^\text{507}\)

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\(^{507}\) For a view of Shirley’s London connections and an articulation of the commercial-production model, see Doyle, “More Light.” For the arguments against Shirley as a true commercial “publisher,” see especially Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 1998). Connolly argues for the importance of the baronial household of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, as a network of circulation for Shirley’s manuscripts. Kathryn Veeman nuances this view of noncommercial circulation, recentering it in London where Shirley spent much of his career (Kathryn M. Veeman, “‘Sende Pis Booke Ageyne Hoome to Shirley’: John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England” [University of Notre Dame, 2010]).
A hub of London literary life, Shirley has documented associations with many London men of letters, Cok among them. Shirley spent a great deal of time at the household of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, but subsequently moved to rented rooms at St. Bartholomew’s hospital where Cok, in his position as rentar, may be presumed to have known him. In fact, the association is conclusively documented: Shirley specifically named Cok in his will, as one of his wife’s co-executors.508

Such a connection to Shirley puts Cok firmly in association with a man sufficiently well-connected in London poetic circles that, with no further evidence, one might imagine Cok well positioned to be “in the know” on matters of authorship and literary patronage. Since Cok knew Shirley, and knew him, as it appears, fairly well, it is no great leap to posit for Cok a wide acquaintance among London’s men of letters, including an author like Lovelich. Nor is such an assumption wholly without foundation in the case of Lovelich. Warren manages to sketch out a path of acquaintance between Shirley and Lovelich, through the person of William Estfield, a sometime London

508 In addition to Cok, other named co-executors were: “Richard Caudrey, Dean of St Martin le Grand, the foundation for secular canons which was almost next door to St Bartholomew’s; [...] Dame Alice Lynne, Shirley’s mother-in-law; John Wakeryng, Master of St Bartholomew’s Hospital [and Cok’s own admired longtime superior]; Edward Norris, citizen and scrivener of London; and John Heron esquire of Lincolnshire.” While this will is important for providing record of Cok and Shirley’s association, it is by no means certain that it was ever carried out, as Shirley’s wife Margaret may well have predeceased her husband (Connolly, John Shirley, 64). Warren even believes that there is some evidence in Cok’s writing of a lettered association between the two men, as well as a business one: “The annotation in MS 80 renders Cok’s association with Shirley graphically in the forms given to ‘French’ and ‘English’: the doubling of consonants (not present in the poem) characterizes, according to Margaret Connolly, Shirley’s own idiosyncratic orthography” (Warren, “Lydgate, Lovelich and London Letters,” 123). This spelling is far from unheard of, however, even outside the Shirley-Cok circle. The scribe of the mid-fifteenth-century College of Arms, Arundel 58 uses it routinely. See “the Englishh thuder ward / drogh a good paas” within the main text on f. 92r (Robert of Gloucester, Metrical Chronicle, 1:341.4840; Wright’s edition, based on a different manuscript, does not employ this spelling). Arundel 58’s dialect is Wiltshire, so this manuscript is outside Shirley’s immediate London milieu (Matheson, The Prose Brut, 332). Shirley’s possible extra-London network associations with the household of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, would not get him much closer to Wiltshire. See also “And wernen vpon Fraynsshe men, Alemanns, and ek Englysshe, / Bretons, Yrissh, and Denmarchisshe” in Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud. Misc. 522, as reported in Smithers, Alisaunder, 1:310.5935–5937. This manuscript is “late fourteenth century” (ibid., 2:2).
alderman and mayor and, perhaps not coincidentally, the dedicatee of two of John Lydgate’s mummmings. In 1444, close to the estimated time of Lovelich’s writing, Shirley made a rather enigmatic, possibly shady business deal, handing over “all his lands and revenues (in London and elsewhere) to several prominent citizens, including Estfield,” perhaps in an effort to “avoid paying a legal judgment.” Estfield, meanwhile, was a political colleague of Henry Barton’s: their tenures as city aldermen overlapped, and both served at one time or another as mayor. This is, of course, the same Barton who was Lovelich’s patron, and who was a distinguished member of the same skinner’s guild to which Lovelich belonged.

All of this may smack somewhat of an elaborate game of six-degrees-of-Kevin-Bacon, but Warren’s goal in sketching out this web of associations is to drive home the notion of an interconnected world of London letters to which Cok, Lovelich, Shirley, Barton and even Lydgate belonged. And this world was, she argues, centered around the activity of the merchant guilds. Warren sees Lovelich’s poems as monumental pieces of narrative verse, translations perhaps comparable in kind, if not necessarily quality, to John Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, but comparable in their circumstances of presentation and proposed audience to Lydgate’s occasional verse, shorter poems dedicated to prominent Londoners and designed to grace guild ceremonial. To bolster this view, Warren draws attention to the passage immediately following the “Gallina Ciligo Amo Similis,” where Lovelich evokes a scene of public oral performance before a live audience:


510 “Now haue j Mad an ende of this talkynge / here now onylch of Merlynes weddyng, / but trewly this Feste hit is Ryht drye, / For me lyst wel to drynken, jn fye, / a drawht Opher two of the beste wyn / that the goode lord hath here with-jn...” (Lovelich, *Merlin*, lines 21579–2584ff.). The invocation of a live
addressing the public of the ‘feste’ and asking to share in their wine so that he may go on with the ‘talking,’ the narrator inscribes the poem pointedly within its performance context – perhaps a guild-sponsored celebration or even a religious feast.”

While the poetic conceit is provocative, the sheer length of Lovelich’s poems may have precluded any real enactment of this scene, at least with regard to the public reading of more than short excerpts. Still, the identification by Cok of Lovelich not as poet but as a “skynner” foregrounds the guild association of both author and text, as does the attribution of the poetic impetus to the oft-examined “instaunce” of Lovelich’s guild superior. Cok himself, of course, was no stranger to the world of the merchant guilds. While a canon himself, his role as rentar would have made of Cok not a cloistered cleric, but a businessman and bureaucrat. Nor was he always a canon: as a youth, Cok began as the apprentice of the goldsmith Thomas Lamporte, “living in Wood Street in a house belonging to the Goldsmith’s Company.”

Whether they were ever publicly performed listening audience is, of course, a romance commonplace, although not, importantly, one Lovelich inherits from his source.


512 Kerling, Cartulary of St. Bartholomew’s Hospital, 8. This early association may have loomed larger in Cok’s self-identity than one might at first assume, and for Norman Moore offers the explanation for the problematic dress of the figure depicted in an illuminated initial of the St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary, of which Cok was the compiler. The portrait, by the fifteenth-century artist William Abell, depicts a man kneeling in prayer before a tau-shaped cross, and, particularly in light of a coat of arms featuring three cocks, is generally assumed to represent Cok himself (Jonathan J. G. Alexander, “William Abell ‘Lymnour’ and 15th Century English Illumination,” in Kunsthistorische Forschungen: Otto Pächt Zu Seinem 70. Geburtstag, ed. Artur Rosenauer and Gerold Weber [Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 1972], 167). Moore avers that “The red gown and black cap in which Cok is represented in his portrait are the dress of a goldsmith” (History of St. Bartholomew’s, 2:2). Nellie Kerling disagrees, however, citing this layman’s costume as grounds for questioning the portrait’s identification as the clerical Cok, proposing instead one Reynold Cok, a butcher and resident in St. Bartholomew’s, as a possible patron for the Cartulary. It is difficult to know how much – or how little – to read into the red, nonclerical dress of the kneeling figure. Comparison of the figure’s dress and hairstyle to that worn by the kneeling figure in the presentation portrait in British Library Arundel 38, may suggest a visual parallel or model: the figures are very similar. The Arundel 38 picture, in which Henry V appears still as Prince of Wales (Mary Erler, “Hoccleve’s Portrait? in the British Library Manuscript Arundel 38,” The Ricardian 13 [2003]: 221) predates the cartulary portrait by a few decades, since Abell flourished c. 1440-1465 (Alexander, “William Abell
or not, the poems of MS 80 were, in the persons of the poet who wrote them, the patron who “instaunced” them and the one documented reader who annotated them, artifacts tied to the metropolitan world of the merchant guilds.

The importance of the *Merlin* “Harry Bartoun” note, therefore, is clear on two fronts. First, the note provides with an invaluable piece of the puzzle in understanding the circumstances of composition for both the *Merlin* and the *History*. It contributes significantly to our picture of mid-fifteenth century literary London, and contributes too to the strength of the case for the merchant guilds as playing a critical role in that literary scene. The note works in the other direction as well, however. It not only informs us about Harry Barton’s role (or at any rate, the role claimed for him) in the poem’s composition, it is part of a larger, manuscript-wide interest on the part of readers in names and the question of authorship. Part of the annotator’s task, it is clear, is the identification and emphasis of certain key facts about the text, in which set authorship is clearly included. Such notes stand apart from the function of the rest of the text’s annotation, but there is evidence that for these medieval readers, they are the most important notes of all, the *sine qua non* of annotation. Even where an annotator finds little else to mark, as is the case for Cok in the *Merlin*, identification of the author holds pride of place. We see here, furthermore, a moment when Cok, elsewhere reacting primarily as a reader, sees here an opportunity to repair an apparent deficiency in his received text. He may know the name of Harry Barton, but we do not, and are grateful that he has taken the trouble to consider us, the readers who come after.

‘Lymnour’,” 166). Even the Hoccleve portrait raises more questions than it answers, however, since Erler challenges the assumption that the red-robed presenter is the poet, arguing instead that the portrait depicts the manuscript’s patron, John Mowbray (Erler, “Hoccleve’s Portrait?”).
4.2 Reading Cok’s Notes: Decoding the Nota Bene

This single note in the Merlin has attracted the lion’s share of critical attention, since it is the most productive in the manuscript for providing information actually extraneous to the text. By attending to Cok’s words there, modern readers are privy to information that Lovelich did not share – or, if he did so, it was somewhere in the important first quire of the manuscript, now lost. Indeed, the vulnerability of a manuscript’s outer pages to attrition and wear may go a long way toward explaining the practice of authors in seeding their names throughout the text, rather than relying on a single introductory signature. Cok’s other notes – all of them falling in the History of the Holy Grail section rather than the Merlin – are less valuable from a “value-added” perspective: they provide no information that is not already supplied by the immediately proximate text. In this regard they are far more typical of romance annotation generally, in which context the “Harry Bartoun” note stands as an outlier.

Cok’s other notes are fascinating as well, however, and in the choice of what aspects of the text he has chosen to highlight or clarify, as well as the form in which these notes are carried out, we may discern his own personal, idiosyncratic approach to the material. We can learn from the annotations some important things about the method Cok employed in making the notes: they are not premeditated, and do not present a comprehensive program for reading the text. Such an approach is not so much a contrast as it is an exaggeration of the note-style that has typified some of the other annotation programs we have examined. Scribes, concerned primarily with laying out a text for readers, tend to be more conscious of presenting the text for those who come after. Even the Hand B annotator of London, Lincoln’s Inn 150, however, sustained his annotation
through long stretches of the manuscript, and made some attempt at following the action of the text through the marginal narrative summaries he supplied. Cok’s notes are frequently brief and more emotionally, reactive to the text that he marks, sometimes employing language that assumes a particular bias, value judgment or attitude toward unfolding events. Cok, unlike the other annotators we have examined, both scribes and readers, sometimes ventures to interpret.

As for the content of Cok’s notes, the History becomes in his handling of it no rousing tale of chivalry or conquest, but the tale of exemplary Christian martyrs, undergoing spiritual testing and experiencing visions. The tale is filled with marvels that witness the power of the Christian faith, but also the strangeness of a Christian’s experience within this fictive world. Strange beasts and fantastic visions take center-stage. Cok does not seem interested in the text’s characters as precursors for an Arthurian chivalry – a perspective of the text certainly available to him and implicit in the scribe’s own notes on the text (see below) – but to interest himself rather in the characters as models of appropriate Christian suffering, and in the marvels as proof of God’s power at work within the world.

The first challenge in studying Cok’s notes is that of deciphering his occasionally terse and obscure wording. He does not typically favor the formulaic “nota” usual to most medieval annotators. Instead, he employs a number of different wordings in the marking of certain lines and passages, some of them fairly standard (“de ...,” “quomodo...”), and others extremely unique and conspicuously personalized. They vary in their expressiveness and wording from, on the more fully-developed end, full notes

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513 “Nota” appears in his marginalia only once, on f. 30va, at Lovelich, History, XXVIII.254.
summarizing narrative content and spelling out in specific terms what exactly has drawn Cok’s notice, down to, on the enigmatic end, simple signatures (e.g. “γ cok / ”) or even just his simple flag-shaped mark, without further explanation (e.g. “γ γ”). In between these two extremes are other notes: not summarizing in their content, but still including more words than the mere “cok” or “γ” of the most terse examples. Perhaps the first step toward understanding Cok’s annotation practice is deciphering these enigmatic intermediate notes, in order to guess Cok’s intentions and the full significance of these abbreviated forms. And they do seem to be abbreviations. One of his favorite notes consists simply of his signature and the single word “bene.” This word is somewhat ambiguous, its true significance not immediately certain: it could be taken as either a terse declaration of approval (“well said”), or, alternatively, merely an abbreviation of nota bene. The first explanation is tempting, but ultimately the second, more mundane interpretation is by far the more likely. “Bene” sometimes marks an incident of which Cok might conceivably approve, as, for example, where Joseph of Arimathea baptizes those who witnessed the healing of Mathegrans. Cok might easily find the outcome of this episode inspiring, either in its content or particular phrasing, or alternatively feel that Joseph has done well to have achieved so much. Yet more often the “bene” does not have any specific referent which Cok might be imagined to approve. “Bene” also marks the decision taken by the pagan Landoyne to carry out King

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514 On f. 21ra, at ibid., XXII.317.
515 On f. 30rb, at ibid., XXVIII.225.
516 On f. 73ra, at ibid., XLIX.403.
Agrestes’s plan to seek out and kill Christians. Cok can hardly consider this resolution a laudable one. Rather, his interest in this line must rest in its position as one of the structural hinges of the narrative. This line marks the end of the story’s setup, the point when a plan of action is made. After this point, Lovelich begins to describe the events that result from the execution of this plan. “Bene,” then is not “well said” or “well done,” but “note well,” an all-purpose plea that particular attention be paid to a line.

Another common but enigmatic formula may have a similar significance, although with an even more explicit interest in dissecting the moving parts of Lovelich’s narrative. This is the formula of which “γ totum istum | passum” on f. 21ra seems to be both the first appearance and the most radical variation. This is the last note associated with the “members” passage, falling next to the line “For these ben the hondes & feet sekerle” (Lovelich, History, XXII.296) and it is surely no accident that this line indeed can be said to encapsulate “that entire passage” in brief. The line so excerpted stands for the totus passus neatly summarizing the content of Lovelich’s rather distended verse, for several lines before and after. A more standard variation of the totus passus formula occurs on f. 23rb. There, Cok’s “γ per totum quod Cok” stands next to the line “So hot sche semeth to been with-Inne” (XXIII.523). This occurs in the middle of a passage describing the phoenix, and specifically at a portion of the description detailing the mother phoenix’s habit of chewing on a particular burning-hot stone, with the result that she herself becomes burning hot, hatching her young only just before being entirely reduced to ashes. The note does not occur at the beginning of the section, when the mother first acquires the stone, nor at its climax, when she is finally incinerated, but

517 On f. 69rb, at ibid., XLVII.147.
instead at a point somewhere in the middle. The noteworthiness of this line seems to rest in the aptness of the phrase “so hot sche semeth” as a description of the general import of the passage. One might expand Cok’s “per totum” to the fuller statement per totum passum, that, presumably, it is “through the entire passage” that this single line is fully explained and worked out.

Not all occurrences of the “per totum” formula fit this model quite so neatly. Still, not one can be said to conclusively disprove this explanation for the note. On f. 21vb, one of the more problematic incidences of this note type appears beside the line “but from hens-forward neuere Adel” (XXIII.88). At first blush, this differs drastically from the note’s apparent function in the phoenix passage, a circumstance that challenges the understanding of per totum partum. The line not only contains no succinct summary of the surrounding context, it does not even contain a full idea. Some allowance should be made, however, first for the lack of absolute precision in the placement of these notes (which might sometimes fall one, two, or even more lines from their intended referent), and secondly for the potential of a single note to encompass a number of adjacent lines in its reference. The context for this particular line is indeed somewhat more enlightening:

And be this I Chastise the wel,
but from hens-forward, neuere Adel,
What Maner Merveilles that Euere thow se,
Loke that abasched no more thow be.

(XXIII.87-90)

This admonition does in fact introduce an extended passage in which the Good Man, in his role as stand-in for divine or prophetic revelation, warns of frightening “Merveilles” that will befall Mordraynes as a test of his faith, with the further assurance that should he remain steadfast, he will come through the trial safely. While the passage itself continues
at some length, the general import of the speech can indeed be well summarized by the lines 87-90, immediately adjacent to Cok’s “per totum” note.

Even more mysterious is the note “γ per totum Cok” on f. 68va, at the line “that of Alle othere to me most chere” (XLVI.448). Here examination of the immediate context does little to illuminate Cok’s meaning:

and 3e, sire Nasciens, my brothir dere,
that Of Alle othere to me most chere,
I 3ow herteliche now beseche
for my wyf, with mylde speche,
whiche that your Owne Soster Is,
that be non wyse sche fare Amys....

(XLVI.447-52)

King Mordraynes intends to retire to a hermitage and, before leaving, sets his affairs in order, entrusting the care of his wife to her brother Nasciens. It is possible that Cok intends to characterize Mordraynes’s particular love of Nasciens as his motive for trusting and favoring him above all others, a trust that he demonstrates over the course of this verbal will. Perhaps a stronger argument might be made for this line, or rather the one above it that opens the sentence, as introducing a new phase in the will, in which Mordraynes gets to the meat of the issue regarding his wife. The direct address of “and 3e, sire Nasciens,” made explicit by the verbal marker “3e,” in essence restarts Mordraynes’s speech, with a renewed bid for the listener’s attention. It must be conceded, however, that the topic of the queen was first introduced as early as line 439, and he does not reach the apparent point of his speech until “so loveth hire In Alle degre”

518 This affection is elsewhere made evident in a manner critical to the plot, as when it is, significantly, the false news of Nasciens’s death that precipitates Mordraynes’s crisis of faith and capitulation to temptation when he departs the Perilous Rock (ibid., XXIV).
(line 456), a full eight lines after the note. In the end, Cok’s meaning here remains obscure, doing little to shed light on the meaning of the “per totum” formula. If Cok’s meaning here does not seem to be adequately expressed by the idea of the single line as summarizing the surrounding passage, neither does there seem to be another interpretation that would make better sense of Cok’s note. In the absence of any clear alternative, one might ascribe to Cok any motive as easily as none at all, and nothing exists to prove that he did not see these lines as fitting the same mold.

Ultimately, therefore, the function of “per totum” seems, when it is comprehensible at all, to be fairly consistent with its use in the phoenix passage. Cok marks with this note a line or group of lines that offers a succinct summation of the entire passage, the totum of which it is a part. As in the case of the “bene” notes, Cok’s “per totum” formula shares the same approach to the text as his summary notes: Cok’s focus in note production is on delineating the progress of the narrative, picking out key moments in the progress of the plot, in order to guide a reader through the intricacies of Lovelich’s sometimes opaque verse. The summarizing notes clarify the most important event (as Cok viewed them), and the “per totum” notes have a similar effect, allowing the marked lines of text to be pulled from their context for the same function, as summations of the surrounding verse.

4.3 Episodic Microstructures: Medieval Close-Reading

Armed with this understanding of Cok’s annotation practice, we may now turn to the analysis of Cok’s notes as a whole, with particular reference to those more expansive notes comprising brief summaries of the text. As has already been repeatedly stated, it is
important to emphasize that his notes do not form a comprehensive program of
annotation for the entire manuscript, or even for the entirety of a single text in that
manuscript. That Cok read past the confines of the *History* alone is evident from his
“Harry Bartoun” note on f. 127rb, over 38 folios into the *Merlin*, and 54 folios after the
last note recognizably in his hand. Even within the *History*, however, the notes are
irregularly grouped, with some folios and series of folios carrying heavy annotation and
long stretches of the manuscript passing without comment. It is possible to divide up the
notes in Cok’s hand into perhaps ten subgroupings of annotations, some long series of
many notes, and others consisting of only one or two. The series, divided according to
topic, are as follows:

ff. 21ra-24vb: the story of Mordraynes on the Perilous Rock,
   including the visitations of the Good Man and the Fair Woman,
   and an extended description of the allegorical phoenix Scipiliens
ff. 30rb-va: the description of the sword Mordraynes finds on
   Solomon’s ship
f. 56vb: at the lines “And this was the Satyrday Certeinly / Afor
   Esterne day ful trewly” (Lovelich, *History*, XLI.217-18)
ff. 64ra-b: Josephes’s encounter with King Crudelx
f. 68va: Mordraynes entrusts his wife to Nasciens
f. 68va: note naming “Sir Robert of Borroun” as translator
ff. 68vb-69rb: the story of King Agrestes
ff. 72va-73ra: the story of the healing of Mathegrans
ff. 73ra-b: the story of Joseph and his followers walking on water
f. 127rb: note naming Lovelich as translator, “at þe instaunce of
   harry bartoun”

These series are not all clearly delineated by Cok himself: notes on the healing of
Mathegrans, for example, progress seamlessly into the marvel of Joseph walking on
water in the subsequent episode. This is some indication that the choice of episodes to
annotate was not entirely dictated by Cok’s particular interest in those episodes, but was
likely influenced at least in part by the surrounding context. Once Cok began annotating,
that is, he was probably more likely to continue doing so, even if the story alone would not have otherwise demanded his attention. Once the pen was in his hand, he was more likely to use it a second time.\textsuperscript{519}

It is possible to speculate, for instance, that the long stretch of notes on ff. 21ra-24rb, the first of Cok’s notes extant in the manuscript,\textsuperscript{520} was initiated by his interest in the seven members of the soul that drew his first notes. Here is visible the paradox inherent in Cok’s approach to the MS 80: he does not fully abandon the habits of organization, ordering and analysis by subordination that we may see in the manuscripts that are his own scribal productions. Here, however, he works in small-scale, rather than on the level of the manuscript as a whole.

In BL Add. 10392, Cok has showed himself to be extremely attracted to taxonomies and lists of all kinds. The invocation of “seven members” of the soul are each listed by name and compared to the physical hands and feet of the body, for without these constituent virtues, the soul “May [...] nethir Meven ne gon” (Lovelich, \textit{History}, XXII.298). It is possible to compare this list of “members” with some of the taxonomies of virtue Cok collected in Add. 10392. There are, for instance, the seven remedies proposed for the seven deadly sins (\textit{humilitas}, \textit{caritas}, \textit{patientia}, \textit{amor et sollicitudo}, \textit{paupertas spiritualis}, \textit{sobrietas}, \textit{castitas}; on f. 2v) or the nine “Temperancies,” individually numbered by Cok as well as named (\textit{modestia}, \textit{abstinentia}, \textit{vereundia}, \textit{castitas}, \textit{honestas}, \textit{moderatio}, \textit{paritas}, \textit{sobrietas}, \textit{pudicitia}; on f. 3r). The lists of virtues,

\textsuperscript{519}Even this remark, however, must be nuanced by the observation that Cok did not always hesitate to drop – sometimes for long periods – a pen briefly taken up. The note on f. 56vb stands out for its relative isolation.

\textsuperscript{520}It is impossible to do more than guess about what, if anything, Cok may have found of interest in the manuscript’s now-missing head.

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temperancies and remedies in Add. 10392 do not exactly correspond to the “members” of MS 80, any more than there is consistency or exact correspondence even among Add. 10392’s own lists. Cok there collected a variety of taxonomies, both competing and complementary.

Here in the History he has encountered another, similar moment, no more authoritative – but not necessarily any less so – than the chorus of authorities collected in 10392. His treatment of this taxonomy is, furthermore, telling. Lovelich never mentions the key number seven so emphasized by Cok’s notation, merely listing off the “members” with no comment on their number:

The membres of the sowle these bene:
Swetnesse of herte Is On ful schene,
Good Religiows, with pyte,
Lowliche reuerence to God, & [vnite]521
Innocense, & Ful therto of Mercye

(History, XXII.287-91)

The reason for Lovelich’s failure to highlight the significant number seven is explained by reference to the French text he is translating, where there are not seven “members” but six. Lovelich has erroneously construed the general description of the “members” (“les boines teces del cuer”) as a first item in the list. The French in fact offers:

Et tu ses bien que nus ne puet estre plus contrais que cil qui a perdu les membres de lame ce sont les boines teces del cuer . si comme religion reuerence concorde pitie misericorde

(Sommer, Vulgate, 1:92.24-26)

I know no one more crippled than someone who has lost the limbs of the soul, that is, the good riches of the heart, like religion, pity,

521 Furnivall’s edition reads “divinite” here, but this is an error. The manuscript reading, translating the French concorde of the Vulgate original, is “vnite.”
reverence, concord, innocence, and compassion.
(Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:117)522

The significance of the number seven, therefore, as well as the numbering of the “members” with Arabic numerals, beginning with “Swetnesse of herte” as number one, is entirely Cok’s own contribution. When he encountered in Lovelich’s text a taxonomy capable of being converted into a schematic list after the model of those found in BL Add. 10392, he employed both numbers and a marginal note to transform the passage into a carefully numbered list accompanied by a rubric or title. The list is characteristically Cok, the careful numbers are typical of his organizational approach, and even the mnemonic advocated by the text of understanding the “members” as physical hands and feet may recall the diagrams of mnemonic hands at the end of Add. 10392, attributed “per manus · ff · Johannis Cok” (f. 1v).

It is easy to imagine, therefore, that this list of “members,” so typical in many ways of Cok’s own scribal production, might exert a powerful draw on his attention, and present a tailor-made opportunity for his schematizing scribal intervention. That this moment quickly passes does not prompt Cok to set down his pen again, however. About twenty lines after the final note connected to the members, he continues his annotation without any apparent interruption, with “γ cok /.”523 It is important, in reconstructing Cok’s motivation in choosing to annotate what he does, to recall that the manuscript’s first Cokian note,524 at the beginning of the “members” passage, is not the beginning of

522 Chase, with the “good riches of the heart,” translates “boines richeces del cuer,” a variant recorded in Sommer’s footnotes. “Boines teces” are more literally “good qualities.”

523 On f. 21ra, at ibid., XXII.317.

524 On f. 21ra, at ibid., XXII.284.
the episode in the text. Nor is it indeed even the beginning of the speech in which the “members” passage falls. King Mordraynes (the name King Evalach adopted following his conversion to Christianity) had been mysteriously carried off from his bed back on f. 16va (at Lovelich, *History*, XVIII.359). On f. 17va, immediately under a gap left for illustration, it is revealed that Mordraynes had been transported to the Perilous Rock, a small island, deserted and waste, subject to violent storms and visitations by a succession of semi-visionary and semi-allegorical figures, there for the temptation and reinforcement of Mordraynes’s faith.525 He is visited first by the Good Man526, who instructs Mordraynes in Christian patience, with the admonition “Thin mynde thou sette vpon þe Trenite” (XXI.154). After the Good Man’s departure, the Fair Woman visits Mordraynes, promising to free him from his imprisonment on the island if he will forsake Christianity and swear loyalty to her.527 When Mordraynes does not assent to her demands, the Fair Woman sails away again, leaving Mordraynes to endure another storm, until, on the following morning, the Good Man returns528 and begins to deliver a speech of “comfort,” asserting the power of Christianity to liberate believers from the prison of sin. It is this speech that culminates in the taxonomy of the “members” of the soul, and which is immediately followed by the Good Man’s relation of the Fair Woman’s history. In other words, Mordraynes’s adventures on the island, however one may choose to mark the opening of that episode, began well before Cok placed his first notes on f. 21ra. Even

525 “Now here be-gynneth kyng Mordreins Storie, / that vpon a Roche In the se is Certeinlye” (ibid., XX.1–2).

526 The character’s first appearance is at ibid., XXI.48.

527 The woman first arrives on f. 19va at ibid., XXI.217ff.

528 On f. 20va, at ibid., XXII.183.
the speech of which the “members” passage forms a part began without marginal notice on the folio before the notes. There is, therefore, no indication that Cok intended to annotate the passage the Perilous Rock episode in a systematic manner. Cok has not premeditated his notes, fitting them into a general, carefully structured plan. It is even possible that these notes represent Cok’s reactions to reading the text for the first time, unsure, before the fact, what he will encounter of particular interest. Here, it seems that the attractions of the “members” passage itself were powerful indeed, and that at least some of the attraction in the Good Man / Fair Woman adventure as a whole arose in inertia. Cok required a particular reason to begin, but once started, his notational momentum not only permitted but encouraged the continuing production of notes over four folios.

These observations deepen our picture of Cok’s annotational practice in MS 80. First, we see that the same interest in ordered taxonomy, as well as in the examination of moral virtue, is an interest he has carried over from BL Add. 10392, to inform his reading of a romance text. When he encounters this material within a literary context, genre does not appear to control his reception of that material. Rather, he makes an attempt to bring the taxonomy more closely in line with the types of excerpted, freestanding lists observable in Add. 10392. He does not appear to value this taxonomy of members any the less for encountering it in a romance context. More generally, however, we also get a fairly clear image of Cok’s process. The notes he writes do not seem – despite the careful numbering of the “members” – part of a pre-planned, manuscript-long schema. He has not annotated the entire manuscript comprehensively, nor even made a consistent attempt to systematically annotate individual episodes. Rather than reflecting a larger
organizational plan, Cok seems alert mostly to the local concerns of the individual passage under his eye, with an attention that does not extend further than the immediately proximate context. However, this does not mean that Cok never sustains annotation over longer stretches of manuscript. Instead, once a particular local context has caught his eye, it will sometimes elicit a sustained act of annotation, in which his interest in an event or context is maintained over the succeeding folios, although not, significantly, with scrupulous regard to the limits of an episode or story arc. On f. 68v, an annotation series begins in the textual context of an episode that reaches a major moment of transition at the base of column a, where Lovelich steps out of the narrative briefly to credit Robert de Boron in his role as translator, an attribution that earns Cok’s emphatic attention (History, XLV.497-501). Yet annotation continues in column b, even as the text begins a new and entirely distinct episode: Cok does not seem deterred by the narrative break, or to view it as a bar to continuous annotation. This assessment of Cok’s practice is not greatly dissimilar from P. J. C. Field’s characterization of the Winchester Malory annotations as “responses on impulse,” a lack of method reflected in “their variety of content and irregularity of occurrence.” The main difference between the annotations in Winchester and those in MS 80 is in the intensity of the notational attention. The Morte’s notes are scattered much more widely, and the series in which they fall are extended over many more folios. Cok might devote intense attention to four folios of text, whereas a stretch of relative intensity in the Winchester MS might extend to over twenty-five. The significance of this fact for understanding the respective practices of Cok and the Malorian scribal annotator is suggestive but ultimately elusive.

529 “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” Medium Aevum 70, no. 2 (2001): 228.
4.4 Language and Interpretation: Moving Beyond the Words of the Text

The tenor of my analysis so far may imply that, since it was the “members” passage that prompted Cok to take up his pen, and since his continued annotation of the text sprang from this initial impulse, this means the notes on the subsequent folios are unimportant or uninteresting. Nothing, however, could be further from the case. Cok may not have initially set out to annotate this passage, but once he began, his notes are such as offer fascinating insight into both his process and his priorities. In this episode, two allegorical characters, the Good Man and the Fair Woman, alternately visit Mordraynes on his island prison. The Fair Woman tempts the king with offers of transport off the rock, and demoralizing news of the deaths of his friends and relatives. The Good Man, in his turn, exhorts Mordraynes to strengthen and affirm his Christian faith, and to endure the hardships of the rock with patience. Cok’s notes unfold as follows:

f. 21ra, at Lovelich, History, XXII.284: \"γ\", manicule
21ra, at XXII.290: “vij\textumlaut{}m\text{}bra | anime - I cok”
21ra, at XXII.296: \"γ totum istum \| passum\"
22ra, at XXII.317: \"γ cok / \"
21rb, at XXII.325: \"γ de casu luciferi\"
21va, at XXIII.55: \"γ cok de visione | Morderayn Reg\"
21vb, at XXIII.88: \"γ cok per totum\"
22ra, at XXIII.166: \"γ cok bene\"
22vb, at XXIII.371: \"γ de tempesta | te post tempta | cionem Regis\"
23ra, at XXIII.420: \"γ de fame Regis \"
23ra, at XXIII.435: \"γ de descripzione volucris \"
23rb, at XXIII.484: \"γ de natura volucris demonstrata Regi \"
23rb, at XXIII.523: \"γ per totum quod Cok\"
23va, at XXIII.557: \"γ de Sciplione volucre mirabile\"
23vb, at XXIII.628: \"γ quomodo post \| \textumlaut{}m\text{} dies dominus | confortaut Mordreyns | Regem in mare \&ceter\"
23vb, at XXIII.651: “quamodo dyabolus apropinquat ad temptandum Regem”
24ra, at XXIII.691: “de pacienza Regis”
24rb, at XXIV.4: “de mirabile visione fantastica per d[yabolum] | facta Regi Mordreyns in mare [&cetera]”
24rb, at XXIV.26: “de equo infra nauem &cetera”
24va, at XXIV.79: “[...] quomodo dyabolus in specie | [m]ilitis toke · kinge | [M]o[dreyns by þe | [left]e hande oute | [of þe]e perillous Roche | [& t]o a schippe”
24va, at XXIV.92: “[...] per totum quod cok · ”
24vb, at XXIV.120: “quomodo dominus confortauti Regem post temptacionem”
24vb, at XXIV.147: “quamodo dominus manifestaut omnia | dyabolica figmenta in | temptando Regem &cetera”

There is a considerable amount here to explore. First there is the question of Cok’s language, an issue which reflects on Cok’s ideas about his model for what annotation means, while illuminating, as well, his technique for note production. We can see in both his language and diction evidence of haste and impromptu production. His diction, moreover, is influenced by the text, but not mechanically so: he does not merely reproduce words or phrases that catch his eye, further evidence (if any were needed) that Cok considers himself in this manuscript as a reader first and foremost, processing and interpreting the text, rather than merely packaging it.

Cok writes his notes predominantly in Latin, in a simple but apparently confident syntax, erring only occasionally and in ways more likely due to haste and inattention than to weak Latinity. The simplicity is perhaps best explained by the straightforward simplicity of his task: his notes are short, and do not lend themselves to lengthy or complex constructions. The confidence is in line with what may be expected of a cleric

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530 The manuscript clearly reads “vsion,” no doubt an error for “visione.”
and scribe who routinely copied and annotated in Latin, as in the St. Bartholomew’s cartulary or Add. 10392. It is more difficult to say whether the choice of Latin for his notes on a manuscript in English was a conscious decision, or merely the result of long habit, for a man who presumably worked with Latin daily, as both a bureaucrat and scribe. It is important to remark that, despite the predominance of Latin, Cok’s notes are not, as a matter of fact, entirely in that language. Several notes are wholly in English, including ones on ff. 72va and 73ra, as well as both notes on the authorship/translation of Robert de Boron and Lovelich. It is tempting to speculate that Cok may be influenced by the vernacular proper names in his choice of language, finding “brooklond” or “Darnauntys” unnatural to Latinize. It is also possible that he may simply be falling into English, prompted by the language of the text he is annotating. The note at XXIV.79 is particularly illuminating, as Cok begins in Latin, but soon switches to English in the middle of his sentence. The casual switch from one language to another provides more proof, if any were needed, of Cok’s own authorship of the notes, as well as the lack of premeditation in their production. The notes flow quickly and naturally from his pen, their bilingual nature a reflection of Cok’s own bilingual thoughts rather than a deliberate choice.

531 “at þe/ preyer of l Ioseph hou þe l mawmetys l were brende in þe l forest of brooklond” (at Lovelich, History, XLIX.246).

532 “þe forest of l Darnauntys ·” (at ibid., L.6).

533 On f. 68va, at ibid., XLVI.501 and on f. 127rb at Lovelich, Merlin, line 10251.

534 An interesting point of comparison may be the note on f. 22va at Lovelich, History, XXIII.322, where he does attempt to Latinize the proper name “Mordraynes” with the genitive “Mordradi.” This is a practice, however, he seems to abandon after this single attempt.
Cok is, in this regard, very typical of annotators of both romance and chronicle. The notes in *Troilus and Criseyde* manuscripts, annotations are (with two key exceptions) usually in Latin, a fact that does not prevent language creep, as in the single English “Here Pander spekyth to Troylus” in British Library, Harley 4912.\(^{535}\) Bodleian Library, Arch. Selden B.24, one of those whose marginal notes embrace English more fully, does not for all that fully abandon Latin, instead shifting easily between the languages. A letter is introduced to the reader with “prima littera Troilus missa ad Criseid,”\(^ {536}\) only to conclude with the marginal note “her’ endes troylus his first lettyr.”\(^ {537}\) Similar linguistic code-switching is present in chronicles as well. The notes in British Library, Royal 13.A.xxi (carrying, among other texts, a *Roman de Brut* formed of ll. 8729-14866 of Wace’s *Brut*, prefixed by the so-called “Royal Brut,” a variant unique to this manuscript) display a similar bilingual confusion. The notes, written by the scribe, are frequently brief, consisting sometimes only of a proper name or length of reign, a circumstance that makes certain linguistic identification impossible. Still, some notes are clearly in French, while others, sometimes immediately adjacent and comparable in content, are presented in Latin. And in a few notes, we can see a shifting between languages: “Locrin mo / l ritur x anz .,”\(^ {538}\) “Embracus rex l xl anz .”\(^ {539}\) In both of these cases, the note commences in Latin (the normal linguistic bias in this portion of the manuscript, but by

\(^ {535}\) Siglum H\(^ 5\), fifteenth century; the note falls at I.547 (Benson and Windeatt, “Manuscript Glosses,” 37).

\(^ {536}\) Siglum S\(^ 1\), late fifteenth century; the note falls at line II.1065 (ibid., 41).

\(^ {537}\) At line II.1085 (ibid.).

\(^ {538}\) On f. 47va, at Bell, *Royal Brut*, line 1106.

\(^ {539}\) On f. 47vb, at ibid., line 1144.
no means a practice universally or even predominantly followed throughout) and then switches to the vernacular following the interjection of the Roman numeral, an abbreviation that could be read equally easily as standing for the Latin *decem* or the French *dis*, Latin *quadruginta* or French *quarante*. The switch to French in this case may be read as a bias toward that language, either as being the annotator’s natural reading for “x” of “xl” as *dis* and *quarante*, or as indicating perhaps some uncertainty about the appropriate grammatical case for *anni*, with the equivalent expression in French springing more readily to his pen. It may also be the case that a Latin annotator’s best intentions might be undermined by the vernacularity of the text he reads.

In the case of MS 80, it is difficult to determine to what degree Cok’s lapse into English at line 79 is prompted by the vocabulary of the nearby text. The adjacent lines “and the kyng took þere be the left hond, / to þe schipward to leden he gan to fond” include many of the same basic words (“took,” “kyng,” “be the left hond”) as the note, although not, it should be observed, in spelling identical to that used in the note. Cok’s orthography, at least, is not drawn directly from the text. Interesting, too, is examination of Cok’s spelling of the proper name Mordraynes: a good point of comparison, as he does not habitually Latinize the name. Cok’s orthography favors “Mordreyns,” with variations including “Morderayns” and “Mordraynes.” The text, meanwhile, first introduces the name as “Mordraynes” (Lovelich, *History*, XVI.221), but immediately enters into a period of instability in orthography, followed by an apparent preference for “Mordreyns” (XVII.79, 221, 234), followed by another switch, this time to the more franciform “Mordreins” (XVIII.8, 12, XVIX.37, 244, XX.1, 40). Interestingly, in the Good Man / Fair Woman passage, Cok *cannot* be drawing his spelling of the name from the
immediately adjacent text, for the simple reason that the name “Mordraynes” is not used there, in any form. For the entire stretch of Cok’s annotation on ff. 21-24, Mordraynes is referred to only as “the king,” or by the name he held before his conversion and baptism, Evalach. The Fair Woman, visiting Mordraynes on the Perilous Rock to tempt him and test the strength of his Christian commitment, addresses him only by the name he held before his conversion, a practice the text’s objective narratorial voice also adopts, for the duration of his temptation. The Fair Woman’s choice is a deliberate one, and is deliberately emphasized by the text, to the degree that on f. 21rb the name “Mordreins” is used, once, to highlight the difference in the Fair Woman’s practice from that of her rival the Good Man:

Thanne this Goodman took him be the hond,
And be his Name him Cleped, I vndirstond,
That he took be his Corestenenge,
Sire Mordreins, that was ferst Eualach þ e kynge.

(XXIII.9-12)

Where the text, that is, uses the name “Eualach” throughout this passage, employing the name of “Mordreins” only to elucidate the significance of this shift in practice, Cok does not follow the Fair Woman’s lead540. He refers to the king throughout as “king” or “rex,” but also by name as “Mordraynes,” appealing to the reality of the character’s Christian identity, even as that identity is being challenged by the characters within the text. Cok’s vocabulary, therefore, is not drawn solely and directly from the adjacent text, and the

540 Contrast, for example, Lovelich, History, XXIII.301–302: “Lo Al this Couseil ʒaf this wommanne / To this kyng Eualach there thanne.” The use of “Eualach” as the king’s name is the narrator’s, not the Fair Woman’s, but is no doubt prompted by her systematic use throughout the section. The narrative voice adopts the practice of the characters, rather than insisting on a fixed, “true” and Christian identity for the king as Mordraynes.
text’s diction does not solely rule his own. The final picture that emerges in this analysis is of notes made quickly and without extensive forethought or planning. They are, therefore, necessarily colored by the language and diction of the text already on the page. There is, furthermore, no obvious recourse to a wider knowledge or body of literature external to the manuscript. Were he influenced principally by a knowledge of the story as it appeared in the French Vulgate cycle, for instance, one might expect the spelling “Mordrain” or “Mordrains” to predominate in his notes. That he does not use this, but instead uses a spelling culled from some six folios before, argues for a diction – and thus a mindset – steeped in a specifically English telling of the story, ultimately drawn, one presumes, from within this manuscript. Yet his mind is not exclusively fixed on the precise diction of the immediate context. His notes are certainly textually influenced, but not, in the purest sense of Grindley’s term “textually gleaned.”

The identification of the diction used as Cok’s own rephrasing, the product of his choice rather than of a mechanical harvest of the text, makes the analysis of that diction all the more interesting. And, beyond the formulae of “bene” and “per totum,” there is a regularity and pattern within Cok’s usage. Latin notes for him regularly open with either de or quomodo. English notes have a freer vocabulary and syntax. The note on f. 68va at XLVI.439 opens with the English equivalent of quomodo, “how,” but on f. 72va (at XLIX.246), “hou” is suspended until the note’s second line, and on f. 73ra (at L.6, “γ be forest of l Darnauntys ·”) he includes no such introductory formula. Other words, more substantive, move beyond a formula of diction, and in their repetition begin to shape a pattern for understanding Cok’s preoccupations in the narrative. The use of particular

541 Grindley, “Reading Piers Plowman,” 86.
words, like the focus on particular topics, is due, of course, in a large part to the subject matter of the narrative. *Rex*, in its oblique cases, is by far the most frequently-used word in this stretch of Cok’s annotation, with twelve repetitions, as it stands in for Mordraynes’s name to identify that character, and is necessary for description of the events in a section where king Mordraynes is the principal actor. Other characters, however – the Good Man and the Fair Woman, as well as the false “Old knyght,” bearing the appearance of a trusted retainer, the “Brothir to [Mordraynes’s] steward” (XXIV.52, 53), and even the illusory corpse of Nasciens – are important to the unfolding of the plot. Yet these characters, some of them actors just as much as Mordraynes, are not referred to either by name nor even by epithet. No “Good Man,” nor any *vir bonus*, for that matter, is ever named. Instead, one of the most frequently repeated words, in its various grammatical forms, is *diabolus*, at four appearances. Coupled with *diabolica* (two uses) and even *luciferi* (one use), a demonic presence – whether it is that of the Devil or merely of a devil is unclear – is very strongly marked in the annotations. This can be contrasted with the agency of *dominus* (three uses). The Good Man and the Fair Woman, that is, are not treated by Cok as characters in their own right, but merely as conduits of diabolic and divine influence. They are not agents themselves, but merely tools; they are not characters, but aspects of the landscape of romance. Cok, that is, does not conduct a purely literal reading of the text, but permits himself some interpretation, demystifying the allegory to some degree, and giving subsequent readers a more direct access to the meaning of Lovelich’s text.

This is perhaps most strongly evident in one note on f. 21rb (at XXII.325), where the Good Man directly explains to Mordraynes the allegorical significance of the Fair
Woman, revealing her history and motivations. She was, he reports, once his honored servant, but became proud and sought to usurp his lordship. For her crimes, the Good Man exiled her from his lands, and she now resentfully works to thwart his projects at every turn. The story is, of course, a thinly veiled allegory for the fall of Lucifer from the grace of God’s kingdom, and the conflict of the Good Man and the Fair Woman over the allegiance of King Mordraynes ought surely to be understood as a battle between God and the devil for the soul of man. Yet while this allegory is clear to any alert Christian reader of the text, Lovelich never explicitly so glosses the passage. Within the text itself, the only level of interpretation offered is the literal one, in which Good Man and Fair Woman remain mysterious, supernatural characters. They are symbolically overdetermined, to be sure, but are never overtly stripped of their allegorical integuments.

A slavishly literal annotator of the text, therefore, would report only the comings and goings of Good Man and Fair Woman, and describe only the literal details of their fictional histories. Such literalness would, moreover, seem to belong to romance annotation norms, as these notes summarize, but do not, as a rule, interpret. Cok, however, takes the logical step of exegesis, and provides the gloss for which the text cries out. Beside the passage describing the Fair Woman’s fall from grace is no reference to her character or personal history, but rather the note “γ de casu luciferi.” The Fair Woman is fully identified with the fallen angel she represents. Cok’s note does not address the literal level of the text, but instead provides the religious signified standing behind the allegory.

A similar act of interpretation with regard to the true agency of events in the text is visible in another note, no f. 24vb, near the end of the Perilous Rock series (at
XXIV.120). As the Fair Woman was glossed by Cok as “Lucifer,” here the Good man is conflated with “dominus” (“the lord,” that is, God). The vocabulary of Cok’s note is to some degree drawn directly from the neighboring text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{there sawgh he to-forn hym Coen Anon} \\
\text{the goode man that In the Schipe gan gon,} \\
\text{wheche that him Comforted Often Sithe,} \\
\text{and with his goode wordis Made him blithe.}
\end{align*}
\]

(XXIV.117-20; my emphasis)

Cok seems to have lifted his “confortauit”\(^542\) directly from Lovelich. The introduction of God as comforter, however, while certainly implicit in the allegory of Good Man and Fair Woman, is an innovation, a departure from a strict adherence to the literal text. There is no real doubt about the meaning carried by these allegorical characters, and the Fair Woman’s “true” nature as “the devel” will shortly be revealed (XXIV.160). Still, while the Fair Woman may be explicitly demonic, she is never in the text fixed with the name of Lucifer, this identification never being brought by Lovelich fully to the surface of the historical (rather than allegorical or anagogical) level of interpretation.\(^543\) Likewise, the Good Man has previously revealed himself as the Fair Woman’s lord, and his advice and admonitions have carried the weight of divine revelation. But he is not here, nor at any point, actually named as God, in any of the three persons. For Cok to term him as such is to take the perhaps radical step of subordinating the literal level of the text to its

\(^542\) “quomodo dominus confortuit | Regem post temptacionem”

\(^543\) Three- or four-level exegesis of scripture was a medieval commonplace. See, for example, the explanation provided by Thomas Aquinas (Quodlibet 7, Question 6, translated in Denys Turner, Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs, Cistercian Studies 156 [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1995], 341–355). Aquinas identifies four levels of scriptural exegesis (the literal/historical; the allegorical, prefiguring Christ; the moral, giving instruction on correct Christian behavior; and the anagogical, prefiguring the “church triumphant” of the end times), a system he encourages for the interpretation not just of scripture, but of literature generally.
allegorical meaning. This would not be so surprising an attitude to bring to bear on an Old Testament episode, but is far more provocative as a method of reading romance.

The act of interpretation continues in the next note, with “dominus” again used as the explicit agent: “\( \gamma \) quomodo dominus manifestuit omnia \( \text{dyabolica figmenta in l temptando Regem \&cetera.} \)”\(^{544}\) This time, however, God is not standing in the place of the Good Man, for it is not the Good Man who has manifested these figments. All along, in the text as well as in the notes, the trials and temptations to which Mordraynes has been subjected have been attributed either to the agency of the Fair Woman, or, more generally, to that of a demonic spirit or devil.\(^{545}\) Here, however, while the “figmenta” Cok cites are “dyabolica,” they are not diabolical in their source or origin. The visions Mordraynes sees of the Fair Woman, the brother of his steward, and the corpse of Nasciens, are illusory and false, but their ultimate source is given by Cok as divine. The agent of Mordraynes’s testing is ultimately God himself. The effect of this shift in agency is to create a parallel shift in the nature of the comfort that Mordraynes receives. In Lovelich’s text, the Good Man assures Mordraynes that he should not lose faith because the visions he has seen, the visitations he has experienced, have not been real. Nasciens’s death was a lie, and the promises of rescue were the blandishments of demons, untrustworthy messengers. The contrast is one between truth and mere image, and the comfort offered to Mordraynes lies in the illegitimacy of surface appearance as a reflection of true meaning. If God is the agent of these manifestations, however, as he is in Cok’s note, the nature of the comfort offered to Mordraynes is subtly altered. In Cok’s


\(^{545}\) Cf. ibid., XXIV.155–156: “and the devel it was Also / that In thin Avisiown Cam \( \parallel \) to.”
presentation, Mordraynes should be comforted not because the devil is the ultimate source of the *figmenta*, but because God is: all that Mordraynes has experienced is revealed as part of the divine plan, and as thereby ultimately benign. It is furthermore not the devil who has been “tempting” the king, but God, testing the strength of Mordraynes’s commitment to conversion not in the hope of a recantation, but in the expectation of a steadfast resistance.\textsuperscript{546}

It is possible, then, to read over Cok’s notes in this episode a final time, and to discover in them an outline for making sense of the episode. Annotation begins with the highlighting of a sermonic passage, itemizing the “members of the soul.” The notes then address the allegorical back-story of the Fair Woman.\textsuperscript{547} It is in this important to note the specificity and attention to placement in Cok’s distribution of these notes. The first (“\textsuperscript{1} cok / ”) marks the beginning of the Fair Woman’s story, while the second (“\textsuperscript{1} de casu luciferi”) is placed at the beginning of her fall proper, after her initial honored position has been established. Cok is not just attentive to the broad themes of the narrative, but desires to identify the various stages in the unfolding plot at their precise locations.

\textsuperscript{546} Or steadfast, at least, to a certain limit. The ultimate failure of Mordraynes’s constancy is foretold in the prediction (fulfilled at ibid., XXIV.79, and marked by notes both here and at its initial ibid., XXIII.166 formulation) that he will remain on the Perilous Rock only until the devil leads him off by the left hand. Yet this evidence of human frailty is the face of temptation seems forgiven even before it is committed.

\textsuperscript{547} On f. 21ra and b, at ibid., XXII.317 and 325.
4.5 The Marvelous, Again

Following the relation of the Fair Woman’s history, a note marks a line that announces the marvelous nature of the events to follow. Mordraynes will, in this adventure, “see” “marvels”:

But from hens-forward, neuere Adel,  
What Maner Merveilles that Euere thou se,  
Loke that abasched no more thou be....

(Lovelich, History, XXIII.88-90)

The admonition is as apt for the reader as it is for Mordraynes himself. In the following note, Cok marks the initial articulation of a prophecy that will subsequently be noted at its fulfillment:548 Cok’s notes do not necessarily permit an easy visual pairing of these passages (nothing about the notes makes them conspicuous as a matched pair), but the revisitation of an earlier prophecy does signal a consistency and sustained attention to this issue across the notes. Cok notes (“bene”) the early appearance of the prophecy, and then, when it comes to its fruition, bringing a close to the stage of the narrative it governs (Mordraynes’s tenure on the Perilous Rock), Cok again recognizes its importance, finding it note-worthy.

After the note on the prophecy, the events marked by Cok begin to take on a pattern of temptation and consolation. The notes are not comprehensive, and do not record every vision Mordraynes experiences, nor every shift in his fortunes. Neither do they succeed very well in distinguishing Mordraynes’s visions from one another. A few

548 “In this Roche Schalt thou byden Certain / Tyl that the devel Owt the take be þe left hond” (ibid., XXIII.166–167). Cf. ibid., XXIV.79–80.
notes do contain a distinguishing specificity (“de tempestate,” 549 “de fame Regis”) 550 but
details are in large part absent. Cok writes about “temptation,” “vision,” and “illusion,”
but the sense of repetition, in incident and vocabulary, is stronger than any attempt made
to distinguish the individual stages of Mordraynes’s ordeal. The repeated refrain of “in
mare” 551 emphasizes the essential similarity of wording from note to note, without
actually contributing very much to the reader’s knowledge of the setting or other such
detail. 552 When the reader is alerted by the note “[γ ] de fantastica & l [dy]abolica
illusione l [fac]ta Regi in mare,” 553 there is in these words little that distinguishes this
stage in the narration from that near the note “γ de mirabile vi[sione fantastica per
d[yabolum] l facta Regi Mordreyns in mare [&cetera].” 554 The impression that Cok
creates is not one of separate, identifiable incidents, but of an extended period of
temptation and consolation. Mordraynes experiences diabolical visions, is tested, and is

549 On f. 22vb, at ibid., XXIII.371.
550 On f. 23ra, at ibid., XXIII.420.
551 On f. 22va at ibid., XXIII.322, f. 23vb at ibid., XXIII.628, f. 24rb at ibid., XXIV.4 and f. 24va
at ibid., XXIV.53.
552 There is an interesting linguistic contrast between the “in mare” formula standard in Cok’s
notes in this section, and the altered form he employs in the one local note where he employs English.
There, events do not occur “in mare,” but Mordraynes instead moves “oute of þe perillous Roche ... to a
schippe.” In this English note, the Perilous Rock, which carries this formal label in the text, is so named by
Cok for the only time. The island on which Mordraynes resides is cast from this perspective as the peril,
the site where Mordraynes experiences strange and threatening visitations. So too does a ship appear, the
vector of these visitors from their undisclosed point of origin to the Rock. In the Latin notes, by contrast,
the island is neither named nor mentioned, but the sea itself becomes the source of all threats to
Mordraynes, as well as of divine comfort. It is difficult to know what to make of this contrast, or even to
determine whether the language difference is cause or effect of this shift in presentation.

553 On f. 24va, at ibid., XXIV.53.
554 On f. 24rb, at ibid., XXIV.4.
tempted. That he exhibits steadfast patience in the face of this testing\textsuperscript{555} appears more important to Cok than the individual enumeration of the tribulations themselves.

The notable digression from this governing pattern in Cok’s notes throughout these folios is one that helps to shed light on some of the notes appearing elsewhere in the manuscript: the brief discursus on, in Cok’s own words, “Scipilione volucre mirabile.”\textsuperscript{556} The bird is in fact one of Mordraynes’s many visitors on the Perilous Rock, flying down to snatch the bread from his mouth. This action injures Mordraynes, and forces him to endure yet more privation. Yet it is to his spiritual benefit as well, preventing the king from succumbing to temptation and consuming bread not provided by God, and so not licit in his period of trial. The greater attention here, however, both in the text, and in Cok’s presentation of it, is not to the literal appearance of the bird (present in Cok’s notes only by implication in the marking of the king’s literal hunger, the hunger that precipitated the incident: “\( \gamma \) de fame Regis · ”),\textsuperscript{557} but the extended discourse on the bird’s general habits and the allegory of Christ carried by the phoenix’s symbolism. Likewise, in Cok’s notes, it is the bird itself, not its actions or even its method of appearance, which is “mirabile.” Cok’s notes further emphasize this priority with their reference to the “description” and “nature” of the bird. It is not action that is here narrated, but the static constants of the phoenix’s traits and meaning.

Cok’s annotation is by no means systematic, but within the clusters where his annotation is prominent, they provide a close reading of the text that interests itself in

\textsuperscript{555} “\( \gamma \) de paciencia Regis” on f. 23vb, at ibid., XXIII.651.

\textsuperscript{556} On f. 23va, at ibid., XXIII.557.

\textsuperscript{557} On f. 23ra, at ibid., XXIII.420.
narrative structure. He walks the reader through stages in the text, bringing to the surface its architectural underpinnings with notes falling at points critical to the unfolding of, in this case, not plot, but bestiary description. The scene is set with the hunger of the king, the circumstances that precipitate the bird’s literal appearance. Then a note marks the beginning of the physical description of the bird (neatly leapfrogging the action of the bird’s literal arrival), and another note falls where the text begins to specify the exact nature of its similarity to Christ, a similarity first introduced some lines before. Two more notes seem directed more precisely at specific lines, drawing reader attention to two salient facts about the bird: its habit of hatching its children in the fires of its own death and its proper name, Scipilions. It is important to observe that there is only one real fact about the bird that makes the transfer from the text to the margins: the name of the bird. While the notes make sense, therefore, as companions to the text, marking time in the progress of its structure, they do not function well on their own. It is necessary to read the text, not just to rely on Cok’s notes to provide content. The notes do, however, provide a sort of punctuation to the text, marking the location of the beginnings of different sections and subsections.

The one detail that does appear in the margin – the name Scipilions – seems extremely privileged in its uniqueness. That Cok repeats Lovelich’s idiosyncratic

558 “de descripcione volucris ·” on f. 23ra, at ibid., XXIII.435.
559 “de natura volucris demonstrata Regi ·” on f. 23rb at ibid., XXIII.484.
560 “per totum quod Cok” on f. 23rb at ibid., XXIII.523.
561 “de Scipilione volucre mirabile” on f. 23va at ibid., XXIII.557.
“Scipilions” rather than the more standard “Serpili ons,” is further evidence, if any were needed, that he refers in his notes only to the text in front of him, not to any hypothesized body of knowledge about the French original, either as a specific text or as some general landscape of Arthurian romance. Cok does not correct or corroborate Lovelich by cross-reference to other texts, named or unnamed; rather he annotates, as a rule, purely within the universe circumscribed by MS 80.

This still leaves open, however, the question of why Cok has chosen to fix on this fact, specifically: the name of Serpilion/Scipilions. The mystery seems best explained by the special status of Scipilions as a name. Names, as we have already explored, are a source of interest for Cok, as when he so prominently highlighted the names of Lovelich and Robert de Boron. This interest does not extend to the names of characters: Cok refers to Mordraynes more often by the generic descriptor rex than by name. In cases like the naming of Lovelich, of Robert de Boron, or here, of Scipilions, the name constitutes not merely a convenient label, but a discrete fact, a summation of the individual’s identity or nature. To name Robert de Boron, or to name Scipilions, is to assert ownership of the named being, an intellectual mastery over its nature. This nuance represents another departure for Cok from the standards of annotation we have encountered in other manuscripts, where names, and frequently repeated names, dominate the notes. Cok interests himself in the name as a discrete fact, but it is his own name, not those of the characters, that becomes the fallback form of his annotation.

562 The Vulgate Estoire reads “serpens lyons,” or, in some variants, “serpelions” (Sommer, Vulgate, 1:103.8). The name “Scipilions” is listed in Ackerman’s Index of the Arthurian Names as only appearing in Lovelich’s History (An Index of the Arthurian Names in Middle English, Stanford University Publications, University Series, Language and Literature 10 [New York: AMS Press, 1967], 214). His spelling does not, therefore, appear to reflect a more general English practice.
That it is the name Scipilions that attracts Cok here seems clear when the note is read in conjunction with his marking of the text on ff. 30r-v. There, Nasciens has embarked on Solomon’s ship, and found a number of mysterious and symbolically-fraught objects, including a bed, a crown, and a sword. The sword in particular is described in some detail, and is portrayed as having a hilt or “handyl” (Lovelich, *History*, XXVIII.217) inset with two scales: one from a serpent, and one from a fish. These are not just any serpent and fish, however, but marvelous creatures, whose bones have magical properties. He who holds a bone from the serpent, for example, will never become cold, but will remain warm, even without the warmth of the sun or the heat of physical exertion. Cok’s notes to these lines are even more terse and enigmatic than usual. Notes to lines XXVIII.225 and 244 (on ff. 30rb and 30va, respectively) include no words at all, but only two of Cok’s flag-shaped marks, which frequently introduce his notes, but here appear in isolation. Their apparent meaning is a simple *nota bene*. A few lines later, he provides hardly more substance, offering merely “*nota per totum*.” The logic behind Cok’s distribution here is clear, however. One pair of flags marks the section describing the serpent, and the second falls within the description of the fish,

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563 The *Estoire* describes not scales, but ribs (*costes*) as making up the two sides of the hilt (Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 1:20.447; Sommer, *Vulgate*, 1:122.2), a fact that explains the focus in both Lovelich’s *History* and the *Estoire* on the properties of the bones of these animals. It is unclear how Lovelich intended his reference to “scales” to be understood, however. In addition to the meaning cognate with modern “scale,” referring to the skin of an animal such as a fish or snake, “scale” can also carry the meaning of “one of the two sides or panels that form the handle of a sword” (Frances McSparran, ed., “Scale, n. (1),” *The Electronic Middle English Dictionary*, http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.library.nd.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED387111). Lovelich is surely influenced in his translation by this fact. This definition of “scale” is attested in the *MED* by only one source other than Lovelich himself, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that a reader would assume it to refer in this passage to the skin of the scaly fish and serpent, rather than the bone, understanding the by far more common anatomical definition in addition to, or even in lieu of, the more unusual military-technical definition.

while the “nota per totum” heads a passage regarding an inscription on the sword, “I-set well ful of lettres Of Gold.”\(^{565}\) Three clear sections appear in the text, and draw three notes, each note falling near the head of its section. It is surely no coincidence, however, that the first double flag falls beside the line giving the name of the serpent.\(^{566}\) Cok’s practice in this is not completely consistent – the second double flag falls a few lines below the name of the fish, “Tortenavs,” at the head of the section describing the properties peculiar to that animal’s bones. Still, the repetition of interest in the proper name of a marvelous or supernatural creature – in Papagast as in Scipiilions – is suggestive, particularly in view of the extended break in Cok’s annotation between the end of the Perilous Rock section and this point, some six folios later. Cok’s annotation is not restarted again in the long term (following the final note on f. 30va, Cok does not again pick up his pen until he marks a single note on f. 56v), but the annotation seems at least briefly reinvigorated by the naming of a marvelous creature.

I have in the argument so far dwelt much on the “marvelous” nature of this animal or that object. This is at least in part a direct reflection of Lovelich’s text, where he at points verges on the overuse of this word.\(^{567}\) It is, therefore, unsurprising that Cok seems

\(^{565}\) Ibid., XXVIII.255. The inscription itself is, characteristically for Lovelich, much longer than could easily fit on a sword hilt. It announces the sword’s nature as “Merveillous to beholde On A rowe,” and predicts that the sword will be drawn from its scabbard only by a man who “Schal ben the most worthiest, / the Most Able, & the Most best, / that Euere was him before” (ibid., XXVIII.258, 267–269). Unnamed in the text at this point, this paragon will eventually be revealed as Nasciens’s descendant Galahad.


\(^{567}\) Chapter XXVIII of the *History*, describing Nasciens’s discoveries on Solomon’s ship, for example, includes fourteen uses of “merveil” and its various forms over the course of 484 lines. Nasciens’s initial impression of the ship is particularly emphatic about the “marvelous” nature of vessel and its contents: “The Schipe, So Riche & So fair it was, / And Merveillede how that It Cam In to þot plas. / And whanne he be-gan thus it longe to beholde, / In his herte he Merveilled Many folde; / And Mochel More
alert to the marvelous as an important factor within the text, drawing some of Lovelich’s marvels out of the text and into the margins. Given the predominance of Latin in Cok’s notes, there is nothing remarkable in Cok’s failure to adopt Lovelich’s oft-repeated “merveil” in its Middle English form. Latin equivalents and near-equivalents are, however, sprinkled throughout the notes: “mirabile,”568 “fantastica”569 and “miraculum.”570 More important than the vocabulary of the marvelous, however, is the predominance of marvels in the notes, as a measure of the weight Cok gives to this content. The entire story of Mordraynes’s experiences on the Perilous Rock – as well as of Nasciens’s closely related experiences on Solomon’s ship – is deeply visionary in nature and Cok’s notes construct the first of these adventures, at least, as a strongly marked pattern of successive benign and malicious visions. Important too are the supernatural animals and objects, with the phoenix of Mordraynes’s island seeming to be a model for the mysterious serpent and fish associated with the sword on Nasciens’s ship. In the latter case, an initial note next to the name of the animal Papagast gives way to subsequent notes with a greater interest in the sword as an object: on the power of the fish Tortenaus’s bones and the golden text inscribed directly on the sword. On f. 64ra, Cok begins annotating again after over 30 folios of near-silence.571 Notes on f. 64r reproduce in miniature a drama between Josephes and the pagan king Crudelx:

Merveil thanne hadde he, / For Nethir Man ne womman ne cowde he se / that Schip with-Inne to warde Oþer Gye” (Lovelich, History, XXVIII.89–95).

568 On ff. 23va and 24rb at ibid., XXIII.557 and XXIV.4.
569 On ff. 24rb and 24va at ibid., XXIV.4 and 53.
570 On f. 73ra at ibid., XLIX.384.
571 The one exception to this is on f. 56vb. There Cok places his signature next to the lines “and this was the Satyrday Certeinly / Afrom Esterne day ful trewly” (ibid., XLI.217–18). It is possible that Cok
intends to mark this passage generally: it falls during a section discussing Joseph of Arimathea’s crossing of the English Channel with his followers, bringing the Grail to Britain. This moment is surely a vital one for the program of the History as a whole. The crossing is effected by a miracle of walking on water, carrying clear resonance with biblical precedent and foreshadowing, too, a later water-crossing that Cok will highlight “γε τὰς τελευταίας ἔκτασιν ἔδωκεν τῷ Ἰωάννῃ ἀποκριτικῆς ἐκκλησίας οἰκείως” on f. 73rb at ibid., L.76. At the same time, the crossing of the channel must be a nationalist moment for any English reader, the point at which the Grail takes up its proper place in the history of Great Britain, entering at last fully into the Arthurian orbit. Such attention to a grand narrative would be somewhat uncharacteristic of Cok’s annotation style, however, and a likelier explanation may be the simple act of dating carried out by these lines. The word “Easter” (“Esternes”) only occurs twice in the History, and in this appearance alone as a method of fixing the date of some event. The placing of some event in time, and particularly such a fixing in relation to an important liturgical feast – indeed, the most important liturgical feast – seems perhaps a rare moment when the text allows itself an alliance with something resembling a real historical chronology. One might compare Cok’s attention to this moment to a note like that in the hand of an anonymous medieval reader, on f. 20 r of British Library, Royal 20.A.ii: “Anno Ante | incarnacionem | dominicam lx | interius bri | sanniam Iu | lius cser.” The text is Peter Langtoft’s Chronicle, and this note falls at The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, in French Verse, from the Earliest Period to the Death of King Edward I, ed. Thomas Wright, vol. 1, Rolls Series 47 (London: Stationery Office, 1866), 58.23. The interest here is clearly in connecting the events of British History into the wider chronology of world history, on the dual fronts of Roman history (Caesar) and religious history (the Incarnation). Cok fixes instead on the cycle of the liturgical year as a point of reference exterior to the text. Romances frequently employ the liturgical calendar as a way of structuring time: the changing of the seasons in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight brings the technique to a glorious apogee in Middle English literature. Compare also Frederick W. Locke, The Quest for the Holy Grail: A Literary Study of a Thirteenth-Century French Romance, Stanford Studies in Language and Literature 21 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), chap. 3, for an analysis of the role of liturgy in the Vulgate Queste.

572 There are two characters in this romance with similar names: Joseph of Arimathea, and his son, Josephes. Because Cok makes many of his notes in Latin, this would require him to choose Latinate forms of these names, rather than simply to rely on the spelling provided in the adjacent English text, and, most critically, to choose a declension and endings for each of the names. It is by no means apparent that he has in fact done so consistently, and there is some evidence that he may have resorted making such a decision: while I have attempted to expand his abbreviations, he frequently dodges the issue by ending the proper name with an ambiguous mark of abbreviation (see ff. 72vb and 73rb, at Lovelich, History, XLI.X.323 and L.31). In this particular note there is, furthermore, some ambiguity as to whether Cok intends to refer to Joseph or Josephes: Josephes is the obvious referent, as the individual the text itself names as principal actor in these lines, but he is accompanied by “his Fadir” (ibid., XLV.2). Cok’s 9-shaped –us abbreviation here is unambiguous and may be intended to reinvent the vernacular “Josephes” as a Latin “Josephus” in the second declension. All other mentions of “Joseph[?]” in Cok’s notes, however, refer not to Josephes, but to Joseph of Arimathea his father, and some of them are also unambiguously second declension: see 64rb and 69rb, at ibid., XLV.57 and XLVII.164. It is possible, therefore, either that this note also refers to Joseph, or that Cok simply does not fully distinguish between the forms Joseph and Josephes. No notes provide “Joseph[?]” with unambiguous endings in anything but the second declension, and so I have consistently transcribed this name as second declension throughout.

573 “How Josephes went out from castle Galafort, preaching the gospel through the country and how he was captured by King Crudelx <of Northumbria> and was imprisoned <who was> the king of North Wales, etc.”
As a technical matter, the first thing to attract notice is the uncertainty or haste of Cok’s note. Far from being a well-considered summary, the note shows two false starts, in cancellations of “Northumbrie” and “qui” apparently carried out during the note’s composition. The ink and nib used for the cancellations – executed by a simple horizontal line drawn through the words – are identical with those of the rest of the note. Further, the contradiction between the initial “Northumbrie” and the subsequent “Northgallie” suggests that Cok became aware of his initial error before he finished the note: while Northumbria is perhaps a more frequently-appearing placename, and the location of the action of the preceding chapter, the coming action is set in North Wales (XLV.13). The cancellation of “qui” slightly complicates this picture. As the note stands, the syntax of the final clause is functional, but the meaning is off: “Rex Northgallie” is the apparent subject of “incarceratus fuit,” meaning that Crudelx the king is the one imprisoned, rather than imprisoning. As the clause stands with the qui in place, the meaning is more clear, but the syntax more contorted: “And how he was captured and imprisoned by King Crudelx, who was the king of North Wales.” The sequence seems to have been something like this: Cok’s original intention was to write “Et quomodo captus fuit per Regem Crudelx Northumbrie Et incarceratus.” After writing this, however, he realized his factual error. With little room for an interlinear correction, he cancelled the offending “Northumbrie” and decided to append a relative clause “qui fuit Rex

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574 “How a divine voice appeared to Josephes and his allies in prison, comforting them.”
Northgallie.” Confused by the correction, and likely influenced by the symmetry of “captus fuit” / “incarceratus fuit,” he then hypercorrected by cancelling the “qui” as well.

What here has so excited Cok, however? Immediately preceding this resumption of annotation, the text occupied itself with a battle, the conquest of the pagan Northumbrians by fire and sword: “thus hadden the Cristene victorie / Of the Sarazines ful sekerlye, / In the Erthe Of grete bretaynge” (XLIV.653-55). Cok, while he has read this preceding material – his error making Crudelx the King of Northumbria is a telling one – has not found its triumphal violence worthy of his pen. Instead, the resumption of annotation comes with the resumption of the theme of visionary experience, and particularly a divine apparition in the act of comforting. Like Mordraynes on the Perilous Rock, Josephes finds himself in a place of suffering, subject to the oppression of some persecutory force, and dependent on visions for support and the promise of deliverance. Cok’s annotation of the text, that is, molds itself around the visionary, preferring such supernatural action to more mundane events, and preferring too such symbolic struggle of the besieged soul to a more literal battle like the rout of the Northumbrians.

The way Cok treats these visions, moreover, seems to transcend a simple statement of interest in the supernatural. Just as his glossing of the text’s thinly veiled allegories betrays the importance of the underlying Christian message beneath the mysterious visions and visitations, notes at other points in the text seem deliberately positioned at points of high religious drama. Beginning on f. 68v, another passage draws Cok’s particular attention, this time the conflict between the pagan King Agrestes, reigning in a pre-Christian Camelot, and Josephes, the son and spiritual heir of Joseph of Arimathea, bringing Christianity to Britain along with the Grail. Agrestes feigns a
conversion before turning against Josephes’s company, and the notes in this section decry his stratagem: “γ de falsissimo | Rege Agrestes”\textsuperscript{575} and “γ de simulata christianite | Regis Agrestes .”\textsuperscript{576} This is followed a few lines later by a simple Cok signature note by the line “In distroction of his Owne lif,” which projects the damnation that will result from Agrestes’s insincere baptism (XLVII.75). The words “Agrestes, ful of Envye” earn from Cok a pointing hand in the margin (XLVII.104). Cok is clearly stacking the interpretive deck well against Agrestes. Not content with the text’s condemnation of his treachery, Cok draws this condemnation into the margin, bringing Agrestes’s villainous actions and character, as well as the ultimate retribution for his sins, to the forefront of a reader’s attention. Shortly thereafter, the real emotional payoff of the passage comes as Cok notes, “I quomodo Rex Agrestes | occidi fecit xij viros | optimos consanguineos | Iosephi Aramathie,”\textsuperscript{577} and, about twenty lines later, places a signature note beside the line “and so there beten hym vppon þe/heved,” the graphic moment of martyrdom for the twelve Christians (XLVII.187). The passages he points out here are deeply hagiographical, but also those aspects of the text – Agrestes’s treachery and the subsequent brutal martyrdom – most likely to draw the emotional response of a partisan Christian reader. In the same way, the loaded vocabulary of the superlatively deceptive (falsissimus) Agrestes and his simulata christianitas makes evident the appropriate and expected response of a reader.

\textsuperscript{575} On f. 68vb, at ibid., XLVII.48.

\textsuperscript{576} On f. 69ra, at ibid., XLVII.68.

\textsuperscript{577} On f. 69rb, at Ibid., XLVII.164.
Cok either prepares the text with the end in mind of eliciting such a response, or, alternatively, he indirectly immortalizes his own such response. The emotional engagement in these passages are striking, particularly when contrasted with the drier, “just the facts” tone of much the of the annotation from the other manuscripts profiled in this study. He inscribes his own personality in his notes with the insistent inclusion of his own name and signature. While he cannot be unaware that future readers will also be influenced by and benefit from his readings, still his refrain of “quod Cok” divides his own authority from that of Lovelich. Statements of fact or interpretations of meaning are carefully linked to Cok’s identity as a reader. Just as Cok’s entries in the St. Bart’s cartulary refer to his shaking hand and old age in the “evening of his life,” verifying the validity of the copied deeds by the testimony of an individuated witness – Cok himself – Cok’s signatures in MS 80 seem to exhort the reader to share in a personal experience of the text.

Notes to episodes following the martyrdom of the twelve Christians by King Agrestes do not follow directly on this plot, but seem nevertheless to create an overarching narrative within the margin. The evil actions of the king receive their immediate redress when the king goes raving mad, a mere few lines later. This event receives no attention from Cok’s notes, however, which instead skip ahead to “γ at þle/ preyer of l Ioseph hou þe l mawmetys l were brende in þle/ l forest of brooklond”\textsuperscript{578}. Within the margins, the punishment for Agrestes’s sins is not a personal tragedy, but a divine judgment on pagans generally, the “mawmetys” of Cok’s note. Public spectacle is the key, as readers invited to marvel at the workings of God in the world. I choose the

\textsuperscript{578} On f. 72va, at ibid., XLIX.246.
word “marvel” advisedly, as this seems to be the way that marvels function for Cok within the text, laid out before the gaze of the reader as witness to a deeper Christian truth, a “declaracioun of þe feiþ” not just by Joseph of Arimathea, but by the text itself.\(^{579}\)

This reading of marvel – truly, in Cok’s eyes, *miracle* – carries forward in the story of the “Saracen” Mathegrans. Wounded himself with a sword, Mathegrans promises to convert to Christianity if Joseph will bring back to life his dead brother:

```
“Sertes, quod Mathegrans thanne, de saraceno
Sire, I hold the for a trewe Manne, Mathegranis
and þif he my brothir to lif wele bringe,
I sey þou, Iosephe, with-owten lesinge,
I schal neuere On Øper god beleve....”
(XLIX.299-303)\(^{580}\)
```

Joseph complies, bringing the dead man (named either Argon, as XLIX.349, or Agrons, as XLIX.405) back to life, albeit only for eight days. Joseph then compounds the miracle by using the shattered remains of the sword that struck Mathegrans himself to draw out the piece still remaining in his side:

```
	thanne leidde he þat swerd to his [Mathegrans’s] Owne wonde;
the poynct thus sone Owt Cam In A stownde, bene miraculum ·
More whittere, more fair, and More Cler
An hundred part thanne it was Er;
(XLIX.384)\(^{581}\)
```

The healing is of Mathegrans, but it is also of the sword, albeit incompletely. That sword has resonances that will echo forward into the future Arthurian world, when the miracle

\(^{579}\) I borrow this phrasing from Cok’s note immediately following, “Γ declaracioun of þe feiþ by Ioseph” on f. 72va, at ibid., XLIX.278.

\(^{580}\) The note, falling on f. 72va, is Cok’s.

\(^{581}\) The note is, once again, Cok’s, on f. 73ra.
will be confounded by a second “healing” in which the sword, its parts having here been regathered, will finally be repaired:

“ha!  swerd, neuere ioyned to-gederis schalt þou be,
tyl Into his hondis thou Come ful sekerle,
that the Aventures of the seint Graal
To An Ende schal bringen hem Al....”
(XLIX.393-96)

The sword waits for Galahad, who will finish Joseph’s miracle as he ends all *aventures*. This foreshadowing of the coming *Queste* does not, however, merit the same attention from Cok as does the subsequent, second death of Agrons. Cok, apparently confused, attributes this death instead to Mathegrans: “\(\Gamma \) de morte &cetera [Mathegrans].”\(^{582}\) This death might be seen as an undoing of the miracle: the dead man is brought back to life, but only as a witness to God’s power before he returns to his previous state. Or, alternatively, if we follow Cok’s interpretation of the line, matters are even worse, as the death of Mathegrans would seem to call into question even the temporary efficacy of Joseph’s healing miracle of a few lines before, in drawing the sword from Mathegrans’s wound. Either way, however, Cok is undisturbed, making of the character a new saint, his death unconnected to the earlier miracles and instead the natural end of a proper *vita*. The marvels that appear in the *History* are glossed by Cok as miracles, and specifically miracles fitting a particular mode of patient Christian suffering in the face of persecution,

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\(^{582}\) On f. 73ra, at ibid., XLIX.405.
directed at the conversion and baptism of pagans, but interested also in faith tested by adversity: significantly, Cok terms Joseph *fidelis*, just as Mordraynes was *patiens*.

Cok’s treatment of marvel, however, is not the only possibility for the framing of the text within a larger literary context. By focusing on the miracle of the healing and the construction of Mathegrans as a new saint, and even martyr, he necessarily diverts attention away from the implications of the sword to the greater sweep of Arthurian *mythos*, even in so religiously-centered a context as the *Queste*. Other perspectives on the *History* are possible, and by stepping away from Cok’s corpus of notes, we may discover other ways of interpreting the manuscript’s texts, in ways that put Cok’s own readings into sharper contrast. Cok’s interpretation of the texts is not the only one available to medieval readers, but rather a response tailor-made to his own personal biases and expectations.

### 4.6 The Beginning of the End: The Scribe Weighs In

Cok’s notes, while extensive, are not the only marginal material in the manuscript. Other hands have made their own contributions to MS 80’s margins, and while we do not in these other cases have the benefit of knowing the identity of the author of these notes, they may still offer a window on the text’s earliest reception. The scribe of any manuscript is also that manuscript’s first reader, and his choices in

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583 See “γ γ bene | de conversione | saraceni | post mortem &cetera” on f. 72vb, at ibid., XLIX.330 and “γ de baptismo | sarazenorum” on f. 72vb, at ibid., XLIX.364.

584 “γ de virtute oracionis | Iosephi fidelis” on f. 72vb, at ibid., XLIX.323.

585 “γ de paciencia Regis” on f. 24ra, at ibid., XXIII.691.
presenting the text must necessarily influence all subsequent readers. The influence on John Cok is not obvious, however, since the priorities of the scribe seem very different from Cok’s. Where Cok showed a predominantly religious bent, imagining himself into the places of the text’s Christian martyrs, particularly Mordraynes, the scribe situates the text within its wider Arthurian context. The *History of the Holy Grail* is not (or not merely) a new Acts of the Apostles, but the cornerstone of a subsequent Arthurian mythology, and the *Merlin*, largely neglected by Cok, is an important part of this program. It is not Mordraynes who takes center-stage for the scribe, but the more chivalric and, significantly, dynastic Nasciens. The tale the scribe frames is not a martyrology of visionary suffering, but a colorful pageant, opulently illustrated and setting the stage for future glory, as well as inevitable decline. The Arthurian connections and networks valued by the manuscript’s scribe – and so, presumably, the circumstances of its production as envisioned by Harry Barton – are not identical with the use made of the text by the clerical reader whose own reactions to the text have left perhaps an even larger footprint on the manuscript than the textual framing and intent of the scribe.

In MS 80, there are a number of notes in the hand of the scribe, totaling nineteen over the course of the entire manuscript: eight in the *History*, and eleven in the *Merlin*. These nineteen notes can be further divided into two main types. Of these, the first is notes proper: notes, that is, that seem designed primarily to draw a reader’s attention to particular lines or points in the text. There are twelve notes of this kind in the manuscript, eight in the *History* and three in the *Merlin*. The other remaining seven notes, all of them in the *Merlin*, are less obviously directed at the reader, and seem,
instead, most likely instructions to an illustrator, for a cycle of illuminations in the
manuscript that was never carried out.

Turning first to the notes proper, it is, as is frequently the case, somewhat difficult
to be certain in all cases what in particular drew attention to a particular passage. There
is, first of all, the challenge of determining whether they should be taken to be the
contributions of the scribe himself, or whether he has copied them from his exemplar.
Unlike the notes in Cok’s hand, the scribe has not signed these annotations, nor marked
them in any way as peculiarly his. Yet without knowing the identity of the main textual
scribe, either, the anonymity of the notes’ ultimate author is to some extent academic. In
any event, they represent the reactions to Lovelich’s poems by some early reader, and
were deemed valuable enough by MS 80’s scribe that he has included them for the
benefit of the manuscript’s future readers. The notes, after some attrition caused by
trimming of the outer margins, read as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>f. 2vb, at Lovelich, History, XIII.420:</td>
<td>nota nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29va, at XXVII.329:</td>
<td>nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30ra, at XXVIII.115:</td>
<td>nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39ra, at XXXII.369:</td>
<td>nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39va, at XXXII.465:</td>
<td>[no]ta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39va, at XXXII.515:</td>
<td>[n]ota nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54rb, at XXXIX.205:</td>
<td>the genelogye of Nassci[ens]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87rb, at LVI.215:</td>
<td>genalagie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103vb, at Lovelich, Merlin, line 3959:</td>
<td>Nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105ra, at 4277:</td>
<td>Nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105ra, at 4313:</td>
<td>Nota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135ra, at 12267:</td>
<td>the birthe and the l Engendrure Of Mordret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are a number of initial observations it is possible to make, with no further
examination than this. The first is of the small number of notes, as well as their brevity.
Marginal annotation does not represent for this scribe a conspicuous element of the
manuscript layout. Nor does he seem concerned with producing a consistent or comprehensive system of annotation: as seems frequently to be the case in romance manuscripts, annotation occurs in clusters in distinct areas of the manuscript, rather than being spread evenly across the manuscript as a whole. For these notes, that clustering appears to have concentrated itself around ff. 29-39 (broadly speaking, relating to the adventures of Nasciens and his son Celidoyne) and 103-105 (in the midst of a series of prophecies by Merlin). There is in this, as we shall see, very little overlap with those portions of the text John Cok found worthy of his concentrated annotation.

What is it in these specific lines or episodes that the scribe wishes for us to “note,” however? In three places, “the genelogye of Nassci[ens],” “genalogie,” and “the birthe and the | Engendrure Of Mordret,” he is generous enough to tell us. In the first of these, there are several points to note, the first of them being that Nasciens seems to be a character who has captured the scribe’s interest. This is not merely something necessary or natural for a reader of the text: Nasciens does not appear in Cok’s annotations at all, with his notes displaying a greater interest in the character of Mordraynes. The scribe, however, devotes the majority of his attention in the History to episodes relating to the adventures of Mordraynes’s brother-in-law Nasciens, the latter’s son Celidoyne, and, to which he is careful to draw our attention on two separate occasions, the family tree it is possible to sketch out between Nasciens and his descendents, down to Lancelot of the Lake and Galahad in the Arthurian generation. Nor is interest in this family tree merely

586 This marks a contrast between romance manuscripts and chronicles. When, as is frequently the case, the notes in chronicles have been added by the scribe, they typically form a more comprehensive and sustained system of apparatus. Romances, in contrast, seldom enjoy such consistency of attention, whether their notes are from the pens of readers or the manuscripts’ scribes.
incidental – it seems to have been a focus of interest for more than one of the text’s readers. The lack of annotation in this sections that can be firmly attributed to Cok is a striking exception to this larger trend. This interest seems to direct attention toward the meaning of the *History* not in its own terms as an independent romance, but as a story deliberately setting the stage for the cast of characters who will be important to the later, Arthurian Grail quest. Nasciens is important for his descendants, among whom are numbered Lancelot of the Lake and Galahad.

The first sign of interest other than the scribe’s in the genealogy, and the first suggestion of the real importance behind that genealogy, is in the series of underlinings on ff. 87r and v, where the names of King Lancelot (Lancelot of the Lake’s grandfather) and Lancelot of the Lake himself are both underlined in red crayon, perhaps by the Early Modern antiquarian Matthew Parker. While the significance of this red underlining is not immediately obvious, still the first words in the manuscript to be underlined in red are the familiar name of Lancelot in a passage that begins to set up the Arthurian generation soon to take the stage in the *Merlin*, beginning on the next folio.

In addition to the red underlining, f. 87r also features a system of numbers, Roman numerals one through eight, and then Arabic numerals nine and ten, numbers that do not appear to be in John Cok’s hand. The ink is not the same, and the script used appears different from that employed in the “\textit{vij\textit{eml} · membra anime}” on f. 21ra.\(^{587}\) Nor are the numerals obviously in the hand of the scribe, although once again the

\[^{587}\text{I judge these interlinear f. 21ra numbers to be in Cok’s hand, on the basis of similarity in ink color to his other notes. Frustratingly, the numbers he prints there are all Arabic numerals, but only go as high a seven, meaning that the only digit the two series have in common is an unrevealing “1”. Cok’s \(\nu\) is not inconsistent with the \(\nu\) appearing in the f. 87r Roman numerals, but neither is it compellingly identical.}\]
evidence is too scanty to either clinch or fully rule out an identification. The ν of the Roman numerals is less angular than that in “Avme” (LVI.251) or “vndirstonde” (LVI.258), and the capital I lacks the scribe’s characteristic sweep back to the right. Too, the ink is slightly more brown than that in the main text. Ultimately, the numerals are not clearly identified with any source, but remain uncertainly anonymous.

This numbering of the genealogy raises some interesting issues. First, it betrays a willingness on the part of some reader to share the scribe’s own emphasis on the genealogy. Then too, it strengthens the connection, established by the scribe’s two “genalagie” notes, between the f. 87r passage and the earlier one on f. 54r. In that earlier passage, a prophecy foretells the sequence of generations as a future event. Lovelich himself numbers the generations of the prophetic passage within the text: “and the ferste that of Celidoyne schal isswie, / ... / hos name schal be kyng Narpus / ... / the secund, Nasciens schal ben his Name...” (XXXIX.213-18). The Roman numerals at the passage’s fulfillment, then, can be seen as an attempt to reconcile these two genealogies, to bring the later passage into alignment with the first.

Intriguingly, the attempt is unsuccessful. Two genealogical tables illustrate the rival family trees, as well as the rival numbering systems (see Figure 4.1). In the prophetic tree, these numbers are Lovelich’s own, and in the fulfilled tree, they are the addition of the annotator. The two numbering systems of the generations are, from the outset, one generation out of synch. The family tree in the prophecy begins its numbering with Narpus, while the Roman-numeral annotator gives Celidoyne the first number. Still, the very act of numbering the second list increases its parallelism with the first. The annotator may not intend to follow the numbering of the prophecy, intending
Prophetic Tree
(Lovelich, *History*, XXXIX.205ff.)

Arabic numerals refer to the generation as Lovelich numbers it within the text.

![Prophetic Tree Diagram]

Fulfilled Tree
(Lovelich, *History*, LVI.215ff.)

Roman numerals are those applied by the annotator.

![Fulfilled Tree Diagram]

Figure 4.1

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instead that the numbering to stand on its own, new numbering for a new list: the
fulfillment becomes assimilated to the prophecy in form if not in content. Alternatively,
the annotator may indeed intend to replicate Lovelich’s system, but the Roman numerals
are simply applied erroneously. Confusion might spring either from the great distance
separating the two passages in the text, or from the lack of exact parallelism between the
trees themselves. The numbering systems diverge even further from one another after
Ionas, where the fulfillment passage inserts an additional name (Avme), and so an
additional generation. Also interesting is the discrepancy that occurs at the end of the
genealogies. In the prophecy, the importance of this family tree lies in the achievement
of Galath, the Galahad who will accomplish the Grail quest and “schal Enden alle
Aventure / In that lond” (XXXIX.263-64). Yet the fulfillment passage makes no
reference to Galath, culminating instead in Lancelot of the Lake, Galath’s father. He
stands, if one chooses to count from Narpus as in the earlier passage, in the ninth
generation, as Galath does in the prophecy.

The numeration of the fulfillment passage on f. 87r, then, reinforces an impulse
toward logical order and subordination that is similarly demonstrated by Lovelich himself
in the prophecy passage. At the same time, though, the instability of these systems of
ordering is paradoxically highlighted by the numbers, since they actually prevent a
straightforward identification of fulfillment with prophecy, by creating a rival system of
numeration and muddying the clarity of an orderly succession of numbered generations.
Finally, the scribe’s annotation of both these passages reinforces (and perhaps partly
motivates) the readers’ fascination with the passages, while likewise inviting a
comparison between the two. The f. 54r prophecy is emphasized in its significance both
by the f. 87r passage that revisits the issue, and by the scribe’s notes that demand attention to the two passages while simultaneously casting a spotlight on their parallelism.

The last of the three notes in the scribe’s hand is on f. 135ra and reads “the birthe and the | Engendrure Of Mordret” (at Lovelich, Merlin, line 12267). Here again we see the scribe’s interest in both beginnings and in endings. Many of the notes in a single word (“nota”), which I will discuss at greater length below, fall not at the midpoint or climax of an episode, but at the beginning. Here, the “engendrure of Mordret” note both stands at the beginning of the episode relating Mordred’s conception and simultaneously highlights an event within the narrative – an engendering – which is a point of origin. Like the paper genealogy prophesying Nasciens’ family tree and the relation of that family tree’s unfolding over time, the “engendrure” note deals with generations or, more properly, generation. The note also directly addresses ending, although one never directly portrayed in the manuscript. The conception of Mordred, whose name is synonymous with the final conflicts and dissolution of Camelot, is a moment of apocalyptic foreshadowing as much as it is of fertile generation.

When this note is read against the two genealogies, it is possible to see in them as well some of the same apocalypticism, a similar concern for the telos of the Arthurian story as well as its origins. The prophetic genealogy written and passed to Nasciens by the Christ-figure of the “goodman” reaches its climax with the coming of Galath:

588 MS 80 ends imperfectly, but as the vulgate Merlin Lovelich translates did not compass a retelling of the final tragedy of the death of Arthur, it is likely Lovelich’s poem would have likewise ended with the seed of Mordred’s betrayal still in potentia.

589 It is not made clear in the text whether this “goodman” is to be understood to be identical with the “Good Man” of Mordraynes’s repeated allegorical visions on the island: the character of the Good Man
“Of hym [Lancelot of the Lake] Schal the Nynthe thanne Come,
that is likned to a flood al & some,
that Trowbled As A kanel schal be,
and thikke atte Begynneweng, I telle it the;
but In the Midwardis It schal be More Cler
than to-forn it is In alle Manere;
And in the Ende, and thow wilt knowe,
A hundred fold dowble, vppon a Rowe,
More fairere, More Cleer, & More swete,
thanne In Ony place to-forn, I the behete;
and so swete to drynken It is Also,
that wondir it is to wetene withowten Mo;
So that A Man thynketh ful trewele
that fulfild Of þ swetnesse may he not be.
and In that flood schal I bathen Me
From top to the too ful Sekerle;
and this same Man schal ben A kyng,
And his Name Galath In vndirstondyng.
For he schal passen Of Bownte
Alle that Evere to-forn hym han be,
Óper alle that Evere scholen hym sewe,
he schal hem passen: hold me for trewe.
this Man schal Enden alle Aventure
In that lond, I the here Ensure,
and Aftir my wil he schal it do,
thus I the telle with-Owten Mo.”
Al this was wreten In thike lyveret,
the wheche In Nasciens hond was set.
and whanne he hadde loked Everydel,
From Ende to Ende as Cowde ful wel,
and beheld the Ende Of his lyne,
and whiche that to hym scholde propyne
Aftyr the Schewyng Of this good Man,
he hit beholdeth lik as he Can;
And that Galaaz it scholde be,
Ful Of Meknesse and of bownte,
Of knyhthod & of Chevalrye,
Of Conqwest and Of Victorye;
“And this Man the Ende of thy lyne schal be,

is introduced as “A wondir fair Man” on Lovelich, History, XXI.32, and first called “this good Manne” on ibid., XXII.174, after which that epithet is consistently used in referring to him. Whether or not a literal equivalency between these two semi-visionary “good men” should be assumed, they surely share similar roles as figures of divine authority.
As is frequently the case with Lovelich’s verse style, his dilation of both syntax and meaning defies concise excerption. This passage is dense with semi-allegorical and tropological imagery, as well as with a thematization of endings of all kinds. It is difficult, through Lovelich’s convoluted sentence structure, to pin down the imagery of the stream or “kanel,” a stream that passes through a “thikke” beginning or murky origin, through a progressively clearer middle and an end “more fairere” than any other. The stream is simultaneously Galath/Galahad himself, and a baptismal stream in which bathes the Christ figure of the Good Man. A metaphorical progression both spatial and temporal fills the imagery of the stream, with emphasis falling on the clear waters of the stream’s ultimate end. Finally, moving beyond the imagery of the stream, the critical import of the passage lies in the presentation of Galath, a character whose identity is entirely about endings. As Nasciens examines his genealogy “From Ende to Ende,” he focuses on Galath as “the Ende Of his lyne,” as well as the lineage’s most important member, the

590 The equivalent passage in the Vulgate Estoire partly inspires Lovelich’s wordplay with “Ende”: “Chils sera drois chienz iusques pres de sa fin . quil samendera la ou il doit . li noeuimes qui sera troubles et espes el commencement comme boe . et el milieu cler & net . mais en la fin sera il encore a cent doubles plus nes & plus cler s que el mi lieu t et sera si douls & si delitables a boire . que a paines sen porroit nuls saouler t en lui me baignerai ge touz & cil sera rois corones . et chils aura a non galaad . cils passera de bonte de cors & de cheualerie . tous cheuls qui deuant lui auront este . et qui apres lui uenront . cil metra a fin toutes lez aventures que auendront . en la terre ou auenture & ma volonte te conduit,” “‘He [Lancelot] will truly be a dog, since in the end, from him will issue the ninth, which will be a turbid river, thick like mud at the beginning; clear and pure in the middle; while at the end it will be a hundred times clearer and purer than at the beginning. And it will be so sweet to drink that one can barely get one’s fill of it. In it I will bathe myself completely. He will bear the name Galahad. He will surpass in goodness and chivalry all those who come before him and after him. He will put an end to the adventures that will happen on earth where chance and his will lead him.’ This is what was written in the letter Nascien found in his hand. Once he had seen his lineage from the beginning to the end, and he knew that this worthy man called Galahad would be full of all goodness and chivalry and that he would mark the end of his lineage, he began to weep with joy...” (Sommer, Vulgate, 1:203.37–204.7; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:28.117; I have here incorporated some variant readings, drawn from Sommer’s footnotes).
culmination and conclusion of the family tree. And, on the larger scale of the kingdom, Galath is the one who will “Enden alle Aventure,” a standard formulation of the notion that, with the Grail quest achieved, Arthurian chivalry will have reached both its apex and its extinction. With the ultimate quest-object – the Grail – at once acquired and carried off from the terrestrial world, the chivalric system of *aventure* has achieved both its most perfect and its final expression. That the adventures (or at least the Arthurian narrative) do not, strictly speaking, end with the Grail quest does not prevent the French Vulgate (or Lovelich’s translation which follows it) from making this claim. Nasciens’s family tree is still at this point very much a projection into the future, a record of events that will not occur within the confines of the *History of the Holy Grail* or even within the *Merlin*, and which are, therefore, beyond the scope of Lovelich’s translation project. Yet even at this moment of projection, of planting the seed which will reach its full flower in the person of Galath, the Arthurian moment is prophesied explicitly and primarily in terms of its ending.

This obsession with ending in the prophetic family tree is, in the fulfilled version some thirty folios later, a more subtle paradox of the origin of termination. Unlike the prophetic tree of f. 54r, which counted its ninth generation in Galath (Galahad), the f. 87r

\[591\] “Et si tost comme galaad fu deuies auint illuec vne [grans] meruie [le] car li doi compaignon virent apertement vne main venir de deuers le chiel . Mais il ne virent mi le cors dont la main estoit . & ele ving droit al vaisell & le prin & la lanche & [es] enporva vers le ciel a tel[e] eure quil ne fu [onques] puis nus hons [tant fust hardis] qui osast dire quil eust veu le saint graal,” “At the moment of Galahad’s death, an extraordinary thing took place. The two companions saw a hand reach down from heaven, though they could not see the body to which the hand belonged. The hand moved straight toward the Holy Vessel, seized it along with the lance, and carried them both up to heaven. Since that time, no man has been bold enough to claim that he has seen the Holy Grail” (Sommer, *Vulgate*, 6:198.3–7; Lacy, *Lancelot-Grail*, 6:85.279).

“genalagie” does not mention this character, beginning with a fairly clear line of succession from Celidoyne to Narpus, Nasciens (the second), Elayne the Gros and so forth, down to King Lancelot, who is marked with the marginal Roman numeral eight. At this point the clear line of succession is dilated, expanding to include parallel lines in the brothers Ban and Brons, Ban’s sons Hestor, Lancelot of the Lake and Boors, and Boors’ sons Lyoniax and “young Boors.” King Lancelot and Lancelot of the Lake are, in Lovelich’s text as in the red underlining that highlights their names, the focus and culmination of the genealogy, which leads directly into a short episode describing the death of King Lancelot and the marvels associated with his tomb. Lancelot of the Lake, as he appears in the History, is a rather ambiguous and opaque character. In the fulfilled genealogy proper, while his grandfather King Lancelot merits nine lines of description, Lancelot of the Lake has only one: “the tothir, Lawncelot was his Name” (Lovelich, History, LVI.271). A reader cannot but be expected to recognize the character, and likely to have an opinion on his significance and moral valence, but Lovelich himself offers none. Elsewhere, Lancelot of the Lake appears as strangely, ambivalently destructive.

593 Lovelich, History, LVI.252–260. King Lancelot was “A worthy knyht and Of gret Fame,” and international, or at any rate pan-British, in his associations: “Owt Of wales he gan to Gon, / and Entrede Into gret breteygne thus son; / and weddid A kynes dowhter Of Irlonde.”

594 In this regard, Lovelich differs greatly from another English interpreter of the Vulgate, working only a few decades later, Thomas Malory. Malory’s own version of the Nasciens family tree, as delivered by Nasciens directly to Lancelot of the Lake, is illustrative: “And of the seven kynges and the two knyghtes the firste of hem ys called Nappus, an holy man, and the secunde hyght Nacien in remembraunce of hys graunteysyre, and in hym dwelled oure Lorde Jesu Cryst. And the third was called Hellyas le Grose, and the fourth hyght Lysays, and the fifth hyght Jonas; he departed oute of hys contrey and wente into Walis and toke there the daughter of Manuell, whereby he had the londe Gaule. And he com to dwelle in thys contrey, and of hym com kynge Launcelot, thy graunteysyre, whych were wedded to the kynges daughter of Irelonde, and he was as worthy a man as thou arte. And of hym cam kynge Ban, thy fadir, whych was the laste of the seven kynges. And by the, sir Launcelot, hit signyfieth that the angels seyde thou were none of the seven felysship. And the last was the ninth knyght, he was signyfied to a lyon, for he sholdel passe all maner of erthely knyghtes: that ys sir Galahad whych thou gate on kynge Pelles doughter. And thou ought to thanke God more than ony othir man lyving, for of a synner erthely thou hast no pere as in kyghthode nother never shall have. But lytyll thanke hast thou yevyn to God for all the grete
In the text of the prophetic genealogy, he is perhaps an object of compassion, but also of both scorn and, finally, admiration or acceptance:

The Eyhtthe, [that] schal ben lawncelot In Certayne, whiche that suffren schal both travaylle and payne More thanne Ony toforn hym han I-do, Owther Aftyr hym Scholen Comen Also. This the kynde of An hownd schal have, Tyl at his laste Ende to Maken him save.  

(XXXIX.235-40)

Lancelot is a “hownd,” a dog, but one who ultimately achieves salvation. He is, furthermore, notable not for what he has done, but for what he has suffered. It is difficult to know what to think about this character, whether to view him as a martyr and victim, or as the adulterous sinner who deserves any misfortune he might endure. At another point in the text, Lancelot is invoked, alongside Mordred, as particularly deserving of Christ’s wrath, personally conveyed. Joseph of Arimathea predicts to his followers that:

as blessedly As he [Christ] aperith to vs here,  
As Angerly schal he In Anothir Manere

vertuys that God hath lente the” (Works, 554.40–555.13). While Lancelot is rebuked for his sins, he remains peerless among earthly sinners, and Galahad is very nearly subsumed as one of the “grete vertuys” lent to Lancelot by God. Malory’s immediate source is not the Estoire but the Queste, in which Nasciens reiterates the genealogy for Lancelot’s benefit. The effect of Malory’s adaptation, however, is a wholesale rehabilitation of Lancelot. One small detail may stand for the whole; when Malory praises King Lancelot as “as worthy a man as thou [Lancelot of the Lake] art,” his characteristic use of the younger Lancelot as a standard by which all other knights should be measured is without Vulgate precedent: “Cil fu si preudons comme tu as seu . quant tu trouas a la fontaine boillant sa teste & le cors de lui en la tombe que li doi lyon gardoient,” “He [King Lancelot] was a virtuous man, as you heard when you found the body of your ancestor at the fountain guarded by two lions” (Sommer, Vulgate, 6:97.22–24; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 6:41.136). In the Queste, Lancelot of the Lake does not rival his grandfather’s virtue, he merely knows of it.

595 While the Lancelot of the equivalent Estoire passage suffers, his salvation is not assured. Lovelich’s addition is doubtless at least partly motivated by the need for a rhyme, but the subtle difference nevertheless increases the ambiguity of a character less sympathetically treated by the Vulgate.
Intriguingly, while both men have elicited this personal divine disapprobation, the condemnation of Mordred (but not that of Lancelot) is somewhat mitigated by the epithet “A man of a wonderful fame.” Perhaps most enigmatic is the comment that arises in the context of a foretelling of the lineage beginning with Joseph of Arimathea and culminating, in the Arthurian age, with Gawain and his brothers, among them Gwerrehes:

“Ful velenosly he was Slayn / be Boort Oþer lawncelot In Certeyn” (LIII.1133-34).

Despite Lovelich’s assertion, nothing about this episode seems to be certain, since responsibility for the “villainous” slaying of Gwerrehes is not fixed, but floats between Lancelot and Bors: neither one fully exonerated, neither one fully implicated. In these allusions to the famous (or infamous) Lancelot of the Lake, the knight enjoys none of the moral clarity of either admiration or direct, uncomplicated condemnation. He is something of a cipher, but one vaguely threatening in his potential for despicable or even villainous behavior.

596 Once again, the quest for rhyme is doubtless partly responsible for an addition to the Vulgate’s more clearly condemnatory text: “ausint por lor maleuerte appara il en tel semblance . a . ij . chetis el tens a vn roi qui serra apeles artus & a . ij . chaïts dont li vns aura non mordret & li autres lancelos,” “He [Christ] will appear for their despair to the two wretches in the time of the king who will be called Arthur. And the names of the two wretches will be Lancelot and Mordred” (Sommer, Vulgate, 1:260.8–9; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:35.224; I have again altered Sommer’s reading by reference to variants in his footnotes, which better reflect the English translation and more closely resemble Lovelich’s text).

597 Here Lovelich inherits the ambiguity from his source, which is equally noncommittal in its attribution of blame.
This presentation of Lancelot of the Lake as a threatening or destructive force is carried forward even into his final appearance in the History. The fulfilled genealogy leads directly into an anecdote about King Lancelot’s death, and the marvel of his tomb, from which, every day, dripped blood with supernatural healing powers. The power of this blood was such that when two lions approached and fought, fatally wounding each other, they were healed and likewise supernaturally tamed “So that betwixen hem was Reste and pes / Euerelastynge Aftyr with-Owten les” (LVI.491-92). The marvel seems one of sacred influence over the animal kingdom, enforcing an Edenic harmony between natural enemies. Yet this harmony did not extend to the human supplicants in seek of similar healing: once the lions established themselves at the miraculous tomb, they would kill any knight who approached in search of a healing miracle, “Til,” Lovelich writes, “the tyme that Cam Lawncelot de lake; / and that he there Slowgh hem bothe tweyne” (LVI.506-07). Lancelot of the Lake’s intervention is difficult to categorize. On the one hand, his action is clearly good, destroying the public menace posed by the lions, and reopening his grandfather’s tomb as a productive generator of marvels. Yet his action also in some way destroys the marvel, since the lions themselves are at once both an impediment to the functioning of the healing site and the single greatest evidence and advertisement of its efficacy.

If the meaning of the prophetic genealogy was in forecasting the coming of Galath, the anticipated ultimate knight who would put an end to adventures, then the fulfilled genealogy is significant in its engendering of the two Lancelots. The doomed King Lancelot may be virtuous and capable in life, but it is his death and tomb that draw the extended anecdote. As for Lancelot of the Lake, the uncertain moral valence of his
life is contrasted with the “good end” he is said to have made, a “good end” that does not, however, transparently redeem his ethically dubious role as a force of destruction. In the end, perhaps the most powerful statement of the fulfilled genealogy’s apocalyptic mode is in the lines directly following on Lancelot of the Lake’s dispatch of the marvelous lions:

Now Of Al this storie haue I mad An Ende
That Isswede Of Celidoyne; & now forþere to wende,
And Of Anothir Brawnch moste we be-Gyn
Of the storye that we Clepe Prophet Merlyne
(LVI.509-12)\(^{598}\)

With the end of the genealogy comes the end of the story as well, a story that, described as it is as “Isswede Of Celidoyne,” is rendered synonymous with that genealogy. Yet it is also an ending that looks forward, linking what has passed before with what will come in the ensuing romance. The degree to which these genealogies look forward to the “end” of Camelot is also the degree to which they should be seen as preparing the ground for these later plots. The genealogy is the tale – both the tale currently being told and the one to be told next – and the end of the genealogy is the end of that tale, as well as the most important part of tale and genealogy alike.

How useful, then are these reflections in understanding the scribe’s less wordy notes, where he simply marks (“nota”) the position of an unspecified something to be

\(^{598}\) Lovelich’s translation is, again, no real innovation, but nevertheless a slight blurring of the original. In Lovelich’s text, story and genealogy become not merely associated but identified, to a degree surpassing the Vulgate’s clearer language: “Si se taist atant li contes de tout les lignies qui de celydoine issirent . & retorne a vn autre branche que len apele lestoire Merlin quil couient a fine force adiouster a lestoire del saint graal . por ce que la brance i est & i appartient,” “Now the story is silent about all the lineages that came from Celidoine and returns to a branch called the Story of Merlin, which should be joined carefully to the History of the Holy Grail because it is a branch of it and belongs to it” (Sommer, Vulgate, 1:296.16–19; Lacy, Lancelot-Grail, 1:41.308; I again adjust some readings, based on Sommer’s footnotes).
noted? There are some common themes. As the genealogy of Nasciens and Celidoyne has been shown to be important to the scribe, so this interest in these characters extends to the notes. The following notes may perhaps be excerpted as relating to the extended interest in these characters:

**f. 2vb** Evalach (later called Mordraynes), who is waging war against Tholomes, is at this point described as dividing his army into four groups, one of them under the command of Seraphe (later called Nasciens). After the division and deployment of each army is described, there follows a description of the battle.

**f. 30ra** Marks where Nasciens discovers an inscription on Solomon’s ship: “lettres of Gold, I vnirstonde, / that As Writeng it was of Caldee londe, / that As pitious word they gone to Speke. / thanyne Nasciens Ner to the Schip gan Reke; / For that Word there so dowtable was / To Ony man that Entren wolde Into þat plas.” On the ship Nasciens finds a bed, a crown and a sword.

**f. 39r** Celidoyne is glossing a dream for King Label, in which the king sees flowers that fade. The *nota* falls at the point where Celidoyne begins to explain the flowers’ meaning: “The flowres that Fadyn so Every day, / Abowtes the, Sire, they ben In fay. / And wilt thow knowen, sire, what they be? / Anon, Sire, I schal here declaren hem the: / The ton flowr is bownte, ful Sekerly; / The secund prowesse; the thrydde is Cortesy; / and Manye other vertwes ben The Abowte.”

**f. 39va** Marks the beginning of Celidoyne’s accusation that Label has killed his own sister when she rejected his sexual advances. His privileged knowledge of this event, presumed by King Label to be unknown to anyone but himself and the wronged sister, functions as the crowning proof of Celidoyne’s prophetic authority.

**f. 39va** Label begins to lament that he is, as Celidoyne has said of him, a “powre Caytyf, / With owten
Counseil, & Cursid Of lyf”; he goes on to lament his state of spiritual bankruptcy at length

It is, as usual, difficult to say with certainty what has attracted the scribe’s attention at these points. The character of Mordraynes is relevant to the location of the first note, on f. 2v, but equally important are the subordinate generals among whom he divides his forces. The f. 30r nota then falls at the opening of what is perhaps Nasciens’s best-known adventure, his encounter with Solomon’s ship, an encounter that prefigures the parallel experience of Galahad’s in the Queste. The notes that track through the narrative of Celidoyne’s interaction with King Label are more notable for all being stages in a single unfolding episode, falling as they do all on the same folio. It is clear that the scribe’s attention was caught by this passage, first as Celidoyne first glosses Label’s dream, then as Celidoyne castigates Label for his secret and incestuous transgression, and finally as Label himself regrets his shortcomings. The scribe tracks this father-son lineage from the earliest stages in Seraphe’s career, through his spiritual education on Solomon’s ship, to the family’s mature spiritualism in Celidoyne, by that point a figure of wisdom capable of instructing others. Focus on one familially connected set of characters pares down the diffuse text toward a single narrative, from Nasciens to Celidoyne to, eventually, Galath/Galahad as Grail-knight. If Nasciens and Celidoyne are men to “note,” then the scribe’s interest in their genealogy, in the projection of these characters forward into the Arthurian world through their descendants, is all the more comprehensible.

Concerns other than the rather diffuse attention to the father and son, Nasciens and Celidoyne, include the structural pattern of the scribe’s notation. While his notes may tend to project forward to the story’s conclusion, the point that they mark is
frequently one of origin, the beginning of an incident or episode. As the “genalagie” notes were positioned at the beginning of the respective genealogies, so too notes like those on ff. 2v and 39v point to beginnings. The reader must progress through many lines of verse before the full significance of the episode or event becomes clear: the scribe obviously applies his note to an extended passage consisting of dozens of lines, rather than pointing directly at the most climactic line or lines, frequently to be found toward the end of an episode.

Themes that we have already discussed in other romance annotations are visible here as well: the interest in the introduction of an important character, the focus on marvels, and interest in prophetic visions. Some of this interest is of questionable significance, given the marvel-laden nature of the History’s plot. It would be difficult to place a note within this text without stumbling upon a marvel of some description. Indeed, it is a toss-up what the true importance of the f. 30ra note may be for the scribe, whether it is the significance of the episode, the marvelous character of the ship, or, most tantalizing of all, the textual nature of the marked text qua inscription. Whereas in the other passages I have quoted, the nota fell at the first line of the excerpted text, here the note comes a bit later, not with Lovelich’s introduction of the inset text, but at the beginning of the text’s transcription. A reader is invited not just to attend to the fact of the nested text-within-a-text, but to focus on that inset text as distinct from the surrounding narrative.

Anon As In-to the Schip Entren Wold he [Nasciens],
In that for-schip he Sawh ful Sekerle
lettres of Gold, I vndirstonde,
that As Writeng it was of Calde londe,
that As pitous word they gonne to Speke.
thanne Nasciens Ner to the Schip gan Reke;
For that Word there so dowtable was
To Ony man that Entren wolde Into þat plas.
Lo, these wordis seide the Scripture
as I the schal Schewe, I the Ensure,
“thow that wilt with-Inne me Entren here,
loke thou be stedfast In alle manere,
And that thou ful of feyth algates be;
For with-Innes me nis thing non but feith sekerle....”

(XXVIII.105-18)

The words written on Solomon’s ship are said to “Speke.” Yet they are also emphasized as physical artifacts, possessing a color (gold) and whatever tangible weight that may carry. That such treatment of a written utterance is well within romance annotation norms (see above, Chapter 2) increases the likelihood that it is the inscription’s very writtenness that attracts the scribe’s notice.

The thematization of the written as a means of achieving connection with the past and authentication of the present is very much an active concern for the scribe. Like the History itself, the prophetic genealogy, marked, as we have discussed, by the scribe, is a received text, and one in which the language of transmission plays a vital role:

Thanne Opened he that wryt Anon,
And Many Merveilles þere behelde he son,
that In Ebrw I-wreten weren there,
and in lattyn, In dyvers Maner;
And Openly it Tolde of goddis knyhtes,
& of his MÎnistres Anon there Ryhtes.

(XXXIX.205-10)

The persistence of the written text – read, significantly, not within the vision that delivered it, but on awakening – serves simultaneously as a record of the vision and as a certification of its truth. Nasciens may, within the text’s fiction, be reassured as to the import and truth of his vision because of the supporting physical evidence provided by
the artifact of the prophetic tree itself. At the same time, the written text also serves to validate Lovelich’s narrative to the scribe’s audience, answering the question of how these “facts” might be known to future readers. The genealogy, telling of “goddis knyhtes,” is likewise the text that Lovelich himself translates, the authoritative Ur-text of which the present manuscript is a filial copy, the real-world culmination of a fictive stemma.

In the *Merlin*, another marked passage seems similarly preoccupied with the fiction of the text’s supposed descent from texts written or encountered by the characters themselves. Merlin’s prophecies are known because they are recorded by the monk Blasye, immediately following Merlin’s initial pronouncements.

There dwellede Merlyne to þe vj day, tyl they that at the deth weren, [Comen], Jn fay, and tolden the kyng how that it stood, howhe þis barown was persched in that flood, and seiden that Merlyne was þe wysest Man that Jn al this world was lyveng than. For of hym was neuere thyng seid ne don, but ȝif he jnto Scripture dide it putten anon. and thus began Merlynes prophecye of the kyngesof Engelond, certeynlye, and of othere Many thynges also. he dide holy Blasye it wryten tho.

(Lovelich, *Merlin*, lines 3959-70)

The essence of Merlin’s wisdom is that his every deed and utterance is recorded “jnto Scripture.” The content of his prophecy (“they kynges of Engelond”), as the contents of Nasciens’s genealogy (“goddis knyhtes”), invoke the genres of chronicle and romance, written records of chivalry familiar to the fifteenth-century reader, and perhaps intended
to be seen as comparable to the present manuscript. The potent “scripture” of Merlin’s prophecy shares its premonitory valence with Nasciens’s genealogy.

The physical materials of production and practical logistics of a written script are a leitmotif in one more of the marked “textual” passages, by the stone of Moses’s tablets and the dust in which Christ scribbles. The story of the Grail, in its supposed Latin original, is presented as authored by God himself, and is asserted to be the third time that God has personally engaged in the physical act of writing, following as it does on two precedents: “Whanne to Moises he wrot the lawe” (Lovelich, History, XXVII.286) and when, in the story of the woman taken in adultery, Christ “wrot In the Erthe, Er he furthere wente / With his fynger Evene Ryht there” (XXVII.295-96). This latter episode is expanded at length, perhaps because the mystery of Christ’s (illegible?) scribbles speaks more directly to the mysticism of the revelation in the History. Here, as on Solomon’s ship, the nota appears at the point where the text is revealed, where Lovelich switches from describing the writing to quoting it directly:

For thus be-began this Scripture to Seye
Al Openly there to the Jewes Eye,
“har, Erthe! Why Art thou so hardye & so fre
The Erthe to Acvsen In Ony degre?”

(XXVII.328-31)

Writing speaks, and the medium is the message.

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599 Michelle Warren, tracking catalogue descriptions of MS 80 from the Early Modern period to the present, emphasizes the respect for this text shown by Matthew Parker and his contemporaries, not as “bad romance” (the usual modern view), but as “good history” (“Arthurian Romance in London”). Such an attitude, Warren observes, is visible in the Early Modern title at the top of f. 1r: “Acta quaedam Arthuri · regis ·,” a description that cannot be praised for its pedantic accuracy: the acts of Arthur, after all, have little to do with the History, set generations before his birth.
So much for the major content and thematic resonances of most of the scribe’s notes. Only two remain unexplained, both occurring on f. 105r. The first requests attention to “a gret prevyte ... Whiche schal ben ryht a strange thing” (Lovelich, *Merlin*, lines 4274-77). The exact nature of this “strange thing,” however, is not wholly clear. Most proximately, Merlin speaks of the dual source of his marvelous knowledge, in both God and the devil:

\[
\text{Al the Connenge that J have, Certeyn,} \\
\text{onlych it Cometh of the Enemy;} \\
\text{and thereto God, that is almyhty,} \\
\text{Wit and Memorie hath grauuntid to Me} \\
\text{thynes that ben Comeng to knowen, Certeinle ·} \\
\text{(lines 4282-86)}
\]

Merlin then goes on to narrate Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, followed by Joseph of Arimathea’s reenactment of the last supper with the Grail as Eucharistic vessel. It is possible that this, rather than Merlin’s prophetic power, may be the “strange thing” to which a reader is meant to attend. This interpretation is, according to personal preference, either reinforced or undermined by the subsequent *nota* beside “Sire, aftyr that, he Ros from ded / Jn scomfiture of the fowle qwed” (lines 4313-14). Here, a pious attention to the central Christian miracle may justify the scribe’s emphasis.

Within all the annotations either composed or copied by the scribe, the thematic resonances of the marked passages interact powerfully, directing a reader’s experience of the text. Because the scribe is rarely specific or explicit in his annotation, it is impossible to determine with certainty which (if any) of these themes explain his interest in these  

\[^{600}\text{This second note is a reinforcement if it is taken as a reiteration and specification, or an undermining if it is seen as independent and distinct.}\]
privileged passages. Yet by attending to those themes that recur in the passages, it is possible to gain a better view of what the effect of these notes has been on the text, how obedience to the scribe’s imperative (“take note of [this]!”) may direct and define a reader’s thematic experience of the History and Merlin. Nasciens and Celidoyne step forward in this reading as the History’s main characters. Both the History and the Merlin are contextualized within the larger context of the full Vulgate cycle, well beyond the scope of Lovelich’s translation, and with a specific eye toward the events of these texts as the beginning of the end and the origin of the conclusion. The notes emphasize the text as setting up the circumstances for the passing of the Arthurian world, even as the ground is prepared for that world’s emergence. The dramatic foreshadowing is not necessarily tragic: Galahad’s achievement of the Grail is a triumph and a consummation, rather than a failure or loss. Yet whatever the tone of these endings, they still are seeds of finality planted at moments of inception, picked out in such a way as to make ending the true “meaning” of origin. There are themes too that emerge of dreams and visions. The dreams of the History, as they are highlighted by the scribe, and too as read against the scribe’s other apparent sites of focus, are powerful moments of prophecy and also interpretation. As Celidoyne “reads” and interprets the dream of King Label – as well as the non-visionary secret history of Label’s sins – he acts as does Nasciens in unfolding the record of future history spelled out in the prophetic genealogy. In both cases the ability to read is the ability to access privileged and occult information. Text is, in the passages the scribe highlights, a divine writing, and the characters who read and write are participating in that divine authority, exercising a privileged spiritual knowledge.
As I have already briefly mentioned, however, the *notae* by the scribe appearing to be exactly that – notes appealing for reader attention to a passage – are only one of the marks the scribe has left in MS 80’s margins. Another set of marginal markings distinguishes itself, first, by its understated appearance. These notes are lightly written, and frequently fall near the edge of the page, a presentation not inconsistent with that of the scribe’s annotations proper, but on the whole more uniformly inconspicuous. These seem to be not notes intended for the use of a reader, but rather instructions to an illustrator.

There are in the manuscript 94 blank spaces that break up the columns of text. They are irregular in size, varying from the largest gap (of 38 lines) left between the end of the *History* and the opening of the *Merlin* (on f. 88va) to the smallest, of only five lines. The average gap is about fourteen lines high. The number of lines between gaps varies widely as well: 22 folios pass between the gaps at *Merlin*, lines 18309 and 7784, while in other locations, multiple gaps appear on the same page, as on f. 154r, with gaps at *Merlin*, lines 17326 (itself a mere 32 lines after the previous gap on f. 153v) and 17428. These blank spaces clearly have the effect of dividing the text into sections, but those sections are not uniform or regular.

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*601* The next-largest gaps, not falling at this major point of division in the manuscript, are 24 lines (ff. 95ra and 95vb, at ibid., line 1676 and 1830).

*602* On f. 153va, at ibid., line 17262. This wide variation is due both to wide variation in the size of the gaps the scribe has left – frequently (although by no means exclusively) with the intent of managing discrepancies between the position of proposed section breaks and the remaining space in a column – and also to the subtle but significant variation in the number of lines per page.

*603* Their placement seems to be an inheritance from Lovelich’s source (Michelle Warren, personal communication). Note, however, that consistency in the placement and content of illustrations was by no means a hallmark of French vernacular literary manuscripts (Alison Stones, “Indications Écrites et Modèles Picturaux, Guides aux Peintres de Manuscrits Enluminés aux Environs de 1300,” in *Artistes, Artisans et Production Artistique au Moyen Age: Fabrication et Consommation de l’Œuvre*, ed. Xavier Barral i Altet, 362)
It is obvious that these text breaks cannot have been intended as section dividers alone, but leave space in the manuscript for a cycle of illustrations, a program never ultimately carried out. Based on the space left blank for their inclusion, the illustrations would have been column-width miniatures, rather than historiated initials or full- or half-page illustrations, a style not dissimilar from that found in French illustrated manuscripts of the Vulgate cycle or Chrétien.\footnote{The number of proposed illustrations, at 94, is large for a French romance manuscript, but by no means remarkable among Vulgate manuscripts (Lovelich’s immediate source. Cf. Keith Busby et al., eds., Les Manuscrits de Chrétien de Troyes: The Manuscripts of Chrétien de Troyes, 2 vols., Faux Titre 71 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993) for a survey of some representative illustrations in manuscripts of Chrétien’s romances. The Vulgate cycle, meanwhile, was the “most copiously illustrated of all the Arthurian romances” (Alison Stones, “The Earliest Illustrated Prose Lancelot Manuscript?,” Reading Medieval Studies 3 [1977]: 12). Stones’s chart of Vulgate manuscripts on the Lancelot-Grail Project website includes 123 for which she specifies the extent of their illustration (“The Lancelot-Grail Project: Chronological and Geographical Distribution of Lancelot-Grail Manuscripts,” accessed on July 7, 2012, http://www.lancelot-project.pitt.edu/LG-web/Arthur-LG-ChronGeog.html”). Of these, 86 (about 70%) have some kind of illustration, and 63 (about half) carry more than five illustrations. The median number of illustrations per manuscript is 38: many have very few (only one or two), and some particularly richly illustrated specimens have more than two or three hundred. The three-volume London, British Library, Add. 10292-4 has 747. Within this larger set of Vulgate manuscripts, the smaller subset carrying the Estoire and/or Merlin (but not the Lancelot, Queste or Mort Arto), and thus equivalent to Lovelich in source, are slightly less likely to be illustrated (at just under 57%), but are also more likely to carry large numbers of illustrations, bringing up the median number of illustrations per manuscript to 67. The ambitious nature of the proposed decorative program in CCCC MS 80, a production otherwise not as deluxe as some of those comparable French manuscripts, may explain in part the failure to carry out that program. Michelle Warren has suggested to me that the death of Henry Barton, Lovelich’s patron, may represent a disruption in funding for the project, and a possible explanation for its apparent suspension. Such an explanation would fix more certainly the date of MS 80’s production to just before Barton’s death in 1435 (J. S. Roskell, Linda Clark, and Carole Rawcliffe, The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1386-1421, vol. 2 [Stroud, UK: Alan Sutton, 1993], 138).}

By and large, the fact that these illustrations were never completed, nor even begun, precludes any guess as to their projected content. Beside seven of these blank spaces, however, appear notes in the scribal hand that seem best explained as instructions to the illustrator. They do not have any apparent direct reference to the text, lying as they do alongside the blank space prepared to receive a
picture. The instructions do not in any way create a comprehensive program of illustration, representing as they do a mere seven percent of the available pictures. Nor is there any obvious reason why these particular illustrations have been apparently singled out by the scribe for particular notice. Still, it is interesting to infer from this scant evidence how the scribe, or, if he merely copied, the instructions’ author, envisioned the illustrations of the *Merlin* (for, as it happens, none of the extant instructions fall within the *History*). The instructions read as follows:

123ra, gap following 9218: “obviacio | Regium”
153va, gap following 17262: [a] pagent:
153vb, gap following 17294: “a pagent”
154ra, gap following 17326: “Apagent”
154rb, gap following 17428: “Apagent”
159rb, gap following 18678: “pagent”

605 In the margin next to the picture, in addition to the base of a page or as an implied secondary function within a textual heading or rubric, is one of the normal positions for such instructions. Jonathan J. G. Alexander even notes that this convention may be sufficiently strong that it influenced the drawing of preliminary sketches, preparatory to finished illustrations, also in the margin, rather than on the empty ground prepared for the final picture itself, a location otherwise perhaps more natural (“Preliminary Marginal Drawings in Medieval Manuscripts,” in Barral i Altet, *Artistes, Artisans et Production Artistique*, 3:312).

606 It is by no means impossible that the body of instructions to the illustrator was once larger than now survives. Such instructions were frequently written at the very edge of a page, “vers les limites des marges, à l’extérieur même des piqûres, prêtes éventuellement à tomber sous le couteau du relieur,” and the enthusiastic knife of that binder may have sliced away some unknown quantity of now-lost instructions in the same way that at least one of the extant instructions (f. 153va, gap following Lovelich, *Merlin*, line 17262) shows evidence of partial loss (Patricia Stirnemann, “Réflexions sur des Instructions non Iconographiques dans les Manuscrits Gothiques,” in Barral i Altet, *Artistes, Artisans et Production Artistique*, 3:354). Given the fact that other losses in the manuscript suggest a missing edge only a few letters wide, however, such a wholesale culling seems improbable. The surviving instructions likely represent the bulk, and probably even the whole, of the original supply.
The most striking thing about this collection of instructions is the repetition of the “pagent” five times, over what are four consecutive textual gaps, and then a fifth, five folios and four text breaks later.

The terse nature of these supposed instructions renders the precise subject of the proposed illustrations somewhat mysterious. What is the “pagent” to which the scribe repeatedly refers? Michelle Warren has speculated that the “pagent” notes may employ the term to simply mean “picture”: that these blank spaces, that is, are to be filled by an illustration, and not merely be left as text breaks. She herself concedes, however, that such an explanation leaves open to further speculation the question of why some few gaps are thus marked while most are not. The question may not be resolvable, as scribes do not always behave in fully regular ways. But an effort to resolve the conundrum may lead us to the text accompanying these pre-illustrations, in pursuit of some clue. At these text gaps, as generally in this section of the Merlin, Arthur is consolidating his kingdom in the face of raids and attacks by Saracen (here Saxon) aggressors who besiege his allies and client kings. The first two “pagent” instructions fall between, respectively, the first and second and the second and third of three raiding armies sent by the Saxons into Northumberland, Cornwall and Orkney, “To Robben & Reven,” burn and slay (Lovelich, Merlin, lines 17256, 17292 and 17317). Following the departure of these raiding armies, the Saxon kings then take counsel on the besieging of the cities Vandebiers and Clarence in Northumbria. Claryown, the king of Northumbria, summons help from his ally Duke Escawnt, and the duke rides out to his relief. The narrative deals largely with the

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movement of troops, specifying names of commanders and deputed generals, as well as
the layout of city defenses and the deployment of forces in siege. Little attention is given
to descriptions of fighting, beyond general statements on the destruction being meted out,
writ large, by the Saxon armies. Individuals are singled out, not for particular prowess,
feats of strength, or even necessarily nobility of character, but as the commanding
officers of large units, with their won movements thus directly tied to, and even standing
in for, the movements of their troops. In this context of councils and troop movements,
the call for pageantry seems, perhaps, a bit out of place. But pageantry viewed as a
parade, as in the triumphal entry of a king into a subject city, would consist no doubt of
the stately march of a large number of armed knights, on or perhaps into a city. It is at its
root the symbolic, ceremonial version of the warlike troop movement it mimics. The
illuminated depiction of such a “pagent” might well be visually indistinguishable from
the troop movements that dominate the text in these passages.

The other two sets of instructions are slightly less opaque than the “pagent” series.
“Coronacio | Arthuris” falls in a text gap directly after, indeed, the description of Arthur’s
coronation. Such coincidence, first, strengthens the argument for the association of these
notes with the content of the proximate text. Moreover, the coronation is an event that is,
in terms of the advancement of the entire narrative of the Arthurian age, surely the central
and most important event of the Merlin. The Merlin’s plot, bringing Arthur onto the
stage, crowning him king, and stabilizing his rule is a narrative arc neatly summarized in
this single image. It is, perhaps, reassuring to find the scribe alert to so central and

608 Cf. Frances McSparran, ed., “Pageant, n. (d),” The Electronic Middle English Dictionary,
http://quod.lib.umich.edu.proxy.library.nd.edu/cgi/m/mec/mec-idx?type=id&uid=ME32166.
symbolic a scene, in his apparent plan for the manuscript’s adornment. The “obviacio Regium” is, in the absence of a naming of the “kings” at issue, slightly more elusive. The demand for the coronation image immediately after the event would suggest that the reader look just before this image to find the meeting kings. And, indeed, just before the text gap left to depict the obviatio, the two kings Ban and Boors depart together to visit London and offer Arthur their homage. While Ban and Boors’s departure is not precisely a meeting, the image of two kings together may perhaps serve to depict these characters as they prepare to embark. Or the “obviacio” may depict not two kings but three: immediately following the space left for illustration, a true obviatio is narrated, as Arthur, at Merlin’s prompting, sets out “to meten these worthy menne,” “with processiou” as well as “gret kysseng & joye” (Lovelich, Merlin, lines 9240, 9271 and 9272). This meeting is deliberately constructed in Lovelich’s text as a deeply ceremonial act, a very public display of goodwill between Arthur and the foreign kings. As the formal procession that Arthur leads, and as, too, the celebratory tournament that follows, do for the public audience of Arthur’s people, so an illustration of an obviatio would stand for the reader as a visual representation of the friendly relations established between Arthur and his new vassals. Whether the obviatio illustration should have depicted Ban, Boors and Arthur, or merely Ban and Boors alone, the formality of the visual symbolism remains constant: an image of two (or three) kings “meeting” is more important for the introduction of the characters Ban and Boors into the Arthurian orbit, and for the national alliance this entails, than for the mere depiction of a narrative event.

What both of these illustrations – the coronation and the obviatio – have in common is what they also share with the “pagents”: an interest in ceremonial. None of
these instructions focuses on the specifics of narrative or individual character. Arthur’s is the only name mentioned, and that is in the context of a scene of generic ceremonial. No details in these instructions cry out for a specific engagement with the detail of the text, to the degree that one instruction (“pagent”) can be repeated verbatim across several illustrations. The interest is in the capturing of static, symbolically laden moments, and in the case of the “pagents,” perhaps even reinterpreting violent action through images of public ceremonial. It is even possible that, if Warren is correct in her linking of Lovelich’s poem – and, by extension, the manuscript in which it appears – to a context of guild ceremony, with the formal recitation of occasional poetry in honor of guild officials acting as patrons, then such ceremonial imagery may reinforce the centrality of public spectacle to the manuscript’s purpose and “meaning.” Even if the public performance of guild events is less real and more notional than Warren suggests, there is in Lovelich’s prose a certain formality and attention to spectacle that these tersely-proposed illustrations reinforce, and to which their author was presumably well-attuned. Whether or not MS 80 was ever, in reality or intention, involved in a formal reading or presentation the projected illustration program, to the degree its fragments can be reconstructed, is one depicting a world of official events and symbolic performance, painting a stylized and formal reflection of the romance’s plot, and in so doing emphasizing a tendency already latent in Lovelich’s text.

609 Such terse and generic description, while neither terribly unusual nor wholly unexpected, is by no means the rule. Samuel Berger and Paul Durrieu, surveying “notes pour l’enlumineur” in French manuscripts, find the reverse to be the case in manuscripts of literary texts, that such notes frequently – and perhaps even typically – do engage with details of dress and heraldic insignia that may distinguish characters as individuals rather than simple types (“Les Notes pour l’Enlumineur dans les Manuscrits du Moyen Âge,” Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France 53 [1893]: 21-23).

The apparatus provided by the scribe, therefore, both in the allowances he has made for the proposed program of illustration, and in the few notes that seem in fact annotations proper – notes intended for the reader to see and referring to the text – displays concerns very different from those evidenced by John Cok, the major reader-annotator of the manuscript. Cok brought a profoundly religious sensibility to the text. He occupied himself largely with the text’s marvels, a practice that connects him with a larger tradition of romance-reading, but to which he has given his own particular flair. He is capable of focus on marvels for their own sake, a tendency particularly visible in the bestiary-style notes of highlighting the Phoenix or Scipilions. But the marvels he highlights tend also to fit characteristically into a model of Christian exemplarity in the suffering martyr. Mordraynes is the hero of Cok’s tale – or Josephes and Joseph when they behave like Mordraynes – enduring visionary temptation, receiving spiritual comfort, and participating in a process of expounding the Christian faith, whether explicitly (as in the marked “declaracioun of þe feiþ by Ioseph”) or allegorically (as in the oblique retelling of the casus luciferi in the guise of the Fair Woman. For the scribe, in contrast, the hero of the story seems to be instead the more chivalric Nasciens, familial progenitor (through Lancelot) of Arthur’s Britain, and the coming events of the Vulgate cycle. Genealogy is the key for the scribe, as a point of connection with later events, a tie with the larger Arthurian canon, and one that is specifically dynastic rather than Christian. Cok’s own Christian preoccupation in the text is all the more striking when viewed alongside the scribe’s own more secular concerns for pomp, pageantry, and even possible guild ceremonial. With two very different annotators at work in the manuscript,

611 On f. 72va, at Lovelich, History, XLIX.278.
we can see some of the range permissible within notes to a single text, and the approach to the Vulgate cycle by the manuscript’s producer on the one hand and, on the other, a reader in the person of the pious and clerical (although, as it must never be forgotten, also bureaucratic and well-connected) St. Bartholomew’s canon. While both of these interpreters of the text operate within the same generic parameters, they demonstrate some of the scope within romance annotation, as well as some of the potential distance between the audience envisioned by a scribal annotator, picturing the readers who will come after, and the audience embodied by an annotating reader, personal in his reactions and remaking the text in his own image.
CHAPTER 5:


Henry Lovelich, translating his Vulgate sources in the mid-fifteenth century, was working a few decades before the most famous adaptor of the Vulgate, Sir Thomas Malory. The Winchester manuscript, the sole extant manuscript copy of his *Morte Darthur*, makes a beautiful and clean appearance, with wide margins and lavish use of bright red ink. The margins are not, however, empty of information. On the contrary, they contain a lavish supply of information, including at least two complete sets of marks made by scribes and readers: a series of marginal annotations, and an assortment of manicules. In the notes, we have evidence of one medieval reading of the text, a reading that is, while fairly straightforward and even superficial at times, nevertheless fully in sympathy with many of Malory’s own apparent priorities and concerns. The *Morte* of the annotations is a predominantly martial text, interested in recording combats and violent encounters. To a lesser degree, but still significantly, the notes also betray an interest in the marvelous, both in the reporting of prophetic dreams, and, even more importantly, as a measure of chivalric achievement.

Set beside this contemporary reading of the *Morte’s* own text, the notes also offer us an extraordinary opportunity for understanding the practice of annotation itself, as it
was used in the presentation and interpretation of Arthurian texts. Modern readers sometimes expect annotation programs to work like indices or tables of contents, helping readers navigate the full hundreds of folios of the manuscript.\textsuperscript{612} The \textit{Morte} notes, however, are clearly intended to be experienced – and may well have been produced – during the reading process, not before the commencement of reading. The notes of the \textit{Morte} reveal a style of reading, and more importantly of \textit{guided} reading (guided, that is, by the calls on attention provided for specific events and themes by the notes) that focuses on the immediate context, rather than the codex as a whole. So too – particularly in sections like the \textit{Tale of Sir Gareth}\textsuperscript{613} or the \textit{Balin}, the notes show a concern with emphasizing the formal unity and structure of the section, drawing out patterns of recurring episode types or particular strains of causality to emphasize the scaffold – whether of causality or episodic repetition – that underlies the complex \textit{entrelacement} of the individual tales, an \textit{entrelacement} that Malory himself was, by his process of adaptation, working to simplify and render legible.\textsuperscript{614}

The manicules then represent a second layer of reading, distinct from that provided by the notes. Sometimes they reinforce the annotations by their ancillary

\textsuperscript{612} Cf. Parkes, "\textit{Ordinatio} and \textit{Compilatio}.

\textsuperscript{613} For convenience, I continue to use the titles that Eugène Vinaver gave to each section of what he termed Malory’s independent “works.” For many of these sections, the tales seem to have if not independence, at least self-sufficiency; possessing a beginning, middle, and end, they stand out as structural units within a larger whole. Frequently, the annotations in the manuscript seem to respect the unity of some of these smaller sections, paying greater attention to plot and theme within the immediate context than to a tale’s role in the \textit{Morte} as a whole.

\textsuperscript{614} The idea that Malory saw his task as that of “unweaving” the \textit{entrelacement} of his sources was most famously advocated by Vinaver. See especially Vinaver, \textit{The Rise of Romance}, 127–128. In the wake of this theory, a cottage industry of scholars sprang up to debunk it, most particularly Vinaver’s idea that the tales of the \textit{Morte} should be viewed as independent “works.” Some undeniable truth underlies his observations on \textit{entrelacement}, however, and Robert Kelly offers a more nuanced reading, in which he characterizes Malory’s task as one of “[bringing] order out of chaos” (“Malory’s ‘Tale of Balin’ Reconsidered,” \textit{Speculum} 54, no. 1 [January 1979]: 85–99).
presence. At other points, however, the manicules lead a separate and independent existence, marking passages other than those chosen by the annotator. Still, it is clear that for both these readers, the *Morte* was a predominantly martial text. As the scribal annotator aids the reader by his focus on certain narrative structures at the expense of others, simplifying the complex tangle of narrative lines, so too does the author of the manicules, demonstrating other possibilities for focus in the text while still working within a consistent reading mode.

The “Winchester Malory,” British Library MS Additional 59678 (formerly Winchester, Winchester College Fellows’ Library MS 13) is the only extant manuscript of Sir Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*. It dates to the second half of the 15th century, between 1469/70, when Malory finished composing the *Morte Darthur*, and 1485, when the printer William Caxton produced the first printed edition of the *Morte*.\(^615\) Since the manuscript has been shown to have been in Caxton’s workshop, presumably while he was putting together his edition, the publication of this edition provides a *terminus ante quem*, and Paul Yeats-Edwards gives the manuscript an approximate date of c. 1480.\(^616\)

The manuscript is written by two different scribes, “Scribe A” and “Scribe B,”\(^617\) both writing in a secretary hand, and following the same basic layout, using black ink for the main text, and red ink for large initial capitals, many proper names, and marginal

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\(^{616}\) Ibid., 381, 389.

\(^{617}\) Scribe A is generally considered to be the “senior scribe, who sets up the general plan of the copying and the rubrication,” whereas “Scribe B seems to be trained to produce a copy consistent with his senior’s practices” (Helen Cooper, “Opening Up the Malory Manuscript,” in Wheeler, Kindrick and Salda, *The Malory Debate*, 271, 274).
Laid out with large, clearly lined margins kept clean of decorative elements, the manuscript does accumulate some marginalia over the course of nearly 500 folios, including its major cycle of annotations, a cycle which I refer to as the “scribal annotations.” These appear in the margins, in the same hand as that of the main scribe. That is, notes in Scribe A’s sections of the text are written in Scribe A’s hand, and Scribe B has written those notes in his own sections. While not strictly uniform in appearance, the notes do not vary so widely in presentation, with some plain text and others enclosed by a box, the outline of a shield, or some kind of bracketing. Scattered over the entire length of the manuscript, from the first note on f. 11r to the last on f. 477r, the notes are irregularly spaced and while some sections have a note on almost every page, at other points as many as fifty or more pages can pass without annotation. There is, for example, a long gap between a note at f. 230v and the next at f. 294r. Folio 300v then carries an astonishing four notes on a single page, followed by another gap until f. 349v.

The first major question that arises is that of the identity of the scribal annotator. I refer to them as “scribal annotations” to distinguish them from marginalia not in the scribal hand, rather than to make any claim for authorship, and indeed the notes were

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618 Scribe A had responsibility or the beginning of the text through the beginning of The War with the Five Kings, except for a short stretch just after the Balin (from the beginning to f. 35r, line 8 and ff. 35v-45r, line 6; Malory, Works, 3.1–59.22 and 60.9–76.10), a stretch of the Tristram from the middle of the tale of La Cote Male Tayle through the end of what Malory terms the “firste booke of Sir Trystram de Lyones” (ff. 191v-229r, ibid., 287.36–343.2), and everything from the beginning of the Sankgreal to the end of the text (ff. 349r-484v, ibid., 511.10ff.). The rest of the text is in Scribe B’s hand (N. R. Ker, ed., The Winchester Malory: A Facsimile, Early English Text Society Supplementary Ser. 4 [London: Oxford University Press, 1976], xiii).

619 A complete transcription of all these notes can be found in Field, “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” 235–237. Other marginal text does occur besides this one annotation cycle, but consists almost entirely of scribbled signatures, catchwords and corrections. A note on f. 23r (“vertu & man- l hode ys hyed wyth In the bodye,” at Malory, Works, 39.15) imitates the style of the scribal annotations, but is clearly in a hand not the scribes’ and corrects rather than comments on the text (Field, “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” 231).
most likely copied by the scribes from their exemplar. Helen Cooper argues for the
scribes’ authorship, based on the overwhelmingly martial interests of those notes in
Scribe B’s hand, which almost always identify places where one knight defeats of kills
another, in contrast with Scribe A’s more varied notes, commenting on “dreams, visions,
and prophecies” as well as “prognostication and cross-referencing.” 620 As P. J. C. Field
points out, however, the more martial tone of Scribe B’s annotations may not be a
personal choice, but merely reflect the similarly more martial tone of the portions of the
text he has copied. 621 Indeed, similarity in phrasing between the two scribes’ notes, as
well as notes that seem to cross-reference related concerns seem best explained if all
these annotations spring from the same source. 622 Field has proposed instead that the
most likely author for the notes is Malory himself. Still, his evidence, while
considerable, is necessarily circumstantial, and the possibility remains that the notes were
produced by some anonymous early reader or the scribe of a previous copy. 623

620 Cooper, “Opening Up the Malory Manuscript,” 269, 270. James Wade has also added his
recent support to this position (“Malory’s Marginalia Reconsidered,” Arthuriana 21, no. 3 [2011]: 70–86).
622 Compare, for example, those on f. 152r at Malory, Works, 234.14 (Scribe B) and on f. 205v at
ibid., 308.43 (Scribe A), both drawing attention to the dog sent to Tristram by the daughter of the king of
France.
623 Field, “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” 231–233. He builds his argument around correspondences
in diction between text and annotations that sometimes occur across large passages of text, contending that
only someone possessing Malory’s own familiarity with his sources would be able to recall, for example,
the full name of an obscure character from some thirty folios earlier. On the other hand, while one could
explain the irregularity of the notes by proposing a fickle annotator who lost interest at certain points in the
project, it is difficult to imagine Malory himself suffering from the same uneven attention toward his own
text. The annotations provide only an incomplete guide to the text, passing over many aspects of the work
that Malory himself prioritized. Wade musters further rebuttal to the identification of Malory with the
annotator. Perhaps most intriguing is the note “How the lady | Coluwbbe slew | hir selfe | for the | deth of | laun | ceor” (on f. 21r at Malory, Works, 35.21), placed, as Wade observes, not beside Columbe’s suicide,
but beside the erection of her tomb, the point in the text when she is named for the first time. Names are, as
Wade points out, extremely important in Malory’s text as well as in the physical object of the Winchester
manuscript, and are, furthermore, as we have already seen in this present study, a frequent magnet for
annotation in both romances and chronicles. The author of this note, then, may be specifically attracted by
Ultimately, of course, while it would be extremely interesting to make a firm attribution of the authorship of these notes, it is not necessary to do so. Even anonymously, the notes provide at the very least a contemporary reaction to the text, an emphasis of those aspects of the *Morte* which someone – whether a reader, a scribe, or the author himself – felt were important.

### 5.1 The Martial Margins

Typically for romance notes, those in the Winchester Malory consist almost exclusively of summarizing descriptions of the text they accompany. These events marked, as well as the ways the notes present those events, seem, furthermore, to reflect certain basic categories of thematic interest.\(^{624}\) Perhaps the most important category, and certainly the most prevalent, is that of notes referring to battles and deaths. These can be subdivided further into deaths that occur in a battle between two knights, other miscellaneous deaths like that of the Lady of the Lake or Sir Percival’s sister, and battles that result not in the death but the defeat of the losing knight. Out of a total of 80 scribal notes, 32 (40%) relate the death of a knight in battle, 3 (3.8%) a death outside of battle, and 18 (22.5%) the nonfatal defeat of one knight by another. An additional 5 (6.3%), while not following the usual pattern of reporting the decisive outcome of a battle, the presence of the name, holding his annotation in suspension until the missing information was provided: a circumstance that would, of course, not apply to the author, who would have known Columbe’s name all along (Wade, “Malory’s Marginalia Reconsidered,” 75).

\(^{624}\) It is, however, important to emphasize that any systematic effort to classify the notes into discrete categories inevitably leads to frustration, as notes often fit several categories at once.
nevertheless relate in some way to a martial encounter.625 This totals 55 notes (68.8%) with an explicitly martial interest, a total that can be increased to 58 (72.5%) if one includes the violence of the three miscellaneous deaths without immediate connection to a formal battle or duel.626 Even without these notes it is, of course, impossible to overlook the martial preoccupation of Malory’s text. Yet the notes enhance this perception, acting to close off the alternate points of interest and emphasis that the text does provide, by focusing a reader’s attention more firmly on the martial events.

One side effect of this martial preoccupation is the de-emphasis of the role of women in the text. Romance as a genre has sometimes been associated with a female readership.627 If the annotator were herself female, or foresaw a female readership for the text, he or she might be expected to leave some evidence of this bias in the notes.628 This is, however, emphatically not the case for the Winchester Malory. Malory’s text itself is, of course, notably male-centered and martial in its concerns,629 and one may in this

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625 For example, f. 196v (at Malory, Works, 295.43), “Here Sir Trystrams l & Sir lamorak faw l ght tyll þey were l wery both & l so they lette l on evyn l honde & l were l swore l to gy l dir” or f. 412v (at ibid., 614.41), “how quene Gwe l nyuer be soujt sir l Bors to l fyght for l her.”

626 These three deaths are all of women, and thus of noncombatants, yet all three are still fairly violent, including a suicide by falling on a sword, a beheading, and a fatal bloodletting.

627 Susan Crane connects the suspicion with which the genre was regarded by some male writers (in her study, particularly Chaucer) with a corresponding lack of respect for its feminine-gendered subject matter, even if its audiences was not in fact limited to women. “Romance,” she writes, “is a feminine genre according to medieval writers” (Crane, Gender and Romance, 10). Linda Olson examines some of the evidence for romance readership, and likewise concludes that “girls and young women must be considered [...] a significant audience” for Middle English romances, but goes on also to stress the importance of other groups as well, including young boys (Olson, “Romancing the Book”).

628 Compare Parsons, “The Red Ink Annotator,” where the repeated inclusion of notes addressing points of particular interest to women suggests an annotator concerned with preparing the text for consumption by a lay female audience.

629 Andrew Lynch, for example, sees the role of women in Malory as “ancillary” to the men, precisely in the degree to which they are not able to act on the field of combat, the primary stage for public expression within the Morte (Malory’s Book of Arms: The Narrative of Combat in Le Morte Darthur, Arthurian Studies 39 [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997], 147–150).
masculine bias read perhaps some evidence of the contested generic affiliation of the *Morte*, or, alternatively, as cause to reexamine assumptions about the nature of romance.⁶³⁰ Women are, of course, not wholly absent from the *Morte*, and one might turn, for example, to the *Tale of Sir Gareth*, described by Elizabeth Sklar as a “perfect courtly romance,”⁶³¹ surely at least in part because of its embrace of an unusually large array of important female characters (Lyonet, Lyonesse, Sir Persaunte of Inde’s daughter) and the exploration of the theme of love that goes with them. That tale includes what is perhaps the most “romantic” note in the manuscript: “The weddynge of Sir Gareth & of Sir Aggrauay & ne his brother.”⁶³² Yet none of the other notes in the *Gareth* touch on the role of the tale’s women. Lyonet’s repeated criticism of Gareth’s presumed low birth, the test to Gareth’s strength of purpose posed by Sir Persaunte’s daughter, his devotion to Lyonesse, even Lyonet’s magical reanimation of “an armed knyght with many lyghtes about hym” (Malory, *Works*, 205.42-53): none of these attract the annotator’s pen. Besides the “weddynge,” all the other notes in the *Gareth* mark the outcome of combats. Nor is this atypical of the manuscript as a whole. Women appear in the notes fairly

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⁶³² “Romantic,” that is, in the modern sense of the word, but not necessarily the most typical of romance annotation. The note in question falls on f. 147r at Malory, *Works*, 224.22.
infrequently,\textsuperscript{633} no other marriage is mentioned, and when women do appear, either
directly or by implication, it is generally only in a martial or violent context,\textsuperscript{634} almost
exclusively as the objects of or occasions for male violence. The annotator seems even
more aggressively masculine in his outlook than Malory, or at least to push Malory’s
defeminizing of his sources one step further.

Another effect of the consistent emphasis on the martial is to create a feeling of
sameness between the notes, in which remarkably similar incidents are often annotated in
very similar terms. When the first post-\textit{Sankgreal} note does appear on f. 412v, it is
markedly martial in its outlook: “how quene Gwe \textit{nyuer} be sou\textsuperscript{3}t sir \textit{Bors to} fyght for \textit{her}” (at 614.41). The substance of the note, when broken down to its most basic units of
content, is essentially two things: the notice of Guinevere and Bors as the two active
characters at this juncture, and the act of Guinevere’s petition for assistance in a combat
situation. Curiously, and perhaps significantly for the understanding of the way the
Winchester Malory’s scribal notes function, it is not the remarkable in this episode that
the note foregrounds, but the formulaic. The remarkable, that which would allow
someone to pick this single episode out of a collection of similar ones as individually
memorable, would be the unique circumstances leading up to the combat: the poison
apple, the attempt at a murder, or at the very least the overt undermining of the unity of

\textsuperscript{633} A rough tally yields eleven mentions of women in the notes, either by name or epithet,
compared to 128 mentions of named men, putting women at just under an 8% share. It would be difficult
to make a similarly objective measure of the “real” importance of female characters in the text, but I
consider them by this count to be somewhat underrepresented.

\textsuperscript{634} Typically martial notes include “Here ys a mencion l of \textit{he lady of the l laake whan l she asked}
\textit{Ba l lyne le sa l veage hys l hede}” (f. 21r at ibid., 35.21) and “how quene Gwe \textit{nyuer} be sou\textsuperscript{3}t sir \textit{Bors to} fyght for \textit{her}” (f. 412v at ibid., 614.41). The only three exceptions to this rule are the note on Gareth’s
marriage, and two notes on the brachet sent by the French princess to Tristram and later owned by Isolde
(ff. 152r and 205v, at ibid., 234.14 and 308.43).
the court by vicious factional squabbles. Instead, the annotator chooses to emphasize the
similar: two familiar characters, and the circumstances of a combat. Even the fact that
Guinevere requires a champion in a judicial duel – a fact implied perhaps sufficiently
strongly by the note to be understood by a reader familiar with the Arthurian plots – does
not offer an oversufficiency of specific detail. One may be forgiven for wondering on
which occasion it is, for which judicial predicament, that Guinevere turns to Bors for his
support.

The next note to appear is hardly more helpful in distinguishing this episode from
others like it: “How sir Launce l lot rescowed l quene Gwe l nyuere from l þe deth.”635
Once again, the note reports the formulaic rather than the particular (Lancelot so rescues
Guinevere on multiple occasions), and emphasizes also a portion of the episode relating
to a martial achievement.636 As an effect of this consistency in annotational presentation,
attention is drawn to the unity of the text. If yet another martial annotation is possible,
then clearly the episode is a “normal” one within the context of the Morte as a whole.
The notes situate the episode within its larger context as one element within a pattern of
parallel episodes, judicial combats in which Lancelot must rescue Guinevere and redeem
her public honor. The flipside of this emphasis on sameness across various episodes is
that such notes must abandon the potential for reference to the specific in a given episode.
In this case, that means that while there are many aspects of the poison apple episode

635 On f. 414v, at ibid., 618.41.

636 This note provides an excellent example of the difficulty of straightforward classification for
some of the manuscript’s annotations. While the note does not specifically invoke violence – and I have
not, for this reason, counted it among the “martial” themed notes (see pp. 376-77) – the achievement
referred to is one that is in fact accomplished through combat, and thus necessarily draws attention to that
combat, as well as the achievement itself.
which stand out as unique within the *Morte*, as particularly vivid and memorable, when
the notes fail to refer to these details, they lose a great deal of their utility as finding aids
within the context of the full manuscript. Nothing about the notes on ff. 412v or 414v
catches the attention as specific to this particular circumstance. That Bors, among other
potential and essentially interchangeable candidates, is the one to whom Guinevere turns
in Lancelot’s absence is the only detail truly specific to this episode that the notes offer as
a way of determining at a glance which episode is under discussion. Without such
specificity, the usefulness of such a note as an aid to navigating the full manuscript
diminishes.

This practice creates a problem that scholars have struggled with, since the most
obvious explanation for these marginal notes is that they were intended as finding aids of
some kind. Indeed, Cooper argues that for at least some of the notes, particularly those in
the portions of the manuscript copied by Scribe A, this function is fully operative.\textsuperscript{637} As
she observes, the notes at the beginning of the *Sankgreal*, to name one example, while not
offering anything so transparent as a “Here commences the quest of the Holy Grail,”
nonetheless can have that effect, referring to important events in the Grail sequence, and
ones that would also signal to a reader familiar with the story that the section marked is at
the head of that tale: “Here Galahad | was made | knyght,”\textsuperscript{638} “How Sir Galahad | sate in
Seege | Perelous.”\textsuperscript{639} Yet, as Cooper also observes, this function cannot hold for all of
the notes, particularly those detailing the deaths of minor characters, whose deaths and

\textsuperscript{637} Cooper, “Opening Up the Malory Manuscript,” 269.

\textsuperscript{638} On f. 349v at Malory, *Works*, 516.13.

\textsuperscript{639} On f. 351r at ibid., 518.37.
defeats are unimportant to the progress of the narrative as a whole, and unremarkable as ways of marking the passage of the plot. Field remarks too that the irregularity of the notes’ appearances, with dozens of folios passing without comment and other folios carrying as many as four notes, destroys their usefulness as an integrated scheme of “text dividers,” an observation surely also true of their usefulness as finding aids across the entire manuscript. The notes’ failure to operate effectively on the level of the whole manuscript leads Field to conclude that they likely represent “responses on impulse to the *Morte Darthur*” rather than an integrated and sustained scheme, jotted down by their author (or authors) in direct response to what the manuscript presents in the immediate context, rather than with an eye toward a sustained pattern of annotation.

There is a great deal of truth to this picture of the notes’ composition. Much of the notes’ contribution to the feel and interpretation of the *Morte* as an entirety arises from the simple accumulation of notes with similar preoccupations, rather than from a consistent or sustained analysis of what one might call the macrostructure of the text, the structural shape of the narrative as a whole. Field also considers, however, that while “particularly in ‘The Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake’ and ‘The Tale of Sir Gareth’, and at the beginning of the Grail story, [the notes] seem to pick out the rhythm of successive incidents [...] they never keep that up consistently throughout a tale.” This characterization is true for most of the tales and significant episodes of the text, but has a

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640 Cooper, “Opening Up the Malory Manuscript,” 270.

641 Field, “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” 228.

642 Ibid.

643 Ibid.
significant exception in *The Tale of Sir Gareth*. There, the notes form the lengthiest sustained series of annotations in the manuscript, and, I argue, actually constitute a coherent reading of the text, not only drawing forward a particular thematic strain, but also highlighting a particular way of understanding the tale’s structure.

5.2 The Tale of Sir Gareth: *Taking Note of Narrative Structure*

This note series in the *Gareth*, like many of the notes in the Winchester Malory, is primarily martial in its outlook, and deals with the defeat in single combat of one knight by another. One might consider the form of the typical note in this series to be comparable to that of the typical note in the manuscript as a whole. On f. 120r, for example, “Here sir Bewma | nes ouer come þe gre | ne knyght” (at Malory, *Works*, 186.37) has its equivalents elsewhere in the manuscript, as on f. 86v “How kyng Arthu | re slew þe Emporer | of rome sir lucyu|s” (at 134.9) or on f. 104v “Here Sir lanu | celot slew Pe | rys de forest | Saueage” (at 160.25). Yet, when taken together with all the notes in the *Gareth* series, a consistency appears that marks this tale apart from others in the *Morte*. Of the nine notes that appear over the course of the *Gareth*, only the last does not follow the pattern of reporting the outcome of a duel between Gareth and another knight, or in one case, two knights:

f. 116r, at Malory, *Works*, 181.4: “Here Beaw- | maynes had | all moste slay- | ne Sir kay”
117v, at 183.25: “Here sir Bew- | maynes slew | ii knyghtes at a | passage”
119r, at 185.14: “the deth of þe | blak knyght slay | ne by þe handis | of Bewmaynes”
120r, at 186.47: “Here sir Bewma | nes ouer come þe gre | ne knyght”
To a certain degree, such a series of combats is a fair and straightforward representation of the *Gareth*’s content. The first part of the tale, after Gareth leaves Arthur’s court, is structured around a series of combats. In order, Gareth battles Sir Kay, Sir Lancelot (to a peaceful resolution), six unnamed thieves, two knights at a ford (Sir Gararde le Breuse and Sir Arnole de Bruse), the Black Knight of the Black Lands (Sir Perarde), the Green Knight (Sir Pertholepe), the Red Knight (Sir Perymones), Sir Persaunte of Inde (the Blue Knight), the Red Knight of the Red Lands (Sir Ironsyde), “an armed knyght with many lyghtes aboute hym” (twice), many knights at a tournament (including Gawain), Sir Bendaleyne, twenty of Bendaleyne’s retainers, the Brown Knight without Pity, the Duke de la Rowse, and Gawain (to a peaceful resolution). There are a number of ways in which these combats are deliberately presented by Malory’s text as a series, or at least as an assembly of several different series. For some, thematic parallels create series that are usefully read together. Gareth’s two encounters with his brother Gawain, for example, form two opportunities for a scene of familial recognition and, on the part of Gareth, the assumption of some of the identity of Gawain as king’s nephew and consummate knight. The battle against Lancelot joins this grouping as another alternate model of combat between mentor and protégé, this time with Lancelot functioning as an alternate and even
superior “brother.”” In other series, verbal parallels emphasize the connections between episodes. So, for example, “So sir Gareth departed and rode up unto a mountayne, and there mette hym a knight, his name was sir Bendaleyne” (220.3-4) is echoed shortly thereafter by “So he departed; and by fortune he came to a mountayne, and there he founde a goodly knight,” soon to be revealed as the Duke de la Rowse (221.10-11). The repetition of similar formulae ties the various episodes together, presenting the battles as successive and fundamentally similar events in a single series.

Even more important than these parallels between battles, however, are the extensive use of colors in the identification of many of the various knights. As Mildred Leake Day proposes, the interest in color may be derived from a potential source text, the Latin Historia Meriadoci. In this text, the hero fights a series of judicial combats against, in succession, Niger Miles de Nigro Saltu, Roseus Miles de Roseo Saltu, and Candidus Miles de Candido Saltu. While the appropriate literal translations of these names are somewhat uncertain – what, after all, is a saltus, precisely? – “the Black Knight of the Black Lands,” “the Red Knight of the Red Lands,” and “the White Knight of the White Lands” seem fair renderings. There are not many correspondences in terms of plot detail between the Historia Meriadoci and the Gareth, beyond the simple coincidence of a series of adversaries with these unusual titles, and the Latin text is at best only one of


the *Gareth*’s sources. Still, the parallel between the two texts cannot be ignored. The *Niger Miles de Nigro Sal tu* claims to draw his name from the blackness of his ancestral patrimony, the *Niger Saltus* or “Black Forest,” a blackness that has also tinted his complexion. While the text does not actually describe the appearance of the *Roseus* and *Candidus Miles*, who come to make comparable claims on their own eponymous territories, one can perhaps be forgiven for assuming a similar correspondence of redness and whiteness. In the *Morte*, Malory’s Black Knight of the Black Lands displays a personal blackness analogous to that of the *Niger Miles*, one of dress if not of complexion, and one which he shares with his environment:

> So at the laste they com to a blak launde, and there was a blak hauthorne, and thereon hyng a baner, and on the other syde there hyng a blak shylde, and by hit stoode a blak speare, grete and longe, and a grete blak horse covered wyth sylk, and a blak stone faste by. Also there sate a knyght all armed in blak hammerse, and his name was called the Knyght of the Blak Laundis. (184.6-11)

The Green and Red Knights similarly carry horses and equipment to match their names, and Sir Persaunte of Inde has an entire retinue kitted out in “the coloure of inde,” that is, blue (190.18). The Red Knight of the Red Lands, although not one of the group of four brothers so described, nevertheless shares their eccentricity, carrying “armour, spere, and

647 Ibid., 435.

648 “‘Uerumptamen’ ait ‘O rex, si ex rerum euentu huius controouersie consistat probacio, mihi nempe censura iusticie pocius assentire uidebitur, qui et ex ipsius Nigri Saltus effectu auita suffundar nigredine, et Nigri miels de Nigro Saltu ex ipsius Nigri Saltus mihi nomen diriuetur nomine,’” “‘Nevertheless, O King, if the settlement of the dispute concerning the origin of this matter is brought to judgment, it seems to me that the authority of justice will agree more with me, tinged with ancestral blackness from the effect of this Black Forest; and my name, Black Knight of the Black Forest, derives from the name of the Black Forest.’” (Latin and English translation both from Mildred Leake Day, ed., “Historia Meriadoci Regis Cambrie,” in *Latin Arthurian Literature*, Arthurian Archives 11 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 148–149).
shylde,” “all ... blood-rede,” and riding “a red stede” (197.14-16). Even his proper name, Sir Ironsyde, suggests the redness of rusty iron, tying color still closer to the center of his identity.

Siân Echard argues that the Historia Meriadoci, as well as its sister romance the De Ortu Waluuanii, may have originated as a type of courtly game, purposely hyperbolic in its pretended erudition. In particular, the instructions for producing Greek fire, including such outlandish ingredients as water snakes “fed on a human cadaver” and the testicles of a werewolf, strike Echard as parodic of “contemporary ‘scientific’ lore,” the true recipe appearing as a mere afterthought to the enthusiastic and detailed description of the other, fantastical ingredients:

Sulphur, also, and pitch, resin, olive oil, tartar, and petroleum are not in the least withheld from these things already mentioned; they feed the fire quickly when the flame is applied; they are set aside until later. (Day, “De Ortu Waluuanii,” 92, 93)

If the De Ortu parodes the complicated and arcane recipes of contemporary science and alchemy, then the Historia Meriadoci is presumably also an artifact of this courtly


652 Arthurian Narrative, 142.
entertainment, as the author of these texts treats the logistics of cooking outdoors without the benefit of pots in a similarly pedantic vein, parodic in its exaggerated complexity and detail. A connection between alchemical science and the color-coded N Niger Miles and his colleagues within the Historia may have suggested the relationship between color-coded knights and alchemy that Bonnie Wheeler sees playing out in the Gareth, wherein the Black Knight of the Black Laundes and his four brothers may perhaps represent the four “brothers” of the four principal alchemical elements. Wheeler views the color-coded knights as part of a system of coded references within the Gareth painting Gareth as both subject and object of an alchemical process, by which the dross of a kitchen servant is revealed to be the refined gold of a knight of surpassing worth, superior even to his brother Gawain.

Color, thus, creates a significant and strongly emphasized pattern for the main series of battles that Gareth fights, progressing from the Black Knight of the Black Lands up through his most important adversary, the Red Knight of the Red Lands. The tale

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653 See, for example, an illustrative excerpt: “Interim uero ceteri terram cauantes, binas fossas non eiusdem quantitatis preparant, una quarum, alta et ampla altera, parum arcior et profundior exstat. Sicque constiuntur ad inuicem, ut semipedis inconuulse terre spaciun inter eas maneatur. Per illud autem spaciun, a maiori ad humiliorem foueam fit oblique haud magnum foramen, quod clepsedra uel sude obturatur.”

“Meanwhile, other men, hollowing out the earth, prepare a pair of pits of different sizes, one deep and wide, the other a little narrower but deeper. These are laid out alongside each other so that a space of about six inches of undisturbed earth separates them. Through this space a drain runs at an angle from the larger to the shallower pit, not too large but that it can be closed with a sort of valve or spike” (Latin and English translation both from Day, “Historia Meriadoci,” 138, 139).


655 Faith Lyons points out that the use of a single color and plain heraldic arms has a tradition within French Arthurian romances as the mark of a novice knight, and that the use of single colors in the arms of the various knights in the Gareth connects to the theme of disguise, in which Gareth, especially, seeks to appear as less skilled than he truly is (“Malory’s Tale of Sir Gareth and French Arthurian Tradition,” in The Changing Face of Arthurian Romance: Essays on Arthurian Prose Romances in Memory
does not end after he defeats Sir Ironsyde, however. Instead, the story continues through a more diffuse, less tightly patterned series of episodes. In the second half of *Gareth* in particular, the narrative, while still including many individual combats, nevertheless wanders somewhat further afield from the mere repetition of these types of episode. The tournament scene, for example, shifts the dynamic of single combats somewhat, and allows both a profusion and diffusion of adversaries, increasing their number while simultaneously decreasing both the drama and significance of each individual combat. Likewise, the description of Gareth’s stay at Lyonesse’s castle shifts focus away from the story as a mere series of combats. While Gareth does battle and defeat the “armed knyght with many lyghtes aboute hym,” sent by his erstwhile travel companion Lyonet, the interest in the episode does not truly lie in the combats themselves. Rather, the incident is notable for the passion between Gareth and Lyonesse, their aborted attempts to consummate their relationship, and Lyonet’s supernatural powers in thwarting those attempts. Even the combat itself is complicated somewhat in its moral valence. Lyonet does no more, after all, than protect her sister’s virtue from a seducer, as Gareth himself did in defeating the Red Knight of the Red Lands. While the reader does not wish Gareth to be killed, nevertheless some question remains as to whether she may be justified in claiming that “all that I have done shall be to your worship and to us all” (Malory, *Works*, 207.28).

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*of Cedric E. Pickford*, ed. Alison Adams et al., Arthurian Studies 16 (Cambridge: Boydell, 1986), 140–141). But while disguise is clearly closely connected to the use of color in this tale, the employment of the device by such a formidable adversary as the Red Knight of the Red Lands must necessarily lessen the force of any association with incompetence or inexperience that it may carry. Similarly, the presence of an entire blue entourage for Sir Persaunte of Inde also expands the color imagery beyond the connection with a single, disguised knight errant it generally carries in the French romances.
Still, some important details of the second half of the *Gareth* continue to keep color at the forefront of the reader’s mind, preventing the complete dissipation of the early pattern established in the series of color-coded single combats. Most obvious are the reappearance, toward the end of the tale, of still more combats against colored adversaries. The Brown Knight is merely referred to by this name, his brownness not further elaborated. Even so, the very fact of his color-coding places him within the series of colored combats that had apparently been suspended with the victory against the Red Knight of the Red Lands. Then, finally, the Duke de la Rowse adds to the proliferation of “red” knights, his name *rouse* meaning literally “red-haired.” Again, while his redness of his name has no specific referent in the tale, the firmly marked redness of the Red Knight and Sir Ironsyde, together with the blueness, greenness and blackness of the Red Knight’s brothers, serves to color the Duke de la Rowse by association. Even after his climactic battle with the Red Knight of the Red Lands, apparently ending the series of colored knights and bringing his adventure to a close, colored adversaries continue to haunt Gareth and, by their insistent presence, emphasize the unified structure of the tale. Should the reader have lost sight, in the second half of the tale, of the story’s structure as a series of color-coded combats, the Brown Knight and the Duke de la Rowse draw the wandering tale back in line with this underlying structure.

Nor does Gareth himself stand apart from this pattern. At the tournament, it is not Gareth’s opponents but the hero himself who draws color again to the fore of the tale. Lyonesse gifts him with a magic ring that will protect its wearer from losing any blood, a

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quality surely valuable in a tournament. Yet it is the ring’s other power that Gareth prefers, its power to disguise by altering the color of the wearer (or at least of the wearer’s armor), so that “at one tyme he semed grene, and another tyme at his gayn-commynge hym semed blewe. And thus at every course that he rode too and fro he chonged whyght to rede and blak, and there might neyther kynge nother knight have no redy cognysshauns of hym” (215.31-35). Finally Gareth absentmindedly removes the ring, and is revealed and recognized when he remains consistently yellow. Gareth does not at the tournament battle a series of colored knights, but instead becomes such a series, against whom Arthur’s other knights must do battle. Gareth in fact seems to gain another pseudonym in this episode. Now that the epithet “Bewmaynes” has lost its power to conceal, following his mother’s arrival at court and revelation of his true identity, he must invent a new disguise as the “Knyght with the many coloures” (216.1). He becomes, even more than the Red Knight of the Red Lands, a sort of culmination of the series of colored knights that he has battled, both dispersing this series over the breadth of a mêlée tournament and then drawing back to the unity of a single knight with his ultimate identification as, if not the Yellow Knight, at least a yellow knight.

All of this is not merely to belabor the point that color plays an important role in the Tale of Sir Gareth. There are, of course, other important thematic strains within the narrative, strains that have been recognized and examined by an array of modern

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657 This new title may in fact be more integrative of his earlier identity as “Bewmaynes” than is immediately obvious. If one accepts the color-coding structure as the predominant organizational architecture of the tale, then the “many coloures” may refer not just to his own shifting appearance, but to the “many coloures” that dog him throughout his adventures.
scholars, and some of which play out in the other combat groupings addressed above. However, the key to understanding the marginal notations of this tale as a series seems to be recognition of the major structure of the *Gareth* as a series of battles with colored knights, a series that plays out fairly straightforwardly in the first half of the tale, then diffuses with the episode of the tournament and the Knight with the Many Colors, and finally reasserts itself in the battles with the Brown Knight and the Duke de la Rowse. Whether by design in making an aggressive reading of the *Gareth*, or simply as a result of his usual habit throughout the *Morte*, in drawing into the margins the successive battles Gareth fights leading up to the Red Knight of the Red Lands (first Kay, then two knights at a ford, then each of the variously colored knights in turn), the annotator makes obvious the underlying structure of the tale as a series of combats.

To turn back to the notes, then, it is clear from those events in the text that the annotator chooses to mark that he sees the structure of the *Gareth* as, fundamentally, a sequence of single combats, and one in which color plays a prominent role. The first note in the series sets the tone by marking the point at which Gareth defeats Sir Kay in single combat, the effect of which is to prove his prowess to the watching Sir Lancelot, earning the older knight’s respect and encouraging Lancelot to grant Gareth’s request that he be knighted. Yet this important chivalric milestone is not referred to in the margin; it is the

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658 Cf. Peter J. C. Field, “The Source of Malory’s *Tale of Gareth*,” in *Aspects of Malory*, ed. Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, Arthurian Studies 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1981), 57–70; Nolan, “The *Tale of Sir Gareth* and the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*”; D. Thomas Hanks, “The Rhetoric of the Folk Fairy Tale in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Tale of Sir Gareth*,” *Arthuriiana* 13, no. 3 (2003): 52–67. Some alternate models for understanding the thematic underpinnings of *Gareth* include the view of the tale as a sort of parallel *Tale of Sir Lancelot*, helping Malory more fully flesh out some of the major themes of that tale without the moral problem of an adulterous affair at the center of the plot (Nolan), Gareth’s progression through a series of alternately successful and unsuccessful battles with his brother Gawain and brother-substitute Lancelot (Field, Nolan), and the underlying folktale structures and motifs of a departure from home, a quest, magical assistance, the journey from low status to high, and happy marriage to a maiden (Field, Hanks).
combat with Kay that attracts attention. Later, a similar singularity of focus is evident at the defeat of Sir Persaunte of Inde. This knight is the most notable in the color-coded sequence largely because he tests the young knight sexually as well as physically, sending his daughter to attempt to seduce Gareth. Yet the annotator chooses to efface that specificity by casting this encounter as equivalent to those with the Green Knight and Red Knight. The repetition of the formula “Here sir Bewmaynes ouercom…” suggests that this combat exactly resembles those that have gone before, and that Sir Persaunte is merely yet another colored adversary.

Then, when the Gareth for a while submerges this structure to relate the courtship of Gareth and Lyonesse and the tournament, the margins suppress these events by their silence. While one might dismiss his ignoring of the unwillingly chaste relationship between Gareth and Lyonesse, deeming the incident too romantic for the usual martial concerns of the annotator, the tournament also escapes mention. Nor does this reflect the general practice across the Morte as a whole. The annotator has elsewhere shown himself capable of interest in mêlée combats like battles or tournaments, yet within the Tale of Sir Gareth, to note the various falls taken by Gareth’s opponents would be to distract from the structure of the tale as a series of single combats. When the notes do begin again after a fifteen-folio hiatus, the nature of the series of combats becomes clear.

A series of notes beginning around f. 83r, for example, marks the deaths of particular knights in pitched battle (at Malory, Works, 129.22ff.), and, on f. 300v, a series of notes chronicles some of the notable falls taken during the tournament of Lonazep (at ibid., 445.40ff.).

The action of the tournament is, admittedly, described in a way that reduces it as well to a number of individual combats, rather than a true mêlée, a practice typical of the Morte as a whole. Cf. Lynch, Malory’s Book of Arms, 48–49. Nevertheless, the large number of these largely unimportant combats, in which each is disposed of within a single sentence or two, does contribute to the perception of the tournament as a single narrative unit, rather than a series of differentiated duels.
While the notes have included some combats that do not have color values, nevertheless the inclusion of the Brown Knight, coupled with the exclusion of some of Gareth’s other single-combat adversaries (the mysterious “knyght with many lyghtes aboute hym.” Sir Bendaleyne, Gawain) draws attention to the development of the marginal notes as a primarily color-coded series. When given the opportunity to restart his earlier formula with “How sir Gareth | slew þe browne | knight,”\(^{661}\) the annotator seizes his chance. This later combat becomes in the notes an equal stage in a series extending nearly the entire length of the romance, now clearly visible as a major structural underpinning to the narrative.

The final note of the tale then seems at first to set this theory on its head, when it marks “The weddynge | of Sir Gareth | & of Sir Aggrauay | ne his brother.”\(^{662}\) Certainly it seems to belie the otherwise purely martial focus of the notes to this tale, a focus that comes at the expense of some extremely important thematic motifs: Lyonet the *maledisante*, Lyonesse the *fée-amante*, and the ennobling power of love.\(^{663}\) Still, given the predominant *lack* of interest in women and the affairs of the heart displayed by the scribal annotator, the more likely explanation for his attention to this event is its structural role in the *Gareth*, as the closing scene of the tale. With the inclusion of the story’s *dénouement*, the notes can clearly be seen as mapping out of the structure of an entire episode that unfolds as a series of combats and a happy ending.

\(^{661}\) On f. 144v at Malory, *Works*, 220.42. The fact that the Brown Knight *is* slain perhaps explains the departure from the strict form of “How Sir Bewmaynes ouercom,” while the revelation of Gareth’s true identity explains the switch from his *nom de guerre*.

\(^{662}\) On f. 147 at ibid., 224.22.

The overriding concern with the notes within *The Tale of Sir Gareth*, therefore, is to provide a guide for a reader of that particular tale, to sketch out the self-contained structure of the tale. The notes do not, significantly, attempt to situate the *Gareth* within the *Morte* as a whole, nor do they serve as practical finding aids within the larger context of the *Morte*, or even, necessarily within the *Gareth* itself. The notes are clearly intended to be read along with the text, not to be used as a means of skipping over sections of that text with an eye toward focusing attention on particular episodes.

5.3 The Tale of Sir Lancelot: *Episodic Reading*

*The Tale of Sir Gareth* offers an excellent case study of this technique being used over a long, semi-independent romance, and is probably the most complete single unit of notes in the manuscript. Does the *Gareth*, however, stand as a unique example of this type of annotation, or is it typical of the use of notes within the *Morte* as a whole? Examination of the section immediately preceding, the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*, can offer a useful point of comparison. This tale does not have the same tight narrative structure of the *Gareth*. Still, like the *Gareth*, it is fairly completely annotated from its beginning on f. 96r following an *explicit* dividing it from the preceding material. Because of its

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664 Albert Hartung argues for considerable complexity in Malory’s program of adapting his sources for this tale, as a result of which Lancelot emerges as an ideal knight, not just in physical skill, but in his exercise of emotional control (“Narrative Technique, Characterization, and the Sources in Malory’s ‘Tale of Sir Lancelot’,” *Studies in Philology* 70, no. 3 [July 1973]: 252–268). Barbara Nolan, meanwhile, sees the *Tale of Sir Lancelot* as intimately connected with the *Tale of Sir Gareth*, picking up on many of its themes, including those of disguise and an ennobling courtly love (“The *Tale of Sir Gareth* and the *Tale of Sir Lancelot*”). Nevertheless, the tale reads like a series of thematically related episodes, rather than as a single narrative arc in the way that the *Gareth* does.

physical proximity to the *Gareth*, therefore, as well as similar length and similar apparent attention from the annotator, it makes an excellent point of comparison. In total, eight notes appear over the eighteen folios of text, in comparison to *Gareth*’s nine notes over thirty-five folios. After seven unmarked folios, notes appear regularly every one or two folios, compared to the *Gareth*’s fourteen-folio hiatus during the descriptions of his courtship of Lyonesse and of the tournament:

104v, at 160.25: “Here Sir laun | celot slew Pe | rys de forest | Saueage”
105v, at 161.41: “Here sir launce | lot slew ii Gy- | launtes in þe cas | tel of tyntagil”
106v, at 163.27: “Here sir launce | lot bete . iii . kny3tes | & rescowed Sir kay”
108r, at 165.19: “Here Sir laun | celot ouercom . iii | breþerne vpon | a brydge”
108v, at 166.17: “Here sir launcelot | with one spere sm- | ote downe Sir | Sagramour Sir Ector | Sir vwayne & sir | Gawayne”
110v, at 169.10: “Here Sir launce- | lot heled sir mely- | ot de logyrs with Sir | Gyolverde þe bas- | terdis swerde”
112v, at 172.4: “Here sir laun- | celot made Sir | Pedyvere be | re þe dede body of þe lady to | quene Gwe | nyvere”

Some obvious differences emerge between the two sets of notes. There is some of the same formulaic nature of the repeated “Here sir Bewmaynes ouercom…” in the *Gareth* notes. The *Lancelot* notes, after the initial “The deth of | Terquyn by | sir launcelot,” settle into a pattern of “Here sir launcelot…” that carries through the length of the tale.

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666 Intriguingly, this note actually seems to better fit the formula, if one may so identify it, of the preceding treatment of Arthur’s continental conquests, perhaps picking up on the pattern of “The deth of | þe marquesse” (f. 92v, at ibid., 142.5), “The deth of | Chastelayne” (f. 93r, at ibid., 142.12), and “The deth of | Sir dolphyn” (f. 93r., at ibid., 142.19) of the preceding three notes. This may perhaps suggest that the annotations were added in order, progressing through the manuscript, allowing the wording of notes on one section to influence the wording of notes in the next, until the annotator fully adapted to the tone and circumstances of the new section.
Yet the verbs employed after this introductory formula serve somewhat to emphasize the changes in the formula, as well as its uniformity: “Here sir launcelot slew,” “Here sir launcelot bete,” “Here sir launcelot ouercom,” even “Here sir launcelot heled.” The fact that the _Gareth_ notes are capable of much more consistent adherence to a single formula (“Here sir Bewmaynes ouercom the [colored] knight”) necessarily emphasizes to the reader the repetitions within the text that allow this consistency. The _Lancelot_ notes convey an impression of greater variety in the episodes that make up the tale, and so also downplay some of the cross-episode connections that could be made.

One significant point of similarity between the two sets of notes is the preponderance of notes referring to martial incidents, a bias that, as previously discussed, extends through all the notes in the manuscript. Of the eight notes in the _Lancelot_ six describe Lancelot’s defeat of one or more opponents, either by killing them or simply by overcoming them in battle. As in the _Gareth_, some incidents in the _Lancelot_ that are not strictly martial are skipped over, while at other times it is the climactic combat that is singled out for emphasis, while the notes ignore other important events in the episode. So, for example, while the opening episode of the tale includes a variety of incidents, during which Lancelot’s loyalty to Guinevere is tested by four queens who hold him prisoner unless he chooses one of them for his paramour (151.14ff.), no annotation appears until “The deth of Terquyn.” While the confrontation with the four queens may have important thematic resonances throughout the _Tale of Sir Lancelot_, as his loyalty to Guinevere is tested repeatedly in a variety of ways, its essentially unmartial nature seems not to attract the annotator’s pen. As he did for Sir Persaunte’s seductive daughter or
Lyonet’s protection of her sister’s virtue, here too the annotator leaves the incident of the four queens unmarked.

A major departure from the _Gareth_, however, is in how the annotator chooses to describe these martial events. The _Gareth_ notes consist almost exclusively of simple declarations that Bewmaynes has defeated this or that opponent. The notes in the _Lancelot_, however, offer far more details about the circumstances of the fight (“in þe castel of tyntagil,” “with one spere”), and also describe aspects of the story that go beyond a mere report of the combat and its participants. _Lancelot_ explicitly “rescowed Sir kay” and “heled sir melyot de logyrs,” actions that more richly reflect the variety of incidents in the _Tale of Sir Lancelot_. _Lancelot_’s adventures do not consist solely of repeated, formulaic battles against interchangeable opponents, but have positive effects as well, tangible benefits like rescues or healings. Even the final note, in which a treacherous knight must carry back to court the body of the woman he has murdered, while certainly violent, and even a direct achievement of _Lancelot_’s sword arm, receives a much more complex treatment than a terse “Here Sir Launcelot ouercom Sir Pedyvere.”

The _Tale of Sir Gareth_, too, likewise contains motivation, positive result, nonmartial incident, and complexity. It is only the annotations themselves that strip much of this from the narrative, with the result of making the underlying narrative structure immediately visible. The annotations of the _Lancelot_ do not attempt this, choosing instead to embrace the specificity and variety of the various incidents marked, with the result that, while the _Gareth_ notes walk the reader through the successive stages of a structured narrative, the _Lancelot_ notes give the impression of a series of far more varied incidents.
5.4 Balin Without Balan: A Tale of Two Storylines

Turning now to an important third object for our study, we may see in the Balin yet another instance of the annotator guiding the reading of the text, in a way different from his formal, structural reading of the Gareth, but different also from the more diffuse treatment of the Lancelot. The adventures in the Balin, while self-contained insofar as they deal with the story of a single individual knight, have wide-ranging effects on the Morte as a whole, and are notable for their lack of logical causality between incidents. Jeanie Brink sees the tale as divided into “two separate quests, each […] set into motion by the violation of a safe conduct,” the first originating with the beheading of the Lady of the Lake, and the second by the murder of Sir Harleus le Berbeus by Garlon, the “knight that rydith invisible.” A related division, and one perhaps more useful for our purposes, is that between the rival subplots of, on the one hand, the tragic fratricidal conflict between Balin and his brother Balan, and, on the other hand, the Dolorous Stroke that would have such profound effects in the Grail quest. The first conflict is precipitated by Balin’s achievement of the sword that makes his reputation as a knight, when he draws it from the scabbard carried by the damsel “sente frome the grete Lady Lyle of


668 As Kelly states, “any discussion of ultimate causation is inevitably thematic,” and events within the Balin are not logically entailed by their causes, but are rather connected by the deeper bonds of thematic exegesis (“Malory’s ‘Tale of Balin’ Reconsidered,” 96–97). See also Ad Putter, “Late Romance: Malory and the Tale of Balin,” in Readings in Medieval Texts: Interpreting Old and Middle English Literature, ed. David Johnson and Elaine Treharne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 337–353; Jill Mann, “‘Taking the Adventure’: Malory and the Suite du Merlin,” in Takamiya and Brewer, Aspects of Malory, 74–75.

Avilion” (Malory, *Works*, 38.10), and that ultimately dooms him, when he refuses to return the sword, despite the damsel’s warning. The second subplot is also precipitated by a sword-bearing damsel, the Lady of the Lake who gifts Arthur with Excalibur in return for a boon, which she attempts to redeem in claiming Balin’s head. When Balin beheads her instead, he sets in motion a series of events that results in the suicide of the lady Columbe, of whom Merlin prophesies: “because of the dethe of that lady thou shalt stryke a stroke moste dolorous that ever man stroke, excepte the stroke of oure Lorde Jesu Cryste” (45.31-32). The Dolorous Stroke will, of course, be redressed and fulfilled by Galahad at the climax of the Grail quest, and the *Balin* thus sets up the necessary background and circumstances for the *Sankgreal*.

Intriguingly, the annotator seems to recognize the dichotomy between these two narrative strains and to untangle the somewhat confused plotline of the text by highlighting one and not the other. As in the other sections of the *Morte* already discussed, notes appear fairly regularly, every one or two folios:

f. 21r, at Malory, *Works*, 35.21: “Here ys a mencion | of þe lady of the | laake whan | she asked Ba | lyne le sa | veage hys | hede”
24r, at 41.7: “The dethe of | the lady | of the | lake”
25v, at 43.18: “How Balyn | slew launceor”
26v, at 45.5: “How the lady | Columbe slew | hir selfe | for the | deth of | laun | ceor”

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670 These two narrative strains are not, of course, fully separate from one another. The cursed sword and scabbard will come into the possession of Galahad in the *Sankgreal*, and Malory even draws attention to the cross-reference between these episodes, both in the *Balin* as the sword is placed in the stone and at the point of the marvel’s achievement in the *Sankgreal* (Malory, *Works*, 58.41–44 and 520.8–13). At this latter point, in fact, Malory seems to integrate the two strains fully, as Galahad attributes not just Pellam/Pelles’s wounding to the Dolorous Stroke, but Balin and Balan’s deaths as well. Nevertheless, there seems still to be a legitimate dichotomy between, on the one hand, those aspects of the *Balin* that look forward to Grail quest, often through direct causation (or as direct as causation becomes in the *Balin*), and those aspects that thematically prefigure the final civil conflicts of the *Morte*.
Casting about for some sort of unifying theory behind these annotations, we first notice that the Balin notes are not formulaic as are those in the Gareth, but describe a variety of incidents in a variety of different phrasings, even for those events similar in nature: “The dethe of,” “How Balyn slew,” “Here ys þe dethe of,” “Here Garlonde … slew.” The lack of a single formula makes clear the remarkable nature of the Gareth notes in emphasizing a consistent, reiterative structure. So too, the notes are somewhat wordier than those in the Gareth, sometimes including information about the circumstances surrounding the events described: “whan she asked Balyne … hys hede,” “for the deth of launceor,” “þat went in visyble,” “vnder þe conduyte of Balyn.” Garlon, for example, makes an impression not just as a knight who kills others and is killed in his turn, but as having the peculiar quality of going invisible, and the notes thus seem more invested in creating some interest and specificity for the incident.

At the same time, these notes do continue to share some of the same characteristics of notes we have already examined, in the apparent gratuity of some of that specificity. When the annotator writes “Here Garlonde | þat went in visyble | slew Har | lews le Bar | beus vnder þe | conduyte | of Ba | lyn,” the reader might be expected to remember Garlon, at least, since his particular supernatural talent is unusual enough in
the realism of the *Morte Darthur*’s world to stick in the mind.\(^{671}\) The character Harleus le Barbeus, however, like Peryne de Mounte Belyarde in the following note, is emphatically *not* memorable, important not as an individual but merely as someone for Garlon to kill. Thomas Crofts sees in the names themselves the major meaning and importance of the notes, a method by which Malory creates a sort of exemplary authority. By their insistence on recording the names of minor characters such as Harleus and Paryne, the notes set these characters up as workable models for chivalric behavior, either to emulate or repudiate, creating for them a consistency of identity contained within the label of the name.\(^{672}\)

Certainly in light of the conspicuous and consistent rubrication of proper names in the Winchester Malory,\(^{673}\) the insistence on names in the marginalia cannot but be important, and part of the general emphasis on names both in and out of the text. Yet, surely any exemplarity in the text comes primarily from its main characters (Lancelot, Galahad, Gawain, Arthur, etc.), not from minor characters like Harleus le Berbeus, notable merely as assistants and adversaries to the important knights. More important in the *Balin* seems to be the way in which the full explication of the details of each noted event creates for the reader a fully legible narrative carried on in the margins of the text.


\(^{673}\) One of the most noticeable aspects of the manuscript layout is that, on every page throughout the manuscript, all proper names are written in red ink and a slightly more formal script.

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Reading the *Balin* notes in isolation creates the illusion of a simple, straightforward narrative. The Lady of the Lake is introduced as desiring Balin’s death; she dies. Balin kills Lanceor; this inspires Columbe’s suicide. King Lot and the twelve kings die, apparently in isolation, but then the narrative turns to the story of Garlon, in which Garlon kills two knights in succession, named in order to distinguish them from each other but each “vnder þe conduyte of Balyne,” before Garlon is killed in his turn by Balin. Finally the episode ends with a “pronosticacion of the Sank Greall.” An incredibly complex narrative, in which logical causality is suspended or obscured, has been laid out as a simple progression of plot.

In this simplified sequence of events, it is possible to see both the privileging of the Dolorous Stroke / Sankgreal plotline, and the corresponding neglect of the cursed sword narrative, which reaches its head with the fratricidal combat between Balin and Balan. Unfortunately for us, this climactic battle falls in a lacuna in the Winchester manuscript, and so it is impossible to know how the annotator treated that event, if he treated it at all. Still, it is possible to state definitively that Balin’s achievement of the sword from the Lady Lyle’s damsel, and his refusal to return that sword, are conspicuous in their absence from the annotations. The only extant note which may refer in any way to this second narrative strain is the one recording the death of King Lot and the twelve kings, and all seven other notes bear directly on the logical progress toward the Dolorous Stroke, and the Grail Quest beyond. The *Balin* annotations, in their selective marking of incidents, highlight a specific reading of the text in which one of the two main plotlines – that leading up to the Dolorous Stroke and, so, anticipating the Grail quest – is presented as, perhaps, *the* plotline of the *Balin*. 
Looking more closely at the note marking the death of Lot, it is possible to gain a further understanding, not just of how the *Balin* notes work in their immediate textual environment, but how they display an awareness of the *Balin*’s place in the *Morte* as a whole. For most of the notes we have so far examined, the overwhelming preoccupation is with the individual section or tale. Unusually within the manuscript, though, the annotator seems in the *Balin* to have a keen sense of the tale’s place within the larger drama of the *Morte*, and to view its importance as, in a large degree, the setting-up of events to play out later on. Some of this is evident in his choice to forefront the Dolorous Stroke plotline, a narrative strain that does not really come to its fruition until the *Sankgreal*. Indeed, the anticipatory character of this plotline is emphasized in the notes when the last stage of the narrative is not the Dolorous Stroke itself, but the “pronosticacion of the Sank Greall,” a note which could be read as foretelling either the Grail or the *Sankgreal*. Furthermore, the apparently eccentric “Hyre ys þe dethe of kynge lot” marks perhaps the other major event besides the Stroke that sets up later events to come, not just thematically, but through direct logical causality. The desire of the

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674 In showing this interest, the annotator is once again sympathetic to Malory’s own apparent aims, as the *Balin* is one of the richest sections of the *Morte* in terms of providing overt cross-referencing within the text. Merlin appears repeatedly throughout the tale, and each time he does, it is to make some prediction of future events, usually to be fulfilled in the *Sankgreal* or *Tale of the Morte Arthur*. Cf. Malory, *Works*, 45.13–15 (a fight between Lancelot and Tristram), 45.31-37 (the Dolorous Stroke), 49.38-42 (the battle between Arthur and Mordred), and 58.24-28 (the coming of Galahad and, in somewhat confused fashion, the death of Gawain at Lancelot’s hands). This collection of prophecies, substantial in itself, leaves aside those made by Malory himself in the form of the narratorial voice directly informing the reader of events to come. See, for example, ibid., 48.40–44: “But kynge Pellynore bare the wyte of the dethe of kynge Lott, wherefore sir Gawayne revenged the deth of hys fadir the ten yere aftir he was made knyght, and slew kynge Pellynor hys owne hondis.” The “pronosticacion” marked in the notes is, in fact, of this latter type.

Orkney brothers (Gawain, Gaheris, Agravaine and Mordred) to avenge their father’s death creates some of the bitter feuding and factionalism that ultimately sets off the conflict between Gawain and Lancelot that did so much to undermine Arthur’s power. The notes in this section, then, display an awareness of the importance of the Balin within a larger narrative of the text, both for the Sankgreal and the Tale of the Morte Arthur. This importance is interpreted in a fairly literal fashion, however, with thematic connections submerged in favor of highlighting those incidents that have actual causal ramifications for later events, ramifications that are, furthermore, very rarely spelled out directly.

This reading of the Balin notes then raises the question of the nature of cross-referencing within the Malory annotations. Interestingly, when, as in the “pronosticacion” note, the annotator does set up the potential for interaction across large stretches of the codex, he does not exploit this opportunity by providing a companion note at the point where the “pronosticacion” achieves its fulfillment. While the Sankgreal receives considerable marginal attention, it is intriguingly not Galahad’s achievement of the Grail that receives a note, but Lancelot’s. Lacking, as it does, any relevance to Galahad’s quest or the restoration of the wasteland, the Sankgreal note cannot be a direct response to the earlier Balin “pronosticacion,” and distances the

676 On f. 401v, at Malory, Works, 596.40: “The significacion l of þe Sankgreal l that ys called l the holy ves l sell the l whiche l appered to l Sir laun l celot.” The reason for this privileging of Lancelot’s incomplete achievement over Galahad’s perfect one must remain uncertain. Perhaps the annotator is influenced by the greater importance of Lancelot as a main character in the Morte, beyond the confines of the Sankgreal. Or, perhaps, he chooses this episode because Lancelot’s version comes first, and so is the reader’s own first encounter with the Grail: readers in a sense achieve the quest along with Lancelot, even down to the imperfection of our experience. We cannot, after all, see through the integument of words to directly access the mystical reality they simultaneously describe and obscure, and Galahad’s subsequent achievement offers to the reader no further perfect revelation, merely a reiteration of the earlier description.
significance of the Grail from a pure cause/effect, malady/cure relationship with the Dolorous Stroke.

When the scribal annotations engage in cross-reference, then, they frequently do so in a way that does not create a workable, manuscript-wide system, but rather opportunistically draws forth points of connection as they arise within a particular local context. Still, at least two annotations do offer a set of direct, paired cross-references, in a way markedly different from the “Sank Greall” “pronosticacion” and its fulfillment. Two notes, “how þe kynge | of ffraucis | doughter sente | to sir Trystra | mes a fayre | Brachette” 677 and “how þe brachet | of la beall Isod | discreved Syr | Trystramys,” 678 with their consistent interest in this (in Malory, at least, fairly unimportant) dog reflect a certain awareness of the annotations as functioning together as a single system. Here, an early note introducing the brachet seems to prepare the reader for the appearance of the later note, drawing attention to a dog that, while unimportant at its first appearance at f. 152r, and so likely to be overlooked or forgotten at this point, will recur in the text later on. At the same time, one may interpret the purpose of the f. 205v note in any (or all) of three ways: as a simple mark of interest in a dog that would be well-known to readers familiar with versions of the Tristan story besides Malory’s; as an endorsement of Malory’s own textual reminder 679 that this dog, although it has not been mentioned since its introduction, has, in the interest of naturalism, been previously established as a narrative device; or even, perhaps, as an implicit invitation to seek out this earlier

677 On f. 152r, at ibid., 234.14.
678 On f. 205v, at ibid., 308.43.
679 “And thys brachet was firste sente frome the kynges doughter of Fraunce unto sir Trystrams for grete love” (ibid., 308.43–44).
introduction, helpfully marked for easy location by the marginal note. The f. 152r note, after all, seems uncharacteristically unmotivated until the appearance of the later annotation. The annotator’s decision about which particular textual facts to note in the margin shows at least some awareness of which facts will become important later on, and at a passage the annotator again chooses to address. Understood as the introduction of a dog that will be necessary for later plot developments, the passage emerges as more vital to the plan and execution of the text than is immediately apparent, and the note serves in part as a pointer to this purpose. It is clear, therefore, that while cross-referencing is a minority function in the scribal annotations, it is not wholly neglected. Whether the notes stem from Malory’s own pen, or merely that of a sympathetic reader, they share the author’s interest in cross-referencing, sometimes at the very points in the text when Malory himself displays a concern for drawing such connections between disparate sections of the text.

5.5 The Sankgreal: The Achievement of Chivalric Marvels

The last major grouping of notes I wish to examine is also one of the largest groupings in the Winchester Malory, the notes within the Tale of the Sankgreal. While the Sankgreal may not have the full autonomy that Vinaver claims for it, nevertheless its coherence as a unit within the Morte is unquestioned, and this coherence seems reflected in the notes, which are markedly different in their priorities than those seen

\[680\] Explicit before and after the tale specifically refer to it as separate and two folios have been left blank before the beginning of the Sankgreal, the only such gap in the manuscript; see ibid., 511.5 and 608.10–11. This codicological separation is surely reinforced by the content of the text itself, which comprises a single quest and incorporates the important character of Galahad, whose entire knightly career is contained within this single tale.
elsewhere. It has already been observed that the most common subject for the Malory notes is violence, usually the defeat of one knight by another (either fatally or otherwise) in single combat. Out of fifteen notes in the *Sankgreal*, however, only three contain actual deaths (20%), and a mere five (33.3%) report combats of some kind. Adding together both combats and noncombat deaths, six notes (40%) can be described as violent in nature, compared with a manuscript-wide total of 72.5% violent notes. The *Sankgreal* notes, in other words, report only about half as much violence as the marginalia viewed across the manuscript. This is, no doubt, due at least in part to a text in the *Sankgreal* that emphasizes a spiritual quest and approach to chivalry over the focus on combat as either moral value or sport entertainment that characterizes the rest of the *Morte*. Violence remains an important background theme, but no longer takes the center stage in the annotations, allowing other thematic strains to come to the fore.

Even where the notes are martial in nature, and offer the potential for a stark naming of the victor and the knight he defeated, the notes often expand to include different aspects of the text. One need only compare some of the terse battle reports

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681 Compare the 43.8% of notes reporting death over the manuscript as a whole.

682 Compare the 68.8% combat interest shown by the scribal notes collectively.

683 Many critics have observed the secularization that Malory executes on his source text. Vinaver, in his notes on the text, presents this tendency as due to a misreading of that source’s true meaning (Malory, *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3rd ed., 3:1535–1536). Dhira Mahoney identifies instead a successful effort at reshaping the meaning of the Grail quest. Nevertheless, Malory’s efforts, whether intentional or not, did not fully efface the program of the French *Queste*, redirecting chivalry away from worldly combat and toward the spiritual quest for salvation (Dhira B. Mahoney, “The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory’s Transformation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*,” in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1985], 109–128). For a study of the *Queste* as a spiritual reworking of the values of chivalry, see Pauline Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the *Queste del Saint Graal* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1979)*. The *Sankgreal* still retains a more spiritual focus than the rest of the *Morte*, even if it is less spiritual than the *Queste* from which it derives.

provided by notes in other sections of the manuscript to observe the difference. In the *Sankgreal*, the only note that offers simple violence, without other reported information, is the noncombat “The deth of | of Sir Per | civalls | Sys | ter;” and the status of Percival’s sister as martyr necessarily complicates the meaning of both the event and its reporting. “Here Sir Gwayne | slew Sir vwayne | his cousyn | germayne” offers up the additional information about the relationship between the two principals, drawing attention to the pathos of their situation in a way that goes beyond the mere report of one knight’s defeat at the hands of another, a concern reiterated several folios later with “how Sir lyonell | wolde haue | slaye sir | his bro| ther | Sir | Bors.” By emphasizing the combatants’ relationship, the annotator highlights the sort of fraternal conflict and tensions that will have such dire consequences in the *Tale of the Morte Arthur*, but which will, paradoxically, receive very little marginal notice there.

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685 To offer only a few examples: “The deth of | marys de la Roche,” f. 12v, at Malory, *Works*, 20.14; “The deth of | Sir Gayus,” f. 79v, at ibid., 124.20; “The deth of | Terquyn by | sir launcelot,” f. 103v, at ibid., 158.42; “Here sir Bewma | nes ouer come | he gre | ne knyght,” f. 120r, at ibid., 186.37; “How Sir Trystramys | gaff Sir Dynadan | a falle,” f. 206r, at ibid., 309.38; “how Sir trystram | had a falle,” f. 300v, at ibid., 446.40. It may perhaps be significant that after the *Sankgreal*, the notes do not return to the simple style so characteristic of the rest of the manuscript. On the other hand, there are only four notes after the *Sankgreal*, an extremely small sample on which to base any conclusion, a fact itself perhaps significant. It is tempting to suggest that, given the preoccupation of the *Balin* notes with the Dolorous Stroke, and the interest the annotator shows in the *Sankgreal*, he may have seen the Grail quest as the true climax of the *Morte*, rather than the coming events of the *Tale of the Morte Arthur*. The presence of so many annotations with no conceivable Grail associations, however, severely undercuts any argument for such a coherent and comprehensive program. There is, ultimately, insufficient evidence to do more than speculate on the cause for the paucity of notes after the *Sankgreal*.

686 On f. 398v, at ibid., 592.11.

687 On f. 378r, at ibid., 560.43.

688 On f. 386v, at ibid., 574.4. In this latter note, the false start of “sir his bro| ther | Sir | Bors” suggests that the scribe copying the note (or, less likely, the annotator authoring it) was at first sufficiently influenced by the prevailing practice in the manuscript to assume a formula of “How Sir X slew Sir Y,” only to realize that he had missed noting the relationship between Lyonel and Bors, and then, further, decided that this relationship was so important for the effect he wished to achieve that he would go back and insert the skipped phrase, even at the expense of syntax and a smooth presentation.
This nuancing of the notes’ violence, however, is a mere grace note to what seems to be the annotator’s major model for the *Sankgreal*, as a study in the achievement of marvels as a measure of chivalric worth and attainment. Marvels, along with their supernatural brethren prophecies and visions, are thematically important to the *Sankgreal* notes, and all part of the same metaphysical matrix. Out of fifteen notes in the *Sankgreal*, six regard the achievement of some marvel. A further four mark the occurrence of visions (on ff. 373r, 376v, 381r, and 399v). Finally, a cross-referencing note on f. 389r, while not matching the others exactly, still participates in this economy of the supernatural, whether as marvel or prophecy. In other words, 73.3% of the *Sankgreal* notes address the marvelous. Outside the *Sankgreal*, in comparison, notes mark two dreams (on ff. 11r and 17r), five marvels, and one prediction, for a total of eight.

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689 The Siege Perilous (f. 351r), the sword in the stone (f. 351v), the exorcism of a devil (f. 357r), the crown of gold (f. 358r), the death of Percival’s sister and, by implication, the healing this death effects (f. 398v), and the appearance of the Grail to Lancelot (f. 401v).

690 At ibid., 578.1: “he Sir Galahad | hirte Sir Gaw | ayne lyke as Sir launcelot | made mension | to fore at | Came | lot.” At other points in the text, the single combat between two premier knights would be the opportunity for showcasing the relative prowess, and thus, worth, of the two. Gawain is a perennial favorite for this kind of calibrating showdown, in Malory as in many other Arthurian romances. Here, however, it is not the fact of the combat that is important, or even, necessarily, the fact that Galahad has shown himself to be as worthy as or worthier than Gawain. Instead the emphasis lies on Lancelot’s prediction of that event (ibid., 517.30–35 and 518.1–3). Then, when the single combat occurs, it is, significantly, entirely about Gawain and his worth, with Galahad acting merely as the instrument of the sword. Gawain is not merely less worthy than Galahad, his inadequacy is absolute, measured against the yardstick of the sword’s geas. Likewise, his failure is primarily important as the fulfillment of a marvel of the Grail quest, a marvel associated with a particular talismanic object. The note thus foregrounds the twin themes of prophecy and marvel, while the incident’s status as a combat slides into the background.

691 This rather generous count includes one magical healing (f. 110v), the defeat of a giant by Tristram, perhaps equally legible as a marvelous accomplishment or as an ordinary single combat (f. 205r), and the three notes dealing with Garlon the invisible knight (ff. 29v and 30v).

692 Again, I include this in an effort to inflate the numbers as much as possible, but the f. 31r “pronosticacion” of the Grail is not really supernatural, since it is merely Malory himself predicting his own later plot point, not the words of a prophetic character predicting future events. Nevertheless, the authorial voice is sometimes difficult to disentangle from that of the characters, and Merlin does make his own prediction several lines further on.
marvelous notes out of seventy (11.4%). Some important conclusions can immediately be drawn. First, the combination of the achievement of marvels and visions together under a single “supernatural” rubric is validated, at least for the context of the Morte, since the two categories increase together over the same section of the text, after being largely absent from much of the rest of the manuscript. Second, it is clear that, while the marvelous, broadly defined, is an aspect of the text that receives occasional attention within the manuscript as a whole, the Sankgreal is characterized very strongly by the annotator as a story of visions experienced and marvels achieved.

A short digression on the nature of the marvels in the Sankgreal seems advisable at this point. Marvel and miracle, after all, can potentially be seen in some ways as essentially identical: not truly supernatural, because all things are possible for God, but rather “natural,” because they, like all things, are products of his creation. This view, indeed, was espoused by no less a thinker than St. Augustine in his City of God, and so would have been instrumental in shaping the medieval understanding of the marvelous. At the same time, however, within the sphere of literature, marvels appeared as one of the defining generic elements of romance, whether as aesthetic “adornments” or as critical drivers of plot.

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Corrine Saunders, analyzing the role of magic in the *Morte*, understands the supernatural in the book as a feature of the natural world and an alternative method for exerting power, available to those, like women, who cannot participate in chivalric adventure by the employment of armed force. For Saunders, this changes in the *Sankgreal*, where “heaven and hell are near and materially manifest,” and magic is transformed into the supernatural effect of either divine or demonic influence. Much of this, certainly, is carried over from Malory’s source in the French *Queste*. Still, while Saunders finds that “Malory remains [in the *Sankgreal*] closer to his source than elsewhere,” he nonetheless “reduces allegorical explanation and increases realism,” making his Quest more similar to the rest of the *Morte* in its treatment of the supernatural than was the *Queste*. Martin Shichtman usefully summarizes the modern critical understanding of the *Sankgreal*:

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695 One might compare the opposition proposed by the thirteenth-century Gervase of Tilbury, in which both are objects of wonder, but whereas miracles derive their wondrousness from their divine origin, marvels are those things whose cause or explanation is unknown (Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia: Recreation for an Emperor*, trans. and ed. S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, Oxford Medieval Texts [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002], 558, 559). Jacques Le Goff offers a related dichotomy between divinely effected miracle and unexplained marvel, but defines their opposition as one of “rationalization” and suppression on the one hand and of resistance on the other, with marvels as a reflex of not-fully-suppressed paganism. The marvelous is that which proceeds neither from God nor from Satan, but from an undefined source, morally neutral in its valence and outside a neat Christian moral taxonomy (Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988], 27–44).


697 Ibid., 254.

698 Ibid., 253.
[It] has been generally viewed by scholars as either a failed effort by an unskilled author to reproduce the religiosity of the original or a successful, entirely competent effort to expunge religiosity from the French text in order to promote a vision of terrestrial chivalry.  

Whether by accident or design, Malory has greatly reduced the role of religion in the text, and as such has necessarily reduced the degree to which the supernatural events of the text appear as miracles.

In the annotations themselves, the separation from miracle is even greater. The series begins with a wholly secular event (“Here Galahad | was made | knyght”700), then progresses through a pair of marvels with far more resonance within the romance economy of prophecy and fulfillment than as miraculous witness of God’s power: “How Sir Galahad | sate in Seege | Perelous”701 and “How Sir Ga- | lahad pulled | the swerde out | of the | peron”702. The first of these primarily has significance as the fulfillment of a prophecy of Merlin’s703, marks Galahad as of “grete worship” (Malory, Works, 519.17-18) and the one “by whom the Sankgreall shall be encheved” (519.13-14), and leads to

699 Martin B. Shichtman, “Politicizing the Ineffable: The Queste del Saint Graal and Malory’s ‘Tale of the Sankgreal’,” in Shichtman and Carley, Culture and the King, 163. Shichtman himself argues that the Sankgreal presents a challenge to the Cistercian values embraced by the Queste. Rather than presenting the Cistercian code of conduct as a way of achieving a perfect chivalry, Malory, in Shichtman’s view, generates sympathy for the unsuccessful Grail knights, demonstrating that the tensions and pressures of real-world knighthood cannot be erased or even truly suppressed by adherence to the demanding moral code offered by the Queste’s authors. In the Sankgreal, “meaning and stability may not be accessible at any price, and […] the truth is never absolute” (ibid., 177). Mahoney offers another alternative interpretation, in which the secular and spiritual are presented as being, in Malory’s fifteenth-century milieu, compatible rather than at odds (“The Truest and Holiest Tale”).

700 On f. 349v, at Malory, Works, 517.13.

701 On f. 351r, at ibid., 518.37.

702 On f. 351v, at ibid., 519.41.

703 See ibid., 62.4ff. Note that Merlin is a sorcerer, not a hermit or other religious figure or prophet.
his identification as Lancelot’s son (519.22ff.). His worth within the chivalric economy of hereditary nobility, achievement of significant adventure, and role as the fulfillment of a mysterious prophecy places this marvel firmly within the realm of romance marvel, and far outweighs the lone nod to religious significance (“Than all the knyghtes of the Table Rounde […] wyster nat frome whens he com but all only be God,” 519.10-100). The latter event of pulling the sword from the stone recalls, first, the placing of that sword in its place following Balin’s death and, second, the marvel of destiny and kingship of Arthur’s own similar feat. Significant primarily as markers of chivalric achievement, these marvels stand as witness not to the power of God, but to Galahad’s chivalric status and worth.

The next marked marvel, the “conjuring” of “a devil out of a tombe,” is on its face the most “miraculous” of the marvels. In the text, the act receives some of the trappings of miracle, as Galahad is called “the serveunte of Jesu Crist,” makes the sign of the cross, and appears surrounded by angels (528.18). No hint of this, however, carries into the annotation. Rather, the naming of a tomb may perhaps lead the reader to recall other Arthurian tombs, routinely the sites of secular prophecy and fulfillment. Galahad’s own father Lancelot achieved a remarkably similar marvel at a tomb inhabited

704 The Queste del Saint Graal, in the equivalent passage, includes all of these aspects, and adds also a long exegesis of the meaning of the tomb, of the dead knight inside, and of Galahad’s feat (see Sommer, Vulgate, 6:27.1ff.). The incident becomes less marvel and more allegory occasioning a moral sermon.

705 Philippe Ménard lists “le cimetière hanté par le Diable” alongside the sword bridge and perilous bed among the “fantastic” marvels that populate the world of Arthurian romance (“Le Monde Médiéval: Le Curiosités Profanes,” in Le Merveilleux: L’Imaginaire et les Croyances en Occident, ed. Michel Meslin [Bordas, 1984], 32). In the Morte, the Balin is full of prophetic tombs: Lanceor’s tomb becomes the marker of future preeminence and discord among the fraternity-at-arms of elite chivalry, while another tomb foretells the feud between the families of Lot and Pellinore (Malory, Works, 45.13ff. and 51.2ff.).
not by a devil but a dragon (478.33ff.), and the incidents are clearly parallel. Perhaps significantly, the tomb in Lancelot’s adventure has an inscription prophesying the coming of Galahad as a “lyon” who “shall passe all other knyghtes,” a prediction that does not imply any departure from the ordinary standards and measures of chivalric excellence. Exorcising tombs is not, therefore, so divorced from the ordinary feats of secular chivalry as it might at first appear.

The series of notes then progresses to another rather ambiguous marvel, with “How Sir Meylyas toke vp | the crowne | of golde.” This is glossed in the text as an event of religious significance, albeit in a context where sin is equated with the unchivalric: “And where thou toke the crowne of golde thou ded syn in covetyse and in theffte. All this was no knightly dedys” (531.27-29). Yet, like many of the religiously significant events of the Sankgreal, the religious exegesis comes only later, and here the note accompanies the event itself, not the subsequent gloss. So too any hint of this explanation of the event’s meaning is absent from the note. While the text itself, even in scaling back some of the religious themes of the Queste, still retains a strong view of the divine as occasioning the aventure and directing the supernatural within the Sankgreal, the notes suppress this religious aspect even further, focusing not on the cause of the marvels that occur, or their meaning within a religiously-motivated program, but rather on them as significant chivalric achievements, as would be performed by any secular knight. The supernatural takes center stage in the annotations, but not as overtly Christian.

706 On f. 358r, at ibid., 529.39.
A further special quality seems to be emphasized for these notes by the inclusion of an unusually large number of physical objects. While people and places feature largely in the notes throughout the manuscript, objects are, by and large, absent, even in the context of, for example, the Balin, where significant objects included Arthur’s sword Excalibur, Balin’s sword, and the spear used to inflict the Dolorous Stroke. Objects in the Sankgreal notes, however, are the Siege Perilous, the sword, a “peron” or stone, a tomb, a “crowne of golde,” and, of course, the Grail itself. With the increased focus on the marvelous in the notes comes a corresponding preoccupation with the physical objects knights encounter during their adventures. The one object appearing in a note outside the Sankgreal is the sword with which Lancelot heals Sir Melyot de Logres, a healing that itself qualifies as a marvel. Even outside the Sankgreal, therefore, the annotator, maintains an association between the achievement of marvels and talismanic, even relic-like objects. Further, because marvels inside and outside the Sankgreal are treated in a similar fashion it is clear that, for the annotator, the marvels of the Grail quest are not qualitatively different from those found elsewhere in the Morte. Marvels are “normal” accomplishments for knights and, conversely, Galahad marks himself out by these achievements not as supremely virtuous, but as the “beste knyght of the worlde,” as supremely chivalrous (517.25, etc.).

Following the note on Melyas and the crown of gold, the notes shift in their supernatural focus, becoming more interested in the visions experienced by the various

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707 Saunders identifies a close relationship between magic and certain “natural objects,” which for her connects the Morte’s magic with the physical world, rather than some divine or demonic agency (Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance, 235).

708 On f. 110v, at Malory, Works, 169.10.
Grail knights. These marked visions pick up on an interest in dreams that was established early in the annotations, and apparently abandoned. The manuscript’s first annotation, “Sompnus,” marks a prophetic vision not terribly dissimilar in nature from the “avisions” of the Sankgreal. One is tempted to see in this note not only the marker for the location of a specific dream, but an invitation to consider the interpretive significance of dreams worked out at such length in the tradition of Latin scholarship. The most famous of the systems for classification of dreams is that laid out by Macrobius in his commentary on Cicero’s Somnium Scipionis, in which he identified five main types. These include false dreams, whether manifestations of waking fears and desires (insomnium) or strange creatures imagined in the state between waking and full sleep (visum). True dreams are prophetic, and subdivided according to the various means of transmitting the prophecy: through the words of an authority figure (oraculum), through a direct vision of what is to come (visio), or through a mysterious allegory requiring interpretation to decipher the meaning behind the figures (somnium). This dream, of a great storm that will sweep over the country, is in fact a somnium in the Macrobian sense, indirectly predicting the coming battle through the figure of the storm, and it is possible the Latin comment “Sompnus” is an attempt to identify the dream within this or another classification system. Or, the note may simply identify the passage as a dream, an interpretation perhaps more likely.

Either way, the conspicuous use of Latin seems to imply a view of dreams as something of significance and interest to a Latinate and thus educated reader, and, as in the case of the marvels, the fact of the dreams seems more important to the annotator than

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709 On f. 11r, at ibid., 17.43.
their meaning. The notes offer no explanation of the content of the dreams, nor their interpretation. In the one note that provides more than the bare statement of the occurrence of an “avision,” the extra information does not do a great deal to enlighten the reader as to the dream’s meaning. Bors has a complicated dream of two birds, one black and one white, and of two trees, one rotten and one flowering. The interpretation of the dream preoccupies the text, with two possible exegeses offered, one true and one false, and Bors’s act of interpretation must unfold over a lengthy section of text and a series of incidents. The note does not highlight either exegesis, however, or even offer a hint as to the dream’s content. Rather, that which captures the annotator’s attention – or, at least, that which draws his pen – is, perhaps typically, the fact of the dream itself, and the single combat with Sir Pridam. Nor does this combat offer any clue to the dream’s meaning, finally revealed as a complex series of symbols representing the Old and New Testaments, the church and the devil, and the promotion of purity and chastity over the claims of familial and feudal loyalty (Malory, Works, 572.8ff.). Action, not explanation, absorbs the note.

The importance of the fact of the visionary experience, over and above the content of that experience, is perhaps clearest at the note on f. 399v, “The avisione | of Sir laun | celot” (at 593.36). While the note raises this dream to the same level of importance as the Sankgreal’s other marked “avisions,” its content consists of a single sentence, a voice commanding: “Sir Launcelot, aryse up and take thyne armour, and entir into the firste shippe that thou shalt fynde!” (593.39-40). The truly important piece of the episode is not this brief command, but the experience on the ship that follows. This experience is

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710 “The auyson | of Sir Bors | whan He | foujt with | Sir pri- | dam,” f. 381r, at ibid., 566.1.
not, significantly, visionary, although it is certainly dreamlike, a sojourn in a sort of
otherworld peopled by the dead (Percival’s sister) as well as the living (Galahad), and
transporting Lancelot to no particular physical location, but rather to a state of heightened
spiritual preparation. Whether because heerrs himself, or because he wishes to
encourage the reader to view the ship episode in this way, the annotator seems, by
foregrounding the preceding insignificant vision, to wish to label the entire event as
visionary in nature.

The notes in the Sankgreal, then, seem to cast the tale in terms of certain modes of
narrative. The tale is characterized as one of somewhat chaotic, misdirected violence – or
at least variously directed, and directed inwards within the family group and the
somewhat larger grouping of the Round Table’s chivalric fraternity. While martial
achievement remains a major theme of the Sankgreal’s notes, the tale lacks the orderly
and inexorably-progressing purpose characteristic of the adventure recorded by the notes
in the Gareth or even the Balin. At the same time, however, the annotator clearly
recognizes that while in other tales a series of single combats worked as a map toward
chivalric success (or failure) for the Arthurian knights, the Sankgreal demands a different
measure of success. The tale is characterized as one of achieved marvels, often centered
around certain talismanic objects, and as propelled forward by a number of visions. As
the notes lack attention to the meaning of these marvels and visions, it is not their
Christian significance as miracles that becomes important, but simply their status as
supernatural, and the Sankgreal becomes in the notes a quest not necessarily Christian,
but rather marvelous and visionary.
In their totality, the annotations of the Winchester Malory offer an invaluable picture of one contemporary’s understanding of the relative importance of various aspects of the text, both structurally and thematically. The annotator emerges as a sensitive reader of Malory’s text who, while he simplifies and closes off some avenues of interpretation, nevertheless avoids presenting notes that contradict or would work against Malory’s apparent project and priorities. In the *Gareth*, he draws forward an important structural underpinning of the narrative, following the series of color-coded combats in constructing Gareth as a “knight with many colors.” Likewise, other sections of the text benefit from the guiding suggestions of the annotation: the *Balin* is transformed into a tale setting the stage for the Grail quest, its complexities similarly suppressed for easier interpretation by readers, and the notes of the *Sankgreal* finish what Malory began in the text, emphasizing the quest’s reliance on visions and marvels, but suppressing some of the Christian exegesis. As Crofts observes, the notes present the *Morte* as a text of named knights,\(^{711}\) but the *Morte* of the notes is also a book of actions, with deeds and events carefully marked, but not, significantly, explained or commented on.\(^{712}\) None of these readings are greatly revolutionary, nor are they the only possible interpretations of the artistry and complexity of the *Morte*. They do, however, offer a particular viewpoint on the text that is, apparently, intended either as the record of one reader’s reaction to the text, or – more likely, in view of the fact that the scribes themselves have transmitted this

\(^{711}\) Crofts, “Malory’s Moral Scribes,” 685–706.

\(^{712}\) One might usefully compare Mary Hynes-Berry’s view of Malory’s efforts in translating the *Sankgreal*: “He reproduces the plot – stripped of its discursive presentation; the allegorical level of the romance is subtracted” (“Malory’s Translation of Meaning: ‘The Tale of the Sankgreal’,” *Studies in Philology* 74, no. 3 [July 1977]: 244). What Malory does for the *Queste*, the annotator seems to do for the text of the *Morte*. Whether this is due to a sympathy with Malory’s aims or simply arises as a result of the usual generic practice in annotating romances remains, necessarily, unclear.
reading – as a guide by which contemporary readers could more easily understand the

*Morte*.

The way in which this guide functions can teach us, too, about how annotations generally worked within medieval romances. Far from providing ways of flipping between remembered or expected episodes, the notes seem rather intended to be read along with the text. They work best within their immediate context, and neither constitute a comprehensive interpretive program for the *Morte* as a whole, nor, even in their cross-references, do they interact much with events or themes outside of the immediate context of their tale. Instead, the notes represent an intimate reaction to smaller, more isolated environments, on the level of the tale. This technique is even more obvious when contrasted with the opposite approach taken by Caxton, with his systematic breakdown of the text into books and chapters, and comprehensive table of contents.  

5.6 Winchester’s Manicules: A Complementary and Competing Annotation Program

All of the conclusions I have drawn so far relate to a single cycle of scribal annotation, but that cycle does not represent the only marginalia in the Winchester Malory. The other major collection of marginal comment on the text is somewhat more opaque: the series of carefully-drawn manicules marking various points over the first 42 folios of the manuscript. All but one of the manicules appear to be drawn in the same hand, and are fairly detailed drawings, each showing a pointing hand with fully rendered fingernails, cut off at the wrist as though at the opening of a glove. Each drawing is

individual, showing the hand in a different position, but the drawing is not expert: three of them actually depict six fingers on the hand. The single unique manicule occurs on f. 20v, and is almost certainly drawn by a different person: this pointing hand is far more stylized, and includes an elaborate flourish at the wrist that seems to suggest a lacy sleeve. Ker identifies all fourteen as likely sixteenth century in date, part of the evidence of readers’ use of the manuscript, rather than aids to reading provided by the scribes. These manicules, therefore, provide evidence of a second layer of reading in the manuscript, which may either resemble or depart from the concerns exhibited by the scribal annotations.

The first thing to note about the manicules is that their creator (“Reader M”? ) does not seem to see the purpose of his marks as identical with the purpose of the scribal annotations, as on three occasions, notes and manicules appear in very close proximity. On these occasions, Reader M apparently duplicates the work of the scribal annotator, indicating that, for whatever reason, he was unsatisfied with relying on the simple scribal annotation to carry out his purpose. So, for example, while a scribal annotation on f. 28v reads “Here ys þe l dethe of l kynge l lot & l of þe l xii l kyn l gis” (at Malory, Works, 49.8), a manicule several lines above actually points to the very line on which King Lot dies. Similarly, a manicule on f. 24 points to the moment when Balin beheads the Lady of the lake in the inner margin, while a scribal annotation in the outer margin, almost exactly even with the manicule, reads “The dethe of l the lady l of the l lake” (at 41.7).

The first of these two examples may indicate that Reader M is concerned with the exact

714 My thanks to Misty Schieberle for drawing this to my attention.

placement of the notes, seeking to specify more exactly the point at which these events occur, when the scribal notes are displaced from the events to which they refer. Not only that, but the manicules must be treated as a separate cycle of commentary from the annotations, since they sometimes and sometimes do not cover the same ground.

Do these manicules, then, represent a reading of the text that is congruent with the scribal notes? Or do they offer a reading that is divergent? In some ways, the manicules seem very much in line with the scribal annotations, and to share the thematic preoccupations of the scribal annotations. Violence, for example, and more particularly deaths, are key characteristics of those passages marked by the manicules. So, out of thirteen manicules, five (38%) mark a death:

- f. 24r at Malory, *Works*, 41.11: Balin cuts off the Lady of the Lake’s head
- 28v at 48.37: the killing of King Lot by Pellinore
- 29v at 51.15: the death of Peryne de Mounte, killed by Garlon
- 41r at 70.33: Torre kills Abellyus
- 42v at 72.38: Pellinore kills Outilake

An additional four manicules (31%) mark the beginnings of single combats, some of them with fatal outcomes, and some not. So, for example, while Arthur and Pellinore part amicably, Balin kills Lanceor:

As I have already stated, there are, in fact, fourteen manicules. The one on f. 20v, however, since it is clearly in another, likely later, hand, does not participate in this main manicule cycle. It is, indeed, anomalous in every way, being the only one to mark a prophetic moment, the revelation by Merlin to Pellinore of Arthur’s real identity. Merlin then goes on to make predictions about Percival and Lamorak, Pellinore’s sons, and about Arthur’s son Mordred. Unlike the interest in violence and chivalric adventure displayed by the other manicules, this one seems to come at the text from a different perspective, drawing attention to a passage whose potential resonances include prophecy, cross-reference, identity, dynasty, kingship, and the magical powers of Merlin. Without further markings that can be attributed to this hand, however, it is impossible to determine with any certainty or precision what in the passage specifically attracted this reader.
The distinction between these two types of manicule is clear. In the first set, the hand points to the moment of death, at the end of the combat. In the second set, the hand always marks the point of the beginning of the combat.\textsuperscript{717} The points marked are, perhaps significantly, the beginnings of the actual combats themselves, not of the interaction between the two principals. This reinforces the impression made by the sheer number of violence-relevant manicules that, just as much as the scribal annotator, Reader M concerns himself primarily with violence. In fact, if one adds together not only the violent deaths and the beginnings of fights, but also the other manicules with a martial resonance (the beginning of a tournament on f. 9v, and the knighting of Torre on f. 36), we have a combined eleven (85\%) that are violent or otherwise related to the martial trappings of chivalry.\textsuperscript{718} In fact, only two of Reader M’s manicules do not participate in

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\textsuperscript{717} So, for example, the manicule on f. 19v points to a line including the beginning of the passage “And anone he toke hys horse, and dressed hys sheld e and toke a grete spere in hys honde, and they com togydir…” (Malory, \textit{Works}, 33.15ff.). On f. 25r, the hand points to “Than t hey fewtred their spears in their restis and com togidirs…” (ibid., 43.16). William Sherman, in compiling a “history of the manicule,” from its medieval origins through its use by printers in the early modern period, surveys the various uses to which manicules are put. He identifies the manicules’ dual function in “organiz[ing] the text” and “help[ing] individual readers to find their way around that structure” (William H. Sherman, \textit{Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England}, Material Texts [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008], 41). More specifically, manicules could be used as \textit{nota bene}, an indication of new material added to an old text (a use prominent in print rather than manuscript), and, significantly, “to mark new sections in key places – especially at the beginning or ending of a book” (ibid., 41–42). Manicules can be used both to point to the specific moment of emphasis, and as a marker of beginning. Reader M seems alert to both of these functions.

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\textsuperscript{718} Nine (69\%) of the total manicules are explicitly violent. Cf. the 72.5\% rate of violence in the scribal annotations.
this armed *Morte*. Manicules on ff. 23r and 37r point to the beginnings of adventures: Balin’s and the quest of the white hart, respectively.

The *Morte* of the manicules, like that presented by the scribal notes, privileges single combats as the apparent primary units of narrative progression. Even more, the manicules ignore some of the noncombat moments marked by the notes in this same section. While there are far fewer manicules than notes in the manuscript taken as a whole, this is because the manicules only appear over a relatively short section of the manuscript. In the portion of the book that displays manicules (thirteen over the first 42 folios), \(^{719}\) there are thirteen scribal notes. One should not, of course, read too much into the numeric coincidence, but the fact remains that the frequency of manicules is remarkably similar to the frequency of notes. It is possible to see, therefore, that some of the things drawn forward by the scribal annotator are also emphasized by Reader M, particularly in the *Balin* section, where the death of the Lady of the Lake, the fight with Lanceor, the death of Lot, and the death of Peryne de Mounte are marked by both cycles of commentary. Outside the *Balin*, however, some of the important events marked by the scribal annotations receive no attention from Reader M. The two dreams, \(^{720}\) notes that evoke an annotational preoccupation in dream visions that will recur in the *Sankgreal*, have no equivalents in the manicules. Moreover, the important f. 31r note “Here ys a pro nosticacion of | the Sank | Greall” has no manicule equivalent either. The potential resonances of this note are both cross-reference and prophecy, but it also draws to the fore the role of the *Balin* as a preparation for the later *Sankgreal*. The manicules, in

\(^{719}\) Once again, this omits the fourteenth, later manicule of f. 20v.

\(^{720}\) Folios 11r and 12v, at ibid., 17.43 and 20.14, respectively.
ignoring this moment – or any similar one – display a lack of interest in these preoccupations of the notes. The manicules mark events, rather than authorial cross-references, and as such function entirely within the textual moment, with no attention to the place of the *Balin* within the larger *Morte* – a circumstance that may or may not be related to Reader M’s entire lack of attention to the manuscript after f. 42.

In this way, therefore, Reader M can be described negatively, in terms of those interests of the scribal annotator he does not share. Positively, however, there is another subtle difference between the manicules and the scribal annotations, in the way the two cycles of commentary approach the structure of the text. The scribal annotations generally mark the exact moment of the event they describe – although sometimes this marking may be slightly off of exact correspondence to the referenced event.\(^{721}\) As Field remarks, this generally places the notes “opposite the mid-point of the passage they refer to, which of course, if the passage is long, may be some considerable distance into it.”\(^{722}\) With plot-descriptive notes positioned next to the moment of the described event, a reader seeking to use the notes for navigation would need to back up some distance in the text in order to get a running start on the event, and to understand fully the context and circumstances of the event described. The notes would be rather cumbersome for this

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\(^{721}\) Hilton Kelliher points out “occasional inaccuracies of placing” in the annotations which he views as evidence that they have been “transferred rather mechanically from the exemplars,” with no great attention to precision placement with their companion passages – a displacement of a few lines might, that is, be introduced when the shift from one manuscript to another altered the location on the page of a given section of text (“The Early History of the Malory Manuscript,” in Takamiya and Brewer, *Aspects of Malory*, 146). Cooper, however, correctly observes that these “inaccuracies” are few in number and minor in scale (“Opening Up the Malory Manuscript,” 43n).

\(^{722}\) Field, “Malory’s Own Marginalia,” 230.
type of navigation, and more useful as markers of emphasis while a reader was working his own way through the text, in order.

Some of the manicules present a similar approach to the text, and particularly those dealing with death. Five manicules sit next to the very lines on which a knight kills an adversary. The clear referent is the death itself, and the manicule points to the moment of death. So, for instance, at Vinaver 51.14, a note reads “Here Garlonde in visible slew Peryne de mounte be l<yar>d vn- | <der> ṭe con | duy3t of | Ba l lyn,” while a manicule appears at the same position. Note and manicule both seek to mark not the passage in its entirety but the very moment of death, and the persistent appearance of manicules next to lines featuring deaths makes apparent that this is their intended reference. Other manicules, however, do not appear next to the climaxes of the episodes they mark. Instead, they appear at the beginning of passages. This is most apparent with some of the fights, where the vocabulary of the marked lines falls into the formulae of the commencement of battles: “And anone he toke hys horse, and dressed hys shelde and toke a grete spere in hys honde, and they com togydir…,” “Than they fewtred their spearis in their restis and com togidirs…,” “Than kynge Pellam caught in his hand a grymme wepyn and smote egirly at Balyn….” In each case, the commencement of

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723 The manicule is at Malory, Works, 51.15, one line below in both edition and manuscript. Since the note extends several lines down, however, this means that note and manicule are directly next to each other.

724 Ibid., 33.15–16, on f. 19v.

725 Ibid., 43.16, on f. 25v.

726 Ibid., 53.17, on f. 31r.
combat is signaled when the principals take up a weapon and approach each other.\textsuperscript{727}

The event marked by the manicule is understood as being the combat proper. So, in the first of the previous situations, one perhaps might more naturally understand the beginning of the episode a few lines earlier, when Arthur first sees his opponent, Pellinore.\textsuperscript{728} Apparently, however, Reader M’s interest does not extend to the entire encounter, but only to the portion of it that is a combat. He reads narrowly here, rather than broadly, with pinpoint focus on the single combat. The implication seems to be that the combats are extremely important to Reader M, with many of his manicules either pointing directly to a violent death or drawing attention to the beginning of a combat vignette.

Other beginnings have somewhat broader implications. On f. 9v, the manicule must be intended to indicate the beginning of the tournament that cements the relationship between Arthur and the two kings Ban and Bors. The line it marks does not seem to have great significance in itself,\textsuperscript{729} but the tournament was first proposed a few

\textsuperscript{727} On f. 38v we have a manicule that does not quite fit this pattern. The first introduction of the adversarial character occurs at ibid., 65.27ff. (“Ryght so there com a knyght oute of a chambir with a swerde drawyn in his honde…”), but the manicule passes over this potential moment of commencement, perhaps because the knight’s hostile action is not directed against the Round Table knights Gawain and Gaheris, but against their dogs. Later on, too, comes the moment of the verbal formula of combat: “Than sir Gawayne alyght on foote and dressed his shylde, and stroke togydirs myghtyly…” (ibid., 65.42–43). The manicule does not fall here either, however, but rather between these two points. After killing the dogs, Sir Blamour goes back into his chamber and arms, before coming out again and commencing a verbal exchange with Gawain: “he mette with sir Gawayne and he seyde, ‘Why have ye slayne my howndys?’” (ibid., 65.36–37). While the verbal formulae may have assisted Reader M in choosing his position for the manicule, therefore, they were not prescriptive. At the same time, however, there does appear to be some attention to locating the precise beginning of direct armed engagement, in this case at the point when Blamour, clearly with combat in mind, takes the trouble to arm himself.

\textsuperscript{728} “So as they wente thus talkynge, they com to the fountayne and the ryche paviliion there by hit. Than kynge Arthure was ware where sate a knyght armed in a chayre” (ibid., 33.4–6).

\textsuperscript{729} “And so Arthure mette them ten myle oute of London, and there was grete joy made as couthe be thought” (ibid., 15.11–13). It is remotely possible that the pointing hand is intended to indicate this line as a summary statement of the friendly alliance between Arthur, Ban, and Bors, but such a reading would
lines above, and for the remainder of the folio and half of the next, the action of this
entertainment is described at length. Two subsequent manicules mark initiatory moments
of even greater significance. On f. 23r, a manicule points to the moment when Balin,
introduced a few lines before as “a poore knyght with kynge Arthure that had bene
presonere with hym,” and “a good man named of his body” (Malory, Works, 39.4-5, 8),
steps forward from among his colleagues and requests permission to attempt drawing the
sword from the scabbard carried by Lady Lyle’s damsel (34.19). The incident,
understood broadly, is that which begins Balin’s career, and thus the entire Balin section
of the Morte. More narrowly, the manicule marks neither the introduction of the
damsel and her explanation of the quest, nor the initial introduction of the character of
Balin. Rather, it falls at the precise point where knight and quest come together: the
precise moment, from the knight’s point of view, of embarkation. This seems to argue
for a perspective on the part of Reader M in which action is more important than
circumstances. The supporting information of the identity of the damsel, the nature of the
sword, the implications of its pulling, and even Balin’s own character and previous
history: all of this is viewed as secondary to the actual deed of drawing the sword and
require rather energetic interpretation of the text; out of context, the reference is not clear, and even within
context the “grete joy” could as easily be a result of the festive tournament as of the political alliance.

While Vinaver identifies the Balin as one of the Morte’s constituent tales, this is one of the
cases where his division of the text is a contentious one: while the text indeed reads “as hit rehersi th aftir in
the BOOKE OF BALLYNE LE SAVEAGE that folowith next aftir: that was the adventure how Balyne gate the
swerde,” the only signal of division in the manuscript’s layout is a two-line large capital (ibid., 37.27–29).
The text’s small capitals, indeed, are Vinaver’s own innovation: the scribe has, following the normal
practice for proper names throughout the manuscript, rubricated Balin’s name, but “booke of” is in no way
distinguished from the rest of the text. For Reader M, therefore, the precise location of the tale’s beginning
would be open to some question. The f. 22r large capital is a good candidate, certainly, but the manuscript
itself rather works against such a reading by the addition of the marginal note on f. 21r at ibid., 35.21,
“Here ys a mencion of þe lady of the laake whan she asked Balyne le saveage hys hede.” The tale’s
coherence as a unit (or sub-unit) is self-evident, since it relates in full the career of a single knight, but the
Balin’s opening is, in the manuscript, “soft,” and Reader M might become alert to the transition at a
number of different discrete points, or even gradually as an accumulation of signals.
achieving the adventure. This approach seems the same as that evidenced by the manicules pointing to the beginning of the physical action of combat, discussed just above. Reader M does not focus on the circumstances of the combat, but rather on the action itself. Action – whether the chivalric action of a quest or the martial action of a combat – seems to be central to his understanding of the important narrative units of the *Morte*, at least for the first 42 folios where he has left evidence of his reading.

Another constellation of manicules – the final five in the manuscript – may be working together in reading the quest of the white hart. In this quest, Merlin directs that three knights – Gawain, Torre, and Pellinore – be sent to retrieve three objects: the white hart, the brachet, and the lady, respectively. Then Malory lays out the three adventures in order, as each knight carries out his own particular assignment and returns to court with the desired object. The manicules in this section of the manuscript seem to map out the important stages in this narrative progression. The first of these, on f. 36r, locates the knighting of Sir Torre, his formal induction into the life of chivalry. This manicule is the only one by Reader M which does not mark a death, a combat situation, or a point of beginning – and many of the other manicules fall into more than one of these categories. Even this manicule, however, is not a complete outlier, since it deals with a chivalric milestone, making it a potential combat connection, since this knighting effectively renders Torre a combatant, as well as a player in the *aventure* and quest culture that characterizes Arthurian knighthood. Additionally, it can be understood as a moment of initiation and thus commencement for Torre himself, if not precisely for his tale – the inauguration of Torre’s chivalric career surely carries some inceptive valence.

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731 “Than he lette calle sir Gawayne, for he must brynge agayne the whyght herte. ‘Also, sir, ye muste lette call sir Torre, for he must brynge agay[n]e the brachette and the knyght, othir ellis sle hym. Also lette calle kynge Pellynor, for he must brynge agayne the lady and the knyght, othir ellis sle hym, and these three knyghtes shall do mervayles adventures or they com agayne’” (ibid., 64.2–8).

732 This manicule is the only one by Reader M which does not mark a death, a combat situation, or a point of beginning – and many of the other manicules fall into more than one of these categories. Even this manicule, however, is not a complete outlier, since it deals with a chivalric milestone, making it a potential combat connection, since this knighting effectively renders Torre a combatant, as well as a player in the *aventure* and quest culture that characterizes Arthurian knighthood. Additionally, it can be understood as a moment of initiation and thus commencement for Torre himself, if not precisely for his tale – the inauguration of Torre’s chivalric career surely carries some inceptive valence.
A manicule points therefore to the inception of the quest (f. 37r), and then one manicule each marks the final battles that each knight fights in the course of accomplishing his quest and retrieving his object. The significant fact here seems to be that the quests are envisioned by Reader M as in each case being brought to fruition by a combat, even though the combats are, strictly speaking, incidental to the stated objects of the quest: hart, brachet, and damsel. It is clearly not just any combat that Reader M marks: Gawain, for example, fights with a number of knights before the climactic battle with Blamour. Each of these marked battles is the final one fought in its quest, and the one most immediate to the achievement of the desired object. However, it is important to note that Gawain has already presumably gained his object when he engages with Blamour, having already slain the hart. And, in all three cases, the manicule does not mark the point of successful return to court, which might be viewed as the formal conclusion to the quest. This can be viewed as an extension of Reader M’s bias toward action, as opposed to formal structure. He prefers to mark the moment of chivalric action which by metonymy becomes the achievement of a quest that, in its narrative form, actually requires some additional *denouement* for its full description. Or, alternatively, this might

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733 Compare, for example, the scribal annotations, which emphatically do not privilege the battles marked out by Reader M. The only scribal note in the white hart quest portion of the manuscript marks the combat between Gawain and Sir Alardyne of the Oute Iles (f. 38r, ibid., 65.12). This discrepancy in interest underscores the fact that while the scribal annotator and Reader M share an interest in violence and the martial, they do not always cover the same ground with their commentary, and neither commenter seems comprehensive, although Reader M may in fact come closer, given the narrower focus of his interests.

734 In each case, the knight has been instructed to “brynge agayne” his object, not just locate it.
be seen as an extension of Reader M’s focus on combat. The object of the quest, the desired items, do not matter so much to Reader M as does the combat which seems for him the critical point of the quest. A hand points to the establishment of a quest to be undertaken by three knights, then subsequent hands point out the three key moments that, if one assumes a bias in which a climactic combat equates with chivalric achievement of aventure, neatly resolve each of the three proposed quests.

It is, of course, dangerous to speculate too elaborately on the meaning and intentions displayed by a reader who marks passages with simple manicules, including no written explanation of his reason for making each mark. Yet Reader M shows such consistency and apparent precision\(^\text{735}\) in his manicules that explanation seems possible. Clearly his primary interest in the text is in the combats. He views violent deaths as important, to the degree that he points out the moments when some of these deaths occur, a practice that has the effect of highlighting the fatal violence of this early portion of the Morte. He also seems to view the function of his manicules in terms of the marking of beginnings, however. This may indicate that he intends at least some of his marks as pointers to appropriate points to begin reading. It is important to emphasize, however, that to take Reader M’s suggestions on appropriate beginnings seriously, if suggestions they in fact are, would be to sacrifice large amounts of important exposition, and to jump directly to a combat as the core passage and meat of the narrative. In an alternate reading, one might view the utility of manicules, like that of the scribal annotations, as

\[^{735}\text{In many cases (the marked deaths, for example) manicules fall at the exact same moments within equivalent actions. Manicules point to the lines where sentences begin that mark the moment of a death, or the taking up of arms that initiates a combat. Since Reader M is not only consistent, but consistent to the level of choosing one specific line over another, it seems reasonable to assume he is showing a deliberate and sustained precision in the placement of his manicules.}\]
more useful to a reader progressing in order through the manuscript, rather than attempting to navigate back and forth between episodes. The manicules draw attention to the important moments, and function as guides for readers to be used during their reading, rather than as section headers to be employed before reading. At other points, too, Reader M seems to share the scribal annotator’s practice of stepping through the stages in a narrative. There is some of this for the Balin, and the practice becomes even clearer in the quest of the white hart. As the scribal annotator did for the Gareth, Reader M has broken down a complicated tale into a setup (the appearance of the white hart) and the adventure’s accomplishment through a series of combats. By pointing hands at each of the climactic combats, Reader M allows these events to come to the fore in a reader’s mind, and clarifies the underlying structure of a quest otherwise perhaps somewhat cluttered by extraneous aventure. The manicules foreground a strong, formulaic structure, in opposition with the discursive and still inextricably interlaced structure of the text itself. Like the scribal annotations, the manicules of the white hart quest permit a reading along a simplified schema, with combats employed as the dominant structuring principle.

Taken together, then, notes and manicules exhibit concern for the Morte’s complexity, and see a joint mission in unraveling such structural confusion. They are

736 Pellinore’s quest is perhaps the clearest example of the confusion of the text. Pellinore, in pursuing the lady, encounters a wounded knight and his lady next to a fountain. The lady requests his assistance, but he ignores her, and continues to pursue his mission. When he passes them on the return trip, he finds they have been killed by wild animals, and he must carry back the lady’s severed head as evidence of his failure, occasioned by too great a focus on the task at hand – his quest – and too little attention to the demands of other chivalric obligations. The doubling of ladies, both the one he actively pursues and the one killed by his negligence, together with the symmetry between the decapitation of the lady and, for instance, Gawain’s acquisition of the hart’s severed head as his own sought-after prize, obscures the parameters of the quest proper.
employed not, as one might suppose, to direct a reader to a particular location within the manuscript, but as an actual aid to reading. Other methods of making sense of the text are, of course, productive, but for a reader struggling to make sense of a wide-ranging and sometimes obscure narrative, the manuscript’s own margins have, sometimes quite literally, a helping hand to offer.
This project has been a study of two genres. The first of these, most obviously, is the genre of medieval romance. It is a widely varied genre, elusive of definition. Yet even if a set of precise rules and standards may never be written, still we may perhaps come to understand them on a practical level, and know them when we see them. There is every reason to believe that contemporary audiences would have shared our understanding of the genre as obeying the rules of a game, even if they did not always agree with us on what those rules might be. In order to understand the rules they played by in the medieval period, we turn to our second genre, parasitic on the first. This second genre is that of the annotation found in the margins of these romance texts.

It is, too, a genre of its own, with its own sets of rules, norms and standards. Annotators were trained in the production of their notes by the methods employed by previous annotators, whose work they had encountered in other books, whether other copies of romances, or chronicles. The simplicity of these notes, focusing largely on the “what happened” in the text, can create a false impression of transparency, that the content of the text is simply reproduced in the margin. But closer examination belies this neat assumption. Wording may be drawn from the accompanying text, but the pattern of what to note and how is one that (with individual idiosyncrasies) recurs across manuscripts, wherever a romance is annotated. The tradition derives from annotation.
patterns in chronicles, which themselves show remarkable consistency in the types of things marked, and how.

Chronicles are by no means always annotated, but they are somewhat more likely to be annotated than are romances – frequently an annotated manuscript carrying both a chronicle and a romance will exhibit its notes exclusively in the chronicle, not the romance. Chronicles are, moreover, on those occasions when the are annotated, likely to carry not, precisely, the same notes as other chronicles, but nevertheless notes following a similar pattern. There is very clearly a tradition of chronicle annotation that means that notes in one chronicle will look very much like those in others. These notes emphasize categories like names, placenames, numbers, the dynastic succession of kings, etymologies, and marvels. And there are differences between chronicle and romance annotations. Not least of these differences is that, while chronicle notes are frequently in the hand of the scribe, part of the manuscript’s original layout, romance notes are more often made by readers.

More striking than the differences, however, are the similarities. These notemaking readers seem to be taking their expectations of what annotation should be, and the jobs it should perform, from the chronicle tradition. The grammatical form of the noun rules these notes. This is partly derived from the consistent annotation of names in chronicle margins. In these texts, the succession of kings within a dynasty is an important structure to the text, and one that annotators recognized. The margins can transform through such notes into a king-list, fleshed out by the addition of other types of nouns – places and objects – when the story itself departs from a simple narration of death, succession and death again. Romance notes share with chronicles the same
attention to the “what” rather than the “so what” of the text, and share too formal similarities, as well the interest in names, places, and etymologies.

Study of the frequency of the notes and their pattern of distribution throughout the manuscripts may also lead us to question some of the assumptions about their purpose and circumstances of use. Frequently these annotations have very little to offer a reader attempting to use them as aids for navigation on the level of the whole codex. Unimportant events receive notes, while, in other places, large stretches of critical action pass with no sign. If the notes do not really function well as marginal chapter headings or section-dividers, however, they have something else to offer. Frequently these notes will be most profitably read along with the text they accompany: as, that is, the reader works his (or, at least this once, most emphatically her) way through an individual episode. Key stages in that episode will receive notice, and the underlying structure – or at any rate, one underlying structure – will be revealed to the interested eye.

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stages in that episode will receive notice, and the underlying structure – or at any rate, one underlying structure – will be revealed to the interested eye.

All this, so far, is a survey of the genre not of romance, but of romance annotation. A tradition exists which romance readers appear to have adapted from the tradition developed in chronicles. Romance manuscripts were not usually considered by their producers to require notes, but when notes were added – frequently by later readers – the conventions followed were drawn from the chronicle genre. But while this characterization of the annotational tradition is a necessary first step, the hope is that these notes might shed more light on romance itself, on how that genre was being framed, read and digested by its contemporary audiences. What do these notes tell us about how medieval readers viewed the romance genre?

First and most obvious is that the testimony provided by the annotations contributes yet another grain of sand to the growing mountain of evidence for a close affiliation between the genres of romance and chronicle. If romance annotators, as a particular subset of romance readers, are treating romances as if they were chronicles, it can only be because they perceive strong connections between the two. Even more exciting are the implications of the annotators’ interest in the marvelous. The marvelous is prominent as a category among romance notes. In some cases there is simply the highlighting of something in the text that we may consider to be marvelous in nature, as, for example, one of the strange creatures of Alexander the Great’s exoticized East in *Kyng Alisaunder*. At other times, however, notemakers show their hand more explicitly, employing terminology like “wonder” or “marvel.” We are informed by the annotators
what precisely it is that has made these events, people or objects noteworthy, namely, that they belong to the “marvelous” as a class.

The consistent emphasis on marvels in romance manuscripts would seem to bolster support for such things as incidents prominent within the romance genre. There are a number of ways that we may, today, seek to define romance as a cohesive genre, and the presence of marvels and the supernatural is certainly one criterion that has been mooted. To name one, Derek Brewer’s attempt at a comprehensive definition for the genre locates a basic subject matter of “love and adventure,” but includes too a list of important subcriteria including a repetitious structure, the motif of quest, the happy ending, a “pattern of withdrawal from and return to society, by which the individual is tested and found worthy” and the importance of the marvelous or supernatural. The marvelous is, in Brewer’s estimation, sufficiently important to the nature of the texts that its presence affects a cascade of related thematic and tonal changes, including a structurally important “free[dom] from ordinary naturalistic cause-and-effect.” Moreover, Brewer’s insistence on romance’s preoccupation with the “secular” rather than the “spiritual” may be nuanced by Jacques Le Goff’s distinction between the miraculous supernatural (explained by appeal to a rational, if ineffable, agent, God) and the marvelous supernatural, which remains unexplained. The attention given by contemporary annotators to the presence of the marvelous in the text, therefore, would seem to lend support to a view of this trait as particularly characteristic of the genre.

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738 Ibid., 37.

739 Ibid., 31.

740 Le Goff, The Medieval Imagination.
Modern evaluation seems to echo observations made by the annotators themselves as to
the centrality of marvel in the landscape of romance. When Wace “went as a fool” to the
forest of Brocéliande, in search of marvels, he did so conflating the “accounts of the
Bretons” with the marvels they relate.\textsuperscript{741}

The continuity between romance and chronicle annotation, however, adds a
caveat to such an easy identification, and should nuance the way we understand the role
of the marvelous in medieval romances. We in the modern era have a preconception –
one that has already been repeatedly challenged by scholars\textsuperscript{742} – to see a tension between
fiction and nonfiction, and the distinction between romance and chronicle therefore as
that between the false and the true, between story and history. For Le Goff, part of the
sanitation of the marvelous, rendered dangerous by its opposition with miracle, is its
displacement onto the exoticized East or the Celtic, safely removed in space or
chronology from everyday experience. Part of the formation of romance is a similar
exoticization. Françoise Le Saux and Peter Damian-Grint find Wace’s generically
amphibious Brut associated more with chronicle in England, and more with romance on
the Continent, where, deprived of its resonances with local history, Celtic Britain could
more readily serve as an escapist and exotic otherworld.\textsuperscript{743} If marvels are central to
perceptions of the genre of romance, we may expect this centrality to articulate a major
point of generic difference.

\textsuperscript{741} Wace, \textit{The Roman de Rou}, ed. Anthony J. Holden, trans. Glyn S. Burgess (St. Helier, Jersey:
Société Jersiaise, 2002), lines 6396, 6388.

\textsuperscript{742} See, for example, Given-Wilson, \textit{Chronicles}.

\textsuperscript{743} Le Saux and Damian-Grint, “The Arthur of the Chronicles.”
In fact, however, while the marvelous is repeatedly emphasized in romance manuscripts, it is an equally prominent aspect of chronicle annotations. Chronicles carry notes that identify the occurrence of “marvels” in the text, frequently marked with this word and no other description. In these cases, the lack of any summary of the marvel so highlighted prevents use of the note for the identification of a particular incident as unique from all others – instead, it classifies the incident as belonging to a particular type. The margins of these manuscripts mark out the passage of time by the succession of kings, but also by the periodic appearance of something unusual and, quote, *marvelous*.

The notable and noteworthy in history, therefore, includes the periodic occurrence of marvels, things and events outside the usual course of nature, whether that means an unusual astronomical phenomenon, a prophetic vision, an exotic creature, or a magical object. As Given-Wilson notes, “Miracles, in an age of faith, were *expected*: they made things more, not less, credible.” As for romance, the attention given to these things by annotators gives us confidence that such things were highly visible, considered an important aspect of the tale and no mere window-dressing. For contemporary audiences, however, the discovery of marvels within the pages of a romance text would place it on a generic continuum. The presentation of history in a chronicle attends closely to the remarkable as a recurring category, and romance gives to that category, among others, a fuller and more literary treatment.

It is important, when opening a manuscript for the first time, to understand the conventions in play that differentiate the usual from the unusual, the expected from the novel. This study has aimed at identifying the norms directing notemaking in romance *Chronicles*, 33.
manuscripts, and at mining these notes for what they can tell us about romance’s own
conventions. The initial impression created by these manuscripts is of the surprising and
often inexplicable preoccupations of the annotators. Why were some events marked and
others not? But, as I have endeavored to sketch out this afternoon, if only briefly, a
closer examination has yielded much to put these notes in a larger context and tradition,
and to render them, therefore, legible. This study is, in the end, about two genres, but it is
also about the readers of those genres. Reader expectations shape how a text is understood
and, likewise, readers can become writers in their turn, changing expectations or
deploying old traditions anew. In romance annotation, we have a body of text that has
been born out of a genre (the annotated romances themselves) and then mapped back
onto it, irrevocably altering the landscape of the romance for any who come after. In
these notes, we do not just find the footprints of previous readers, but a pair of shoes to
put on, and so equip ourselves to step our own way through the forests of *aventure*,
feeling the ground through another’s soles.
APPENDIX A:

COK’S CHRONICLE

What follows is a transcription of the St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary, f. 646v, the so-called “Chronicle” by John Cok, which has been translated into English by Norman Moore. Cok does not seem to be, strictly speaking, the major “author” of the chronicle. The text seems to be an excerpt of a longer chronicle, a version of which appears in British Library, Harley 565. In its entirety, the Harley 565 text includes a brief history of the world (“In principio creavit Deus celum et terram et omnia que in eis sunt...,” Nicolas and Tyrrell, Chronicle of London, 176), with a narrowing focus onto Britain after the Trojan War and the subsequent deeds of Brutus. History continues up until the conquest of Julius Caesar, at which point there is a curious circling back, in which “verses” containing a dialogue between Brutus and the goddess Diana are inserted. The early kings of Britain are then rehashed very quickly, mentioning Brutus,

745 Moore, History of St. Bartholomew’s, 2:36–40. Moore’s identification of the chronicle as on f. 636v is incorrect.


747 They are introduced with a brief, punning Latin stanza: “Te quicunque reges. bene si vis nescere Reges / Anglos vel leges. hec iterando leges. / Reges maiiores referam seu nobiliiores / Quando regnarunt et vbi gens hos timularunt. / Mille quater deca. bis fit Adam Bruto prior annis,” “Oh you, whoever will rule yourself, if you wish to know the English kings or laws, you will read these things a
Lucius (the first Christian king) and Arthur. More kings of England’s subsidiary kingdoms are listed as martyrs, and straightforward narration of dynastic succession begins in earnest around “Coronacio Alfredi Regis primi Monarche Anglie” (178). The Harley text is introduced as the copy of a tablet, hanging in St. Paul’s Cathedral, near the tomb of St. Roger, a “recent” bishop of London. These tablets, if they existed – and they likely did – may well have been Cok’s exemplar, as he lived and worked very near St. Paul’s. I consider it unlikely that the St. Paul’s tablets reproduced Cok’s own chronicle, as the differences between the two texts include the insertion of an anecdote for which Cok himself stands as eyewitness. It seems more probable that Cok, copying down a chronicle from another source, chose to embellish it with his own experience, than that these details were excised from an adapter producing the St. Paul’s tablet. The St. Paul’s tablet most likely dates to shortly after the last event it records – the coronation second time. I will recount the greater or more noble kings, when they reigned and where the people buried them. Adam was made four thousand and twice-ten years before Brutus” (ibid., 177; English translation is my own). The exchange between Brutus and Diana reproduces verses provided by Geoffrey of Monmouth (History, I.16.294–299, 305–312).


749 The texts of three tablets are reproduced, the first “copia tabule pendentis ad columpam iuxta tumulum Ducis Lancastri’ in Ecclesia Sancti Pauli London’” (“a copy of the tablet hanging on the column next to the tomb of the Duke of Lancaster in the Church if St. Paul in London”), the second “copia alterius tabule pendentis ad medium colmpnam, ibidem inter dictum tumulum dicti ducis et tumulum Sancti Rogeri nuper Episcopi London’” (“a copy of another tablet hanging on the middle column, in the place between the aforementioned tomb of the said duke, and the tomb of St. Roger, recently the Bishop of London”), and the last, including the brief chronicle, “copia magna tabule ibidem pendentis per dictam tumbam dicti Rogeri Nuper Episcopi London’” (“a copy of the large tablet hanging in the place by the aforementioned tomb of the said Roger, recently bishop of London”); Nicolas and Tyrrell, Chronicle of London, 174, 176. Given the length of the final entry, it would have to have been a “large tablet” indeed, and, alongside the specificity of the recorded positions, it is some corroboration of the tablets’ physicality that this fact was remarked.
of Henry VI as king of France in 1431. The last event recorded in the Harley manuscript is in 1443.

In the Cok’s cartulary copy of the chronicle, a system of brackets drawn to the right of the lines makes clear its nature as a list of entries, rather than a discursive narrative. I have indicated these entries below as different paragraph chunks. Cok’s original line breaks, when they fall within entries, are indicated with vertical bars.

St. Bartholomew’s Cartulary, f. 646v

Anno gracie Millesimo · xlij\o/ · Coronacio Sancti Edwardi Regis & Confessoris apud Wynton’ qui regni \| sui anno · xxv · in ecclesia westmonasterij quam ipse construì fecerat honorifice collocatur

Anno · Millesimo · lxvj\o/ Coronacio haraldi ducis apud westmonasterium · & sepultura illius eodem anno apud waltham

Anno · M\o/ · lxvj\o/ · Coronacio willeimi Primi ducis Normannye apud westmonasterium qui regni sui anno \| xvj\o/ · angliam describi fecit in vno volumine dicto Domesday · & anno · iii\o/ · post Cadamum sepelitur

750 Cok’s verb choice here differs from that appearing in Nicolas and Tyrrell’s edition of the Harley tablet transcription. There the reading is “constitui,” changing the meaning from “which he himself caused to be built,” to “which he himself caused to be established” (ibid., 179).
Anno · M · lxxx 751 · Coronacio willelmi Rufi apud westmonasterium & regni sui anno 752 xiiij\o/ wynton’ timulatur 753

Anno · M\o/ · C · Coronacio henrici Bew clerk primi Regis fratris willelmi Rufi apud westmonasterium · & Regni | sui anno xxxv · apud Radyne sepultus est · Iste fecit parcam de wodestoke 754

Anno · M\o/ · C · xxxv · Coronacio Stephani Regis apud westmonasterium · hic Regni sui | xix\o/ · anno apud ffaueresham humatus est

Anno · M\o/ · C · liii\o/ · Coronacio henrici secundi Imperatricis filium & cognatus stepham 755 apud westmonasterium & regni | sui anno · xxxv · apud ffontem Ebraldi sepultus est

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751 Where the date’s given in Cok’s chronicle differ from the real dates of events, Moore has altered his translation to reflect historical reality. He gives a date here, therefore, of 1087, the real year of William Rufus’s coronation (Moore, *History of St. Bartholomew’s*, 2:36). The manuscript, however, clearly reads 1080, a date it presumably inherits from its source: Nicolas and Tyrrell report 1080 as the date given in Harley 565, and the date, therefore, likely used on the St. Paul’s tablet (*Chronicle of London*, 179).

752 Cok has, presumably inadvertently, omitted the o.

753 A marginal note to the left of this line is partly cut off by the edge of the page, and its meaning, therefore, remains obscure. What remains reads: “iij + vj septimas.”

754 Here Cok has apparently amplified his text. Neither the epithet Bewclerk, nor the mention of the parcam de wodestoke appears in Nicolas and Tyrrell.

755 Cok’s description of Henry II represents a shift in focus when compared to the version reported by Nicolas and Tyrrell. There, it is the coronation “Henrici secundi imperatoris,” “of Henry the second, the emperor.” Cok’s version is perhaps more precise: “Henry the second, the son of the empress and kinsman of Stephen.” Note that Cok’s alteration is not fully integrated into the syntax: these descriptors should, like the “henrici” they modify, be in the genitive rather than accusative and nominative.
Anno · M\o/ · C · liiiij · Translacio Sancti Edwardi Regis & confessoris apud westmonasterium · iiij\o/ · Idus Octobris p[er]\textsuperscript{756} beatum \textquoteright Thomam Cantuar’ archiepiscopum · & postea per dictum Regem marterizatur · anno domini · M · C · lxxij\o/ · x\textsuperscript{757} die Decembris\textsuperscript{758}

Anno · M\o/ · C · lxxxix\o/ · Coronacio Regis Ricardi apud westmonasterium qui regnauit · xj · annis · & apud fontem \textquoteleft Ebraldi timulatur · hic fuit interdiccio Anglie & duruit vsque ad annum domini · M · CC · xiiij\o/ .\textsuperscript{759}

Anno · M\o/ · C · lxxxxix\o/ · Coronacio Iohannis Regis apud westmonasterium & regnauit annis xvij wigornie sepelitur

\textsuperscript{756} The absence of a mark of abbreviation on the \textit{p} (intended for \textit{per}; see ibid., 179) has perhaps misled Moore. In any case, he has construed the translation of Edward and the martyrdom of Becket as two separate chronicle entries. Cok’s layout makes clear that they should be read as one: Becket is first introduced not as martyr, but as the agent of Edward’s translation.

\textsuperscript{757} Moore reports here the correct date of the 29\textsuperscript{th} (\textit{History of St. Bartholomew’s}, 2:37). While the manuscript only has “x,” a blank has been left that could accommodate a further addition to the date. It is possible that Cok could not immediately recall the date of Becket’s death, and left a space to correct the date later, but never followed through.

\textsuperscript{758} The description of Becket’s martyrdom is not carried in Nicolas and Tyrrell, and everything from “& postea...” to the end of the sentence may well be Cok’s own addition. It is unsurprising that mention of Becket would prompt a description of his murder, but the shift in focus is intriguing. Becket, a minor character, mentioned only as accessory to the postmortem travels of a king (an important episode in a dynastic list that emphasizes the location of kings’ remains), becomes a main character in his own right, with his own recorded death-date. Moore completes the transformation by recreating Becket as an entry to the list in his own right.

\textsuperscript{759} The text from “hic fuit interdiccio...” to the end of the entry is Cok’s addition, not carried in Nicolas and Tyrrell’s edition. Furthermore, its insertion creates an historical problem: the interdict was not in Richard’s reign, but John’s. Moore has remedied the problem by silently, moving this line to its proper place with John. Two faint lines in the manuscript preceding “hic fuit interdiccio...” may indicate an attempt at such correction in the manuscript itself: it is possible that Cok added the comment later, and placed it in Richard’s entry rather than John’s, because Richard ended on a short second line (“Ebraldi timulatur”), while the single line of John’s entry had already filled all allotted space.
Anno · M\o/ · CC · xvj\o/ Coronacio henrici filij Regis Iohannis apud Glouerniam qui anno · iiiij\to/ · sequenti iterum Coronatus | apud westmonasterium & regni sui anno · lvij\o/ · ibidem timulatur

Anno · M\o/ · CC · lxxiiij\o/ · kalendae Septembris Coronacio Edwardi primi post conquestum apud westmonasterium qui regni sui anno <tre>760 xxxv\o/ · ibidem sepelitur

Anno · M\o/ · CCC · viij\o/ · decimo kalendae Martij Coronacio Edwardi secundi apud westmonasterium qui Regni sui | anno vicesimo Gloucestr’ timulatur

Anno · M\o/ · CCC · xxvj\o/ · Coronatur Edwardus tercius flos tocius milicie christianitatis apud westmonasterium etatis | sue anno xiiiij\o/761 · Et Anno domini · M\o/ · CCC · xlviij\o/ · tercio die Septembris ijdem dominus Rex · Et · incepit obsidere | villam de Caleys · cum castro & suam obsidionem continuauit vsque tercium diem Augusti

Anno reuoluto quo | die dictam villam cum castro suo imperio subiugauit · Et anno domini · M\o/ · CCC · xlv\o/ · viij\o/762 · kalendae Iulij · Illustris | Rex Anglie · Edwardus tercius · apud le Scluse francigenas vicit in Nauali bello · Et Anno domini · M\o/ · CCC ·

760 Cok has cancelled this with a line drawn through. Presumably he began to write out the number, then changed his mind and used Roman numerals.


762 The error here does not seem to be Cok’s, but is inherited from his source: cf. Nicolas and Tyrrell, Chronicle of London, 179. Moore silently corrects the date to 1340.
per Anglicos debellantur ffranci apud Cressy & Rex Boemie ibidem

Eodem Anno xvj kalendae | Nouembris Scoti vinctur ab Anglis apud Dureham & capitur Dauid Rex Scoccie | Et Anno Domini | M\o/ CCC lxvj xiiij kalendae Octobris capcio Iohannis Regis ffrancie apud Peyters per Principem egregium Edwardum primogenitum | Edwardi terciij Regis graciosi | Et Anno domini | M\o/ CCC lxvj xij Idus Iunij obijt | Edwardus princeps egregius quo die festum Sancte Trinitatis contingebat | Et Anno Domini | M\o/ CCC xxvj xij Idus Iulij obijt | Edwardus flos milicie christianitatis & iij Nonarum eiusdem Mensis | apud westmonasterium est sepultus | regni sui Anno lj

Anno | M\o/ CCC lxvij xvij kalendae Augusti apud westmonasterium Coronacio | Ricardi secundi filij Edwardi principis wallie | anno etatis sue xj & Regni sui anno xiiij vitam finiuit | & westmonasterio timulatus

Anno | M\o/ CCC lxxxix in feste Sancti Edwardi Regis & confessoris

Coronacio henrici quarti apud | westmonasterium & Anno suo xij vitam finiuit

Cantuar sepelitur & fuit filius ducis lancastris

Nicolas and Tyrrell’s reading includes the incorrect date, not reported by Cok, “vij” kl. Octobr.” The historical Battle of Crécy was in August.

Moore’s translation of “perished,” rather than “was punished,” somewhat lessens the moral judgment implicit in both Cok’s version and that in Harley 565 (History of St. Bartholomew’s, 2:38).

The adjective egregius does not appear at this point in Nicolas and Tyrrell’s edition. Cok’s use of it here seems to transform princeps egregius from a simple description into a formal epithet.

Richard II’s death (perhaps a sensitive subject in Lancastrian England?) does not appear in Nicolas and Tyrrell’s edition: everything from “& Regni sui anno...” onward is presumably Cok’s own addition.
Anno · M\o/ · CCCC · xiiij · ix\o/ · die Mensis Aprilis · quo die fuit Dominica in passione & dies valde pluuiosa | Coronacio · henrici · quinti apud westmonasterium · in qua coronacione · ego ffrater Iohannes Cok qui Istam \transsumpcionem\ ad reuuiicacionem memoriae conscripsi · interfui & vidi · qui Rex multa inaudita | bella exercuit · & magnam partem ffrancie suo imperio subiuguit · Et Regni sui anno l Decimo in francia decessit · & apud westmonasterium honorifice timulatus est

Anno · M\o/ · CCCC · xxij\o/ · henricus Sextus · filius Regis · h · quinti · primo etatis sue | anno cepit regnare · videlicet · primo die · septembris

767 Henry IV’s death is not carried in Nicolas and Tyrrell either: everything from “& Anno suo · xiiij\o/...” onward is additional information perhaps added by Cok. The neglect of Henry’s death might less the argument for Lancastrian anxiety as the reason for the absence of Richard’s. In any case, the version produced by Cok is more complete, but in that completeness, also makes the dynastic discontinuity more evident. Henry is the “son of the Duke of Lancaster,” a fact not further explained, but which alerts the reader to a problem in the succession: if he is the son of the Duke of Lancaster, he is not the son of the king.

768 This entire entry has been reworked from the form it appears in Nicolas and Tyrrell – unsurprising, since Cok has here supplemented the chronicle not just from his own knowledge, but from his personal experience. The detail of the day’s weather is his interpolation, as is his own assertion of presence at the coronation. Cok also appears to have added the praise of Henry’s French conquests. The Nicolas and Tyrrell version is more restrained, instead reporting that Henry V was he “qui apud Boys seynt Vyncent iuxta Parisiam in Francia vitam suam finiuit. vltimo die Augusti anno regni sui. x”. incipiente. Et postea ossa sua apud Westm’ sepulta fuerunt,” “who ended his life at Bois de Vincennes near Paris in France, on the last day of August, with the tenth year of his reign underway. And afterwards his bones were buried at Westminster” (Chronicle of London, 180).

769 Moore’s 1423 is his hypercorrection; both the cartulary and Nicolas and Tyrrell share the historically correct reading of 1422 (Moore, History of St. Bartholomew’s, 2:39).
APPENDIX B:

BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD. 10392

London, British Library, Add. 10392 is 15cm × 21cm × 5cm, with a page size of approximately 14.5 cm × 20.5cm. It contains 185 folios in 23 quires, and is entirely in the hand of a single scribe, John Cok. Some of Cok’s marginal material has been trimmed off at the edge of the page during binding. He worked with the quires already gathered together, as is evident where some pages were closed together with the blue ink still wet, and that ink has transferred from one page to the other: Cok was the rubricator, as well as the scribe. The manuscript was acquired by the British Museum in 1836. What follows is a brief list of the manuscript’s main contents, followed by a more detailed description of each item or group of items.

B.1 A Brief Survey of the Contents

Miscellaneous Introductory Materials (quire 1)

f. 1v: table of contents

f. 2r: series of maxims, apparently from various sources

ff. 2v-5v: collections of lists

f. 6r: Richard Rolle, excerpt from “Comment on the Canticles”
f. 6v-7r: excerpt of the *Compendium in Job* by Peter of Blois

f. 7v: treatise on virtues and vices

Texts by Bernard of Clairvaux\(^770\) (quires 2-7)

ff. 8r-46r: *Tractatus de Interiori Domo seu de Conscientia Aedificanda*

ff. 47r-50v: *Speculum Peccatoris*

ff. 51r-55v: *Planctus Mariae*

Texts by Hugh of St. Victor, Bernard, Augustine, et al. (quires 8-14)

ff. 56r-67v: *Soliloquium de Arrha Animae* by Hugh of St. Victor

f. 68r: short text “following Henry Cossey *Super Apocalypsim*”

ff. 68v-70v: a miscellaneous collection of very short religious texts

ff. 71r-88v: *Cognitio Vitae, seu de Cognitione Verae Vitae*, attributed to St. Augustine

ff. 89r-92r: more miscellaneous religious texts, many attributed to St. Augustine

ff. 92v-102v: *Soliloquiorum de Instructione Animae Libri Duo*

ff. 103r-108v: “De Maria Magdalena” by Pseudo-Origen

ff. 108v-109v: excerpt from *De Contritione Cordis*

Miscellaneous Hymns and Prayers (quires 14, cont.-17)

ff. 110r-140v: hymns and prayers

\(^770\) Cok’s attributions are not always accurate, but are frequently those generally accepted in the period. Throughout this introductory survey, I have highlighted the authorial attributions that Cok has himself followed: he seems to have envisioned the manuscript as collecting shorter texts from a number of important authors. The fact that most of these attributions are now judged to be erroneous does not diminish their usefulness in understanding his own organizing principle.
Texts by Augustine (quires 18-22)

ff. 141r-159r: *De Fide ad Petrum sive de Regula Verae Fidei*

ff. 159v-163r: a *Liber Sententiarum* often (incorrectly) attributed to Augustine

ff. 163v-164r: an excerpt from Augustine’s *De Ordine Libri Duo*

ff. 164v-172v: *Liber de Vitiorum Virtutumque Conflictu*

Miscellaneous Texts on the Virtues and Vices (quires 22, cont.-23)

ff. 173r-173v: a poem, “Verses on Every Race of Men”

f. 173v: a poem on the worthlessness of empty virtues

f. 173v: a brief paragraph of John Wyclif, on the symbolism of virtue in clerical dress

ff. 174r-178r: *tabula* of sins

ff. 178v-182r: guides to meditation, in the form of drawn hands

f. 182v: more brief items, including lists of sins and virtues

f. 183r: “Proverbs” by Chaucer or Pseudo-Chaucer

B.2 Descriptions of the Manuscript’s Various Contents

f. 1v, Table of Contents:

Cok’s table of contents is not comprehensive, but includes many of the manuscript’s major entries. The first item described is the *Tractatus de Interiori Domo seu de Conscientia Aedificanda* beginning on f. 8r. All the previous texts, that is, are unlisted, and represent later additions, copied after the table was written and inserted to fill out the first quire. What follows is a transcription of the table. Line breaks are the
same as in the original, text in red ink is represented in bold, and those words underlined in the transcription were underlined also in the manuscript.

**Ista sunt Contenta in libello isto scripto a J ohanne C ok**

**Anno dominj · Mille simo · CCCC · xxxiij ·**

i  
_In primis_ · Speculum Consciencie · in · iiiij · libellis distincto

ij  
Item Speculum peccatoris 'beati' Bernardi ·

iiij  
Item lamentacio beate marie secundum Bernardum ·

iiiij  
Item hugo de Arra anime _scilicet_ Solliloquium dilectionis ·

v  
Item Bernardus de dignitate Sacerdotali ·

vj  
Item Quare soluuntur horas Canonicas sancti Bernardi

vij  
Item Augustinus de Cognicione vere vite ·

viiij  
Item Augustinus in tractatu quomodo homo sanctus est ad ymaginem dei ·

ix  
Item Augustinus de decem plagis ·

x  
Item libellus de Instruccione anime ·

xj  
Item Omelia origenis super Magdalenam ·

xij  
Item quedam Meditaciones deuote · & Oraciones _scilicet_ de domino Ihesu · de Sancta mara _scilicet_ Stabat mater dolorosa · &cetera

Aue maria in versibus · O Intemerata · Et de passione domini

cum letania · & letanie feriales · \b/ Et centum & quinquaginta

collect' psalterij david · \a/ Et psalterium <*****> [771] · de sancta maria

xiiij  
Item Augustinus ad petrum Oracionum de ffride catholic ·

[771] This text has been cancelled, and is now illegible.
f. 2r, Series of Maxims

The entire page is given a title in blue (represented below with bold), but the title in fact refers only to the first of the maxims, on patience. These maxims seem to find their sources in a number of different locations. That first I have identified as an adage frequently employed as a gloss on one of Cato’s Disticha, and one which was sufficiently well-known that it likely inspired Chaucer’s Parson to intone “If thou wolt venquysse thyn enemy, lerne to suffre.” All seem to belong to the general cache of medieval proverbial wisdom, attributed to no particular author and briefly appearing in a number of different anthologies.

Capta cohors castri veteris partita cremetur.  

772 I have not expanded this abbreviation, as it is by no means clear what Cok intended this participle to modify, nor indeed if he had necessarily decided the issue even in his own mind.

773 Richard Hazleton, “Chaucer and Cato,” *Speculum* 35, no. 3 (1960): 367. The Parson’s adage is found in Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, X.661. Hazleton also identifies other resonances with this line in Chaucer, in the *Franklin’s Tale* (“Lerneth to suffre,” ibid., V.777) and *Troilus and Criseyde* (“The suffrant overcomith,” *Troilus*, IV.1584). The distich this line associates itself with is “Quem superare potes, interdum vince ferendo; / Maxima etenim morum semper pacientia virtus” (I.38).

774 This note seems to have been added later, although it is still in Cok’s hand.
Nota bene de paciencia

† Nobile vincendi genus est paciencia · vincit
Que patitur · si vis vincere disc eti pati ·
† In domibus letus · in stratis sisque facetus ·
In templis humilis · in campis sisque urilis ·
In mensa urgo · in lecto resticus esto ·
† Tempore felici · multi mun erant amici ·
Cum res defecerit · nullus amicus erit ·

{etc.}

ff. 2v-5v, Collections of Lists

This extensive collection of lists, sometimes numbered, comprises various
collections and classifications, among them the twelve abuses of the world, the seven
vices and their remedies ("Septem vicia per hec curantur"), the seven sacraments together
with their effects ("Septem sacramento cum efficibus eorum"), the seven vices "compared
to seven beasts" ("Nota bene · sanctum thomas in veritatibus | theologie · libro · ii|ol ·
capitulo · xv · | quod · vij · vicia comparan | tur · vij · bestijs · propter eorum |
proprietates · videlicet ""), the nine "temperancies," the outer joys, the inner joys, and
many others. These lists are sometimes repetitive (there are several different schemata
for both virtues and vices), and sometimes contradictory, with lists professing to offer the
same information sometimes differing in vocabulary, number, or even precise detail of
information. It is clear that the lists have been gathered from a large number of different
sources, with an encyclopedic, rather than synthesizing, impulse.
f. 6r, Richard Rolle, excerpt from “Comment on the Canticles”

This text is carried under the title “hec Ricardus hampole super Cantica.” For an edition, see Elizabeth M. Murray’s dissertation, “Richard Rolle’s Comment on the Canticles, Edited from MS Trinity College, Dublin 153” (Fordham University, 1958). The text appearing here is an excerpt from a larger commentary (or collection of affiliated fragmentary commentaries), and specifically addresses the Vulgate passage Song of Sol. 1:2, “oleum effusum nomen tuum” (Douay-Rheims translation, “Thy name is as oil poured out”). The name poured out like oil is Christ’s, as the name of Jesus uproots vice and establishes virtue, seeming to combine an interest in virtue and vice with a preoccupation with the efficacy of a practical devotion, this time in the pious repetition of a single word.

f. 6v-7r, Excerpt from the Compendium in Job by Peter of Blois

See PL 207:795-826. This text is carried under the title “hec Blesensis in fine super Job.”

f. 7v, Treatise on Virtues and Vices

This text is carried under the title “¶ Remedia contra omnia vicia.”

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775 My gratitude to Katherine Zieman, who identified this passage and provided this information about Rolle’s commentary.

ff. 8r-46r, *Tractatus de Interiori Domu seu de Conscientia Aedificanda*

Item 1 in Cok’s table of contents. See *PL* 184:507-552. The text’s authorship is now considered uncertain, but Cok heads the page with titles in red ink: “¶ Bernardus” and “¶ Speculum Consciencie Sancti Bernardi.” He divides the text into two books, each subdivided into a series of numbered chapters, whose topics are given at the beginning of each book in a carefully numbered and rubricated table of contents. This table has been further improved by the addition of *nota bene* marks, in the form both of Cok’s “γ” (in red and without a signature), and, in one instance, a red “γ bene” (next to “¶ 28 Quod nulla melior est scientia · quam · vt homo cognoscat seipsum · ”).

ff. 47r-50v, *Speculum Peccatoris*

Item 2 in Cok’s table of contents. See *PL* 40:983-992. The text’s authorship is now uncertain, but Cok attributes it also to Bernard.

ff. 51r-55v, *Planctus Mariae*

Item 3 in Cok’s table of contents. See W. Mushacke, ed., *Altprovenzalische Marienklage des XIII. Jahrhunderts*, Romanische Bibliothek 3 (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1975), 41–53. This text is of H. Barré’s “Type B.”

ff. 56r-67v, *Soliloquium de Arrha Animae* by Hugh of St. Victor

Item 4 in Cok’s table of contents. See *PL* 176:951-970.

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A short text purporting to be “Secundam Henr’ Costesey in postilla super apocalipsim · Ca · 18 ·,” following, that is, chapter 18 of Henry of Cossey’s Super Apocalypsim. Henry was a Franciscan, active at Cambridge in the 1330s, and heavily influenced by Joachim of Fiore, and his own Super Apocalypsim.\textsuperscript{778} Henry’s text is extant in a number of manuscripts, principally Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 85 and St. Bonaventure, NY, St. Bonaventure University, Holy Name MS 69 (\textit{olim} Washington, D.C., Holy Name College MS 69).\textsuperscript{779} The passage excerpted here is a taxonomic one, including a breakdown of the grammatical cases of nouns, and as well as an analysis of the different types of pride specific to different orders of men (‘Magistri qui superbiunt ex sciencia · | Nobiles qui superbiunt in prosapia · | Diuites qui superbiunt ex auaricia ·” etc.)

Included among these is an anonymous text sometimes attributed by Cok to Bernard and listed as item 5 in his table of contents. See the \textit{Sermo ad Pastores in}

\textsuperscript{778} Reeves, \textit{The Influence of Prophecy}, 86. Henry’s debt to Joachim included, among other things, an enumerating and taxonomic impulse: “His [Henry’s] main interests were in the seven \textit{bella} of the Old Testament and the seven persecutions of the Church, the seven heads of the Dragon, the seven \textit{etates} of the world, and the seven orders of preachers. Obviously he was most attracted to the theme of the sixth and seventh orders and Joachim’s expectation ‘de isto generali ordine qui in fine convertit iudeos et alios infideles per predicacionem’ (f. 71r [of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Laud Misc. 85]). In particular, he adopted Joachim’s interpretation of the Angel of the Church of Philadelphia as ‘quidam ordo qui est vel erit sexto tempore, qui habebit donum spiritualem’ (f. 82va [of Laud Misc. 85]). He was also interested in Joachim’s characteristic exposition of the Alpha, Omega, and Tetragrammaton” (ibid.).

\textsuperscript{779} See Friedrich Stegmüller, \textit{Repertorium Biblicum Medii Aevi} (Barcelona: Matriti, 1950), 3161. My thanks to Paul Spaeth at St. Bonaventure University, for his generous help in identifying the current location of the Holy Name manuscript.
Synodo Congregatos in PL 184:1085-1096. The Add. 10392 version is not identical to that carried in the PL, and appears to be an excerpt from the text. Its incipit is as follows:

O Quantam dignitate contulit vobis deus | o sacerdotes · o quanta est prerogatiua
sacerdota / | lis ordinis · pretulit eos deus regibus terre · | pretulit hunc ordinem deus
omnibus hominibus · imor | altius loquar · pretulit eos deus · angelis · archangelis · |
thonis & dominacionibus · [... etc.]

ff.71r-88v, Cognitio Vitae, seu de Cognitione Verae Vitae

Item 7 in Cok’s table of contents. See PL 40:1005-1032. The text is of uncertain authorship, but is frequently attributed to Augustine, as it is here.

ff. 89r-92r, Miscellaneous Religious Texts

Most of these texts are explicitly attributed (falsely) by Cok to Augustine. They include a “tractatus Beati Augustinis yponensis Episcopi qualiter homo factus est ad
ymaginem & similitudinem sui conditoris” (Cok’s item 8), and a “liber Augustini de
decem plagie & preceptis,” where each of the ten plagues of Egypt is compared with one of the ten commandments (Cok’s item 9).

ff. 92v-102v, Soliloquiorum de Instructione Animae Libri Duo

Item 10 in Cok’s table of Contents. See PL 198:843-872.
ff. 103r-108v: “De Maria Magdalena” by Pseudo-Origen

Item 11 in Cok’s table of Contents. See Louis Bourgain, *La Chaire Française au XIIe Siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973). In the later Middle Ages, this homily was sufficiently well known and appreciated that it was translated by Chaucer, although that text is no longer extant. Bourgain, working in 1879, follows his base manuscript in attributing the homily to Anselm of Canterbury, but the author is considered unknown, and Origen was the more usual attribution.

ff. 108v-109v, Excerpt from *De Contritione Cordis*

See *PL* 40:943-950. The excerpt begins in chapter 3 (col. 944).

ff. 110r-140v, Hymns and Prayers

This section of the manuscript is extremely miscellaneous, containing a large number of short texts. Even Cok’s own description of them (see item 12 in his table of contents) is necessarily lengthy, under the general heading of “quedam Meditaciones deuote · & Oraciones,” some of which he enumerates more specifically.

The first of these texts (“de domino Jhesu”) is a hymn to Jesus with the following incipit:

O Bone ihesu · O piissime ihesu · O dulcissime ihesu · o ihesu fi / l li marie uirginis · o amantissime ihesu plenus misericordia & pie / l tate · o dulcis ihesu redemptor & custos


781 Ibid., 493.
This is followed by a hymn (“Stabat mater dolorosa”), with the following incipit:

Stabat mater dolorosa · iuxta crucem lacrimosa · dumpende / | bat filius · Cuius animam
gementem · contristatem & dolen / tem · pertransiuit gladius · [... etc.]

A subsequent hymn (“Aue maria in versibus”) opens:

Que porta glorie fons uirginitatis · | Arbor paciencie radix caritatis · | virga sapiencie uia
ueritatis · | fpons misericordie ortus uoluptatis · [... etc.]

Finally, f. 112r carries the Latin prayer O Intemerata. See A. Wilmart, Auteurs
Spirituels et Textes Dévots du Moyen Age Latin (Paris: Librairie Bloud et Gay, 1932),
474–504. Since this piece in fact begins quire 15, it is possible that it should be grouped
with the text that follow rather than those that precede, but Cok’s lack of a clear booklet
structure within this manuscript makes such assessments necessarily tentative and
problematic.

In any case, on ff. 112v-114r, a series of prayers appears that hangs together as a
single unified text, headed with the rubric “In honore passionis oraciones deuote ·”
(“devout prayers in honor of the Passion”). This section seems clearly designed not just
for the simple recording of interesting prayers, but as a guide for practice: each prayer is followed with a rubric “Pater noster · Ave maria,” presumably inviting the reader to insert these prayers at that point. The familiar prayers are not copied in full, but their insertion is provided for; a reader is expected to appreciate instruction on how to incorporate each of these prayers within a larger devotional recitation. Cok has also provided marginal annotation (in red) describing the content of each of the prayers in this section, for instance: “hic petimus ueram contricionem | puram confessionem · | & dignam satisfaccionem” or “hic petimus timorem & | amorem dominij.” Folios 144v-115r offer more miscellaneous prayers, not treated as part of the preceding sequence.

Folios 115v-120r are labeled by Cok with the colophon “Oracio sequens psalterium Jeronimij,” and is presumably the same “psalter of David” he highlights in his table of contents. The series consists of the first two verses of the Vulgate version (i.e. Jerome’s translation) of each of the Psalms, in order, from Psalm 5 to Psalm 142. Some more miscellaneous prayers and litanies follow, climaxing on f. 132r, with a an elaborately rubricated paragraph, picked out with a square bracket and a marginal nota bene, promising tangible reward in the afterlife, in the form of guaranteed salvation and specified time off in Purgatory, for the daily recital of the “psalterium beate marie virginis.” Due to its emphatic presentation with notae and colored ink, it is quite possibly the most striking and visible entry in the manuscript. This ends the quire (16, oversized at 13 folios) and prepares the reader for the text to follow, the second of Cok’s promised psalters, on ff. 133r-140v. This last is not a copy of the Psalms proper, but a series of prayers “secundum ordinem psalterij,” and numbered in the margin 1 to 150 with Arabic numerals.
ff. 141r-159r, De Fide ad Petrum sive de Regula Verae Fidei

Item 13 in Cok’s table of contents, and frequently (as here) but erroneously attributed to Augustine. See *PL* 40:753-780.

ff. 159v-163r, *Liber Sententiarum*

Item 14 in Cok’s table of contents. See Prosper Aquitanus, “Liber Sententiarum,” 213-365. Although Cok calls it *De Innocencia*, innocence is the title only of the first, very short, sentence (“Innocentia uera est, quae nec sibi, nec alteri nocet, quoniam qui diliget iniquitatem, odit animam suam. Et nemo non prius in se quam in alterum peccat,” 257). Each sentence is headed in the manuscript by a brief rubric describing its content.

ff. 163v-164r, Excerpt from Augustine’s De Ordine Libri Duo

See *PL* 32:977-1020. The excerpted passage begins at Book 2, chapter 7 (col. 995).

ff. 164v-172v, *Liber de Vitiorum Virtutumque Conflictu*

Item 15 in Cok’s table of contents. See *PL* 17:1057-1074, 40:1091-1106, 83:1131-1144 and 143:559-578. The text is frequently treated as Pseudo-Ambrose, but Cok attributes it to Augustine.

ff. 173r-173v, “Verses on Every Race of Men”

See Thomas Wright, ed., *The Political Songs of England: From the Reign of John to that of Edward II* (London: Camden Society, 1839), 400–401. Wright takes his text from Cambridge, University Library Ee.VI.29, and considers that the poem “bears a
remarkable resemblance in some parts to [an] English poem of the Auchinleck MS,”
carried in his book under the title “Poem on the Evil Times of Edward II” (incipit “Whii
werre and wrake in londe and manslauht is i-come, / Whii hungger and derthe on eorthe
the pore hath underway [... etc.]”).782 The text is essentially identical to that appearing
in Wright, with the exception of five additional final stanzas:

[f. 173rb]
¶ Peccatrices vinculum pacis & amoris ·
Dirum pentes poculum propinant doloris ·
Quodantes loculum lucrumque laboris ·
ffedauerunt seculum per facta fetoris ·
¶ Juuenes diligite virginem sinceram ·
\textit{christi} materem colite qui dat uitam ueram ·
Viri fortes fugite fetidam chimeram ·
Eius caudam pestis fore peram ·

[f. 173v]
¶ Mors morbus & demones conregnant in ira ·

Corrupentes homines seculi per gira ·
Clerus plebs & proceres vadunt in delira ·
Recordentur Juuenes que nunc vident mira ·
¶ Planetarum prelia puto iam parantur ·

Vut peccata vilia de terra radiantur ·
Vsceris angustia ruentes plagantur ·
Mortis pretristicia pauci iocundantur ·
¶ Obt’a trinitas pater · proles · flamen ·
Nobis tua bonitas conferat solamen ·
chrísti matris pietas mostulat iuuamen ·
Sanctorumque caritas nos confortat · Amen ·

f. 173v, Poem on the Worthlessness of Empty Virtues

This poem is also found in Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson D.893 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 450. Its transcription is as follows:

Nil valet ille locus † vbi nil patet humilitatis ·
Nil valet ille locus † ubi nil est societatis ·
Nil valet ille labor † quem nil premia secuntur ·
Nil valet eius amor † per quem sua diminuntur ·
Nil valet dubium † quod premia nulla merentur ·
Nil valet ille decor † vbi nil probitatis habetur ·
Nil valet hec mulier † que quilibet associatur ·
Nil valet ullus homo † nisi sit sermone fidelis ·
Nil valet hec probitas † miseri qui parcer nescit ·
Nil valet architenens † qui nescit parcer te lis ·
Nil valet hec pietas † qui parcer nescit agenis ·
Nil valet ebrietas † per quam perit omnis honestas ·
Nil uael hec gluciens † per quam modo crescret egestas.

Nil uael ingenium † ubi non est copia rerum.

Nil uael ille domus † ubi quisque cliens dumatur.

Nil uael ille chorus † ubi quisque sibi famulatur. 783

Nil uael hec regio † que non subdita regi.

Nil uael ut iubeas † vbi uult tibi nemo fauere.

Which is to say, in my English translation:

That place is worth nothing, where nothing of humility is evident.
That place is worth nothing, where nothing of fellowship is present.
That labor is worth nothing, which is followed by no rewards.
His love is worth nothing, through which he himself is diminished.
The doubt is worth nothing, which earns no rewards.
That beauty is worth nothing, where nothing of honesty is held.
The woman is worth nothing, who associates with anyone.
No man is worth anything, if he is not faithful in speech.
The honesty is worth nothing, that does not know how to spare a wretched man.
The Bowman is worth nothing, who does not know how to conserve his arrows.
The piety is worth nothing, which does not know how to spare the lambs.
The inebriation is worth nothing, though which all honesty is lost.
The gluttony is worth nothing, through which need only increases.

783 In the left margin, in his casual, cursive hand, Cok makes a correction: “fabulatur.”
Capacity is worth nothing, where there is no abundance of things.

That household is worth nothing, where every client is mastered.

That multitude is worth nothing, where each serves himself.\textsuperscript{784}

The region is worth nothing, which is not subordinate to a king.

It is worth nothing that you should command, where no one wants to befriend you.

\textbf{f. 173v, Brief Passage from Wyclif’s \textit{De Civili Dominio}}

See John Wyclif, \textit{De Civili Dominio Liber Tertius}, ed. Johann Loserth, vol. 4 (London: Trübner, 1904), 494–495. The passage examines the various characteristics of clerical dress, and glosses each as representative of a particular clerical virtue. Wyclif’s intent is to criticize the clergy for failing to live up to the virtues professed by their dress. As it appears in Cok’s excerpt, the passage is ostensibly from Jerome: Wyclif’s name is nowhere mentioned. See Chapter 3, pp. 252ff. for a more in-depth examination of this passage and its source.

\textbf{ff. 174r-178r, \textit{Tabula of Sins}}

Item 16 in Cok’s table of contents. The \textit{tabula} is extremely structured and schematic, laid out as a table, rather than as fluent prose. Its incipit is “\textbf{O Mne peccatum opponitur \| alicui uirtuti theologice \textit{id est} uel fidei \cdot uel spei \cdot uel carita \| ti \cdot uel pluribus simul \cdot uel & omnibus simul \cdot}” (“Every sin is in theological opposition to some virtue, that is, either to faith or to hope or to charity, or to several of these at once or to all at

\textsuperscript{784} I have translated this line as it originally stood, ending in \textit{famulatur}. If Cok’s subsequent correction were accepted, the line would seem to read more naturally with \textit{chorus} taken literally, in a musical metaphor of disorder: “That choir is worth nothing where everyone converses among themselves.”
once”). Each sin is then examined in turn, broken down according to its nature as it is opposed to the various combinations of faith, hope and charity, both singly and collectively.

ff. 178v-182r, Hands to Guide Meditation

These are the unnumbered final entry in Cok’s table of contents. These diagrams, one hand appearing on each page, were mnemonic devices for remembering the stages in a guided meditation. They are similar in form to the Guidonian hands that were used as mnemonics in music instruction, and were likely widespread meditation aids in the period. Each of the hands seems to represent a different meditation. Labels written on each anatomical area – the knuckles and the various areas of the palm – allow the reader to envision similar labels on his own hand, and to step through the stages in a personal regimen of meditation, even in the absence of the book and its diagram.

Cok’s comment that these drawings were “script’ · per manus · ff · Johannis Cok” may suggest that he designed these guides to meditation himself, rather than copying them directly from some exemplar, although it is true that he also frequently signed his name to copying efforts, as well as products of his own composition like the Corpus Christi Lovelich annotations. The manuscript as a whole is headed, after all, with his signature (“libello isto script\o/ a · ff · Johanne · Cok”). Indeed, the likelihood is high that these hands are only copies. One of them, the Meditacio Nocturna of f. 178v, bears the statement “Dat manus hec doctis que sit meditacio Noctis,” a title that occurs in at least one other manuscript, there too associated with a hand diagram laying out the plan for a meditation. Cambridge, Jesus College MS Q.B.15, a manuscript whose major contents include the Apologeticus of Cyril of Alexandria, 85 of Seneca’s Epistulae
Morales ad Lucilium, and – perhaps not coincidentally – a “Libellus de iv virtutibus” (“little book of four virtues”), also carries within it “Diagrams of two hands, with a subject of meditation inscribed on each joint or part,” one of which carries the same “Dat manus hec doctis...” label familiar from the Add. 10392 example. The Jesus manuscript postdates Add. 10392, but is evidence that the specific hands found there may not have been original.

f. 182v, Brief Excerpts, Including Lists of Sins and Virtues

The brief lists on this page are very similar in content and form to the collections of lists on ff. 2v-5v. They likely represent more opportunistic filling of available space with small items.

f. 183r, “Proverbs” by Chaucer or Pseudo-Chaucer

See Benson and Robinson, Riverside, 657; George B. Pace and Alfred David, eds., A Variorum Edition of the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, vol. 5, part 1 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982), 195–200. In other manuscripts, the proverb is the second of two, but Add. 10392 presents only four lines (with Latin titles):

Interrogacio \quid/ Juuens ·

þis wordle is of so grete a space ·

hyt wolle not in my armes tweyn ·

Responsio Sapientis ·

Ho þat alle þinge wolle embrace ·
lytelle þinges may hym sustene ·

This brief passage represents the only English in the manuscript. The poem may be by Chaucer, or it may not. Two manuscripts (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fairfax 16 and British Library, Harley 7578) assign it to his authorship, and it is this traditional attribution that represents the strongest argument for its place in the Chaucerian canon. Arguments against Chaucer’s authorship frequently center around the rather clumsy quality of the rhyme, particularly a “compas”/“embrace” rhyme that is not carried in the Add. 10392 version. Indeed, this manuscript’s version is extremely eccentric within the tradition. Other manuscripts employ a significantly different phrasing:

Of all this worlde / the large compace
Yt wil not / in myn Armes tweye
Whoo so mochel wol / embrace
Litel therof / he shal distreyne 786

Whether Cok himself would have considered the poem Chaucerian is open to question. The poem is not labeled as Chaucer’s in John Shirley’s manuscript (British Library, Add. 16165) 787, and since Shirley and Cok were associates, it would not be unreasonable to assume that Cok may have learned of the poem from him. Given the Add. 10392 version’s considerable variation from Add. 16165’s text (and indeed from all other extant texts), this scenario leaves open the question of why, were Shirley Cok’s source for the poem, the two versions do not resemble each other more closely. Ultimately, Pace and

787 Benson and Robinson, Riverside, 1089.
David assert that “the question [of Chaucer’s authorship] cannot be finally resolved,” concluding that while the proverbs are “hardly a poem at all,” nevertheless, “we should be grateful to possess all verse that has survived from the Middle Ages,” Chaucerian or not. And while the editors of the *Riverside* make clear that the Chaucerian attribution is by no means certain, they also present it as belonging to an editorial tradition that has treated it as part of the great man’s *œuvre*.

To the right of this poem are a series of short Latin proverbs, added later. The script is a very casual one, and it is not clear whether the hand is Cok’s.

Comendet morte si | clauseris hostia post te | Si quis te coripit non te sed que facis odit |
Numquam de minimis multum cures alie<nis> | Sed tua quot mala sunt tu discute semper |
ad vnquem

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788 *Variorum Chaucer*, 5, part 1:198, 196.
APPENDIX C:

COK’S NOTES IN CAMBRIDGE, CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE MS 80

The following is the comprehensive list of all marginalia in the hand of John Cok (c. 1393-c. 1468),789 in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 80. The manuscript’s main texts are the sole extant copies of two verse romances by Henry Lovelich, The History of the Holy Grail and Merlin, translations of the Vulgate Estoire del Saint Graal and Merlin, respectively.

f. 21ra, at Lovelich, History, XXII.284: “γ", manicule
21ra, at XXII.290: “γ vij\teml membra | anime · I cok” (underbracket)790
21ra, at XXII.296: “γ totum istum | passum” (underbracket)
22ra, at XXII.317: “γ cok / ” (underbracket)
21rb, at XXII.325: “γ de casu luciferi” (underbracket)
21va, at XXIII.55: “γ cok de visione | Morderayn Regis” (underbracket)
21vb, at XXIII.88: “γ cok per totum” (underbracket)
22ra, at XXIII.166: “γ cok bene” (underbracket)

789 Etherton, “Cok, John."

790 Cok has also written interlinear Arabic numerals over each of the virtues enumerated in the text, Lovelich, History, XXII.288–291: 1 (swetnesse), 2 (Good Religiows), 3 (pyte), 4 (reuercence), 5 (vnite), 6 (Innocense) and 7 (Mercye).

22vb, at XXIII.371: “γ de tempesta | te post tempta | cionem Regis” (side bracket)

23ra, at XXIII.420: “γ de fame Regis · ”

23ra, at XXIII.435: “γ de descricione volucris · ”

23rb, at XXIII.484: “γ de natura volucris demonstrata Regi · ”

23rb, at XXIII.523: “γ per totum quod Cok”

23va, at XXIII.557: “γ de Scipilione volucre mirabile”

23vb, at XXIII.628: “γ quomodo post · 7.teml · dies dominus | confortaut Mordreyns | Regem in mare &cetera” (side bracket)

23vb, at XXIII.651: “γ quomodo dyabolus apropinquat | ad temptandum Regem” (side bracket)

24ra, at XXIII.691: “γ de paciencia Regis”

24rb, at XXIV.4: “γ de mirabile v[i]sione fantastica per d[yabolum] | facta Regi Mordreyns in mare [&cetera]”

24rb, at XXIV.26: “γ de equo infra nauem &cetera”

24va, at XXIV.53: “[γ] de fantastica & | dyabolica illusione | [fac]ta Regi in mare” (side bracket)


24va, at XXIV.92: “[γ] per totum quod cok · ”

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791 Some of the text has been lost where the outer edge of the page is trimmed off.

792 The word “v[i]sione” in fact reads “vsione,” but Cok’s intent is clear. Some text has been lost to trimming at the edge of the page.

793 Text has been lost to trimming at the edge of the page. The restored word facta is speculative, but seems likely when this note is compared to that on f. 24rb, at Lovelich, History, XXIV.4, where similar phrasing is employed.

794 Text has been lost to trimming at the edge of the page and is here tentatively restored.
24vb, at XXIV.120: “quamdo dominus confortuit | Regem post temptacionem” (side bracket)

24vb, at XXIV.147: “quomodo dominus manifestauit omnia | dyabolicafigmenta in | temptando Regem &cetera” (side bracket)

30rb, at XXVIII.225: “γ γ”

30va, at XXVIII.244: “γ γ”

30va, at XXVIII.254: “nota per totum · ”

56vb, at XLI.218: “γ cok”

64ra, at XLV.2: “quomodo Iosephus evijt | de castello Gala | fort per provinciam predicans evangeliu | Et quomodo captus fuit | per Regem Cruelx | <Northumbrie> Et | incarceratus <qui> fuit | Rex Northgallie · &cetera”

64rb, at XLV.57: “Quomodo vox divina apparuit | Iosepho & socijs suis in | carcere confortans eos · ” (side bracket)

68va, at XLVI.438: “γ Cok” (underbracket)

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795 The loss of text to trimming elsewhere along this page-edge, coupled with the prevalence “γ” as a prefix in Cok’s notes, leads me to postulate that, before trimming, this note too once carried a “γ”.

796 There are two characters in this romance with similar names: Joseph of Arimathea, and his son, Josephes. Because Cok makes many of his notes in Latin, this would require him to choose Latinate forms for these names, rather than simply to rely on the spelling provided in the adjacent English text, and, most critically, to choose a declension and endings for each of the names. It is by no means apparent that he has in fact done so consistently, and there is some evidence that he may have resisted making such a decision: while I have attempted to expand his abbreviations, he frequently dodges the issue by ending the proper name with an ambiguous mark of abbreviation (see ff. 72vb and 73rb, at Lovelich, History, XLIX.323 and L.31). In this particular note there is, furthermore, some ambiguity as to whether Cok intends to refer to Joseph or Josephes: Josephes is the obvious referent, as the individual the text itself names as principal actor in these lines, but he is accompanied by “his Fadir” (ibid., XLV.2). Cok’s 9-shaped –us abbreviation here is unambiguous and may be intended to reinvent the vernacular “Josephes” as a Latin “Josephus” in the second declension. Other mentions of “Joseph[?]” in Cok’s notes, however, refer not to Josephes, but to Joseph of Arimathea his father, on one occasion unambiguously second declension (On f. 69rb, at ibid., XLV.57 and XLVII.164). It is seems, therefore, that Cok simply does not fully distinguish between the forms for Joseph and Josephes. No notes provide “Joseph[?]” with unambiguous endings in anything but the second declension, and so I have consistently transcribed this name as second declension throughout.

797 The words Northumbrie and qui were cancelled by Cok himself, apparently as he was writing the note.
68va, at XLVI.439: “
how kinge Mordraynes whan he was made bykynde commendinge the kepinge of h's wyf & h's scheld vnto Nasciens here broþre”
(side bracket)

68va, at XLVI.448: “per totum Cok”

68va, at XLVI.497: (manicule), “” , “I Cok”

68va, at XLVI.501: “Sir Robert of Borroun þyl/ turnyd þis oute of latyne in to ffrenshe” (side bracket)

68vb, at XLVII.48: “de falsissimo Rege Agrestes” (side bracket)

69ra, at XLVII.68: “de simulata christianite Regis Agrestes ·” (underbracket)

69ra, at XLVII.75: “Cok ·” (underbracket), “per totum” (underbracket)

69ra, at XLVII.104: manicule

69ra, at XLVII.116: “bene”

69rb, at XLVII.147: “bene Cok” (underbracket)

69rb, at XLVII.156: “per totum” (underbracket)

69rb, at XLVII.164: “quomodo Rex Agrestes occidi fecit xij viros optimos consanguineos Iosephi Aramathie” (underbracket and side bracket)

69rb, at XLVII.187: “cok per totum” (underbracket)

72va, at XLIX.246: “at þe preyer of Ioseph hou ðe mawmetys were brende in þe/ forest of brooklond” (side bracket)

72va, at XLIX.278: “declaracioun of þe feiþ by Ioseph”

72va, at XLIX.299: “de saraceno Mathegranis”

72vb, at XLIX.323: “cok”, “de virtute oracionis Iosephi fidelis”

72vb, at XLIX.330: “bene de conversione saraceni post mortem &cetera”

72vb, at XLIX.337: “bene cok ·”

72vb, at XLIX.353: “cok”

72vb, at XLIX.364: “de baptismo · sarazenorum”
73ra, at XLIX.373: “γ bene · ”

73ra, at XLIX.384: “γ bene miraculum · ”

73ra, at XLIX.403: “γ bene cok · ”

73ra, at XLIX.405: “γ de morte &cetera | Mathegranj” *(side bracket)*

73ra, at L.6: “γ þe forest of | Darnauntys · ” *(side bracket)*

73ra, at L.11: “γ per totum”

73rb, at L.31: “γ de concilio Iosephi · ”

73rb, at L.40: “γ”

73rb, at L.51: “γ de albo Cerno cum | quatuor leonibus” *(side bracket)*, “per totum · ”

73rb, at L.76: “γ de transuectione Iosephi | cum socijs suis vltra |quam · sed exceptus chanaan · | scilicet propter peccatum &cetera · ” *(side bracket)*

127rb, at Lovelich, *Merlin*, line 10251: “γ henre louelich skynnere | þw/ translated þs/ boke oute | of ffrensshe into englysshe | at þe instaunce of harry | bartoun”
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