REWRITE THIS BOOK: COMPILATION AND EXPERIMENTAL LITERARY PRACTICES IN *PIERS PLOWMAN* AND LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLISH BOOK CULTURE

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"Rewrite this Book" argues that medieval English bookmakers created bound works with aggregate and varied contents akin to earlier compilations and compendia. These objects, which I call "mixed-manuscripts" are often anonymously produced, contain many works by different writers and in different genres, serve as the material grounds for associative reading not directed by a compiler's notes or evaluations, and are fertile ground for associative thought and creative production. These mixed objects were constructed by hand both by amateurs and professionals to protect, collect, and associate texts with each other, forming textual 'societies' between the covers of a book. Within these books, clusters of regularly associated medieval texts began to circulate in small, stable groups of 'textual companions,' appear together in several different manuscripts. Some late medieval poetry, *Piers Plowman* chief among them, took these mixed structures as a compositional model and crafted intricately associative poetical works rooted in companion networks.

Chapter one reads the Vernon manuscript as a mixed-manuscript which contains "Ypotis" and the Middle English "Castle of Love" which together present Christian political thought in vernacular poetry, giving its lay audience an idealized fantasy of political harmony. Chapter two reads across *Piers Plowman* from the Peace in Passus 4 to the Peace in 18 and unites them allegorically to picture of 'peace' personifying across gender, social position, and poetic space. Adapting Grosseteste's *Castle* into later versions of *Piers Plowman* produces an

unsteady instantiation of the concept which reveals difference in 'peace' afforded to the farmer-Peace of passus 4 and that brought about by the noble daughter of the king in passus 18. Chapter three examines the conversation between Meed and Conscience, the episode of the Pardon, and Imaginatif's bookish suggestions as examples of allegorizations trying to cope with the textual complications of the poem's expansion via integration of external texts. Chapter four argues that *boke* of John Colyns, which contains early versions of John Skelton's poetry alongside the established stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, radicalizes *Morte* with Skelton verse and protects the same through its association with the politically dull *Morte*. Colyns thus imagines that his boke is destined to make Skelton great, but the laureate updates and collects his poems in print, authorizing himself for fame and political security.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Seth John Strickland was born in Buffalo, New York and grew up largely in the state of Maine. He holds a BA in English Literature and Classics from Hillsdale College and an MA in English Literature from Saint Louis University. At Cornell, he has received the Alan Young-Bryant Poetry Award and the Truman Capote PhD Writer's Award for his work in poetry and multimedia productions. He is the 2022-2023 Joseph F. Martino '53 Lecturer in Undergraduate Teaching in Cornell's Department of Literatures in English

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“Et puis j’aime repérer le détail que personne ne verra jamais”

-Amélie

Wherefore y presumenge of that charite, whiche,
as Seynte Gregory seythe in an Omely,
ministrethe strenightes, schalle prosecute my processe, perauenture
contemptible to fastidious men, but as y iugge not
vnprofttable to goode studentes. Makenge an entre in to
the feldes of olde men, folowenge the scherers after my knowpower,
gedrenge the eres of cornes remanent, or elles cromes
fallenge from the table of lordes, whiche replete lefte frag-
mente to theire childre and successores, gedrenge the litelle
partes to men hungre of the fragmentes of the cophinnes
remanent, schalle adde somme thynge to the labores of auctores.

- Ranulf Hidgen, trans. John Trevisa, BL Harley MS 2261 version

INTRODUCTION: MIXING THE RECORDS

Broad banks

Imagine that you’re sitting on a grassy bank by a quiet stream, ducks land on the quiet water, cutting wakes into the rippled reflection of the trees around it. Looking down at the book in your hand, you read

drive my bundles
to the junkyard, bring
kerosene for a
lusher flame

You take your finger out of the book you’ve been reading and look back at the page of poetry but a page or two has slipped. The poem you begin reading now is different,

shoulder. my my what color

are the bands of amaranth pendulous. the showy

hollyhocks brighten their own

faces. a pesky picture always jutting

flits just out of frame the foliage

still growing the trees frighten

[1]

and you misread 'frame' as 'flame.' Then you wonder, 'what colors are amaranth and hollyhocks?' Both red. You see that the first poem, once a thing of cloth, flame, and cuts is full of plants, seeds, soil, a lush garden of germinating promise. The 'frame' and 'pesky picture' of redbursting flowers in the second poem, bent and tinted by the glass, become "simplified colors" bent and darkened to flame-like tints.[2] The slip brings each poem new life and encourages a resonance at once deep and delicate, a soft web between ostensibly separate poems in the open heart of the reader.

~

The spark of beauty that flashes between pieces composed separately and united materially undergirds the following pages and fuels the interpretations therein. This dissertation is, in part, an appreciation for the accidental, for the gentle touch, for quiet arrangement, and for the fact that attention paid to pairings perpetuates them.[3] Most of all, this is an appreciation for physical books, which have given me so much and seem to be an endangered and exotic species

[1] tvverk, "Kelly Hoffer," February 1, 2022, https://tagvverk.info/2022/02/01/kelly-hoffer/.
[2] Amelia Soth, "The Claude Glass Revolutionized the Way People Saw Landscapes," JSTOR Daily, February 18, 2021, https://daily.jstor.org/the-claude-glass-revolutionized-the-way-people-saw-landscapes/.
[3] Production and maintenance of physical productions remains important. In "A Roundtable on the Contemporary Literary Magazine" (2008), Jill Allyn Rosser maintains, "it's still needed, the physical object, and I think it lasts longer than any [digital] archive. Well, we don't know yet, but the online archiving systems could all go kablooey one day, whereas the book is there as long as the library doesn't burn down" (39). Later in the roundtable, Eli Horowitz remarks, "When we're making a book and when we're making a print journal, we're making a thing, and so we tend to try and make the thingiest thing possible" (41) – that is, the planned existence of a *thing*, an actual book, is, to this day, a planned and considered undertaking with its object-ness in mind. Jill Allyn Rosser et al., "A Roundtable on the Contemporary Literary Magazine," *Mississippi Review* 36, no. 3 (2008): 34–61.

in ordinary life. I have come to appreciate the dark undergrowth of medieval books, the strange snapshots produced with great care more than six hundred years ago. This project seeks to accomplish two goals: the first is to show the value of reading medieval works in their manuscript contexts; the second to show that this method of contextualized reading undergirds a new mode of authorship appearing in the 13th and 14th centuries, which is exemplified with extraordinary power in *Piers Plowman*. [4]

Mixed-content manuscripts and the relationship between mental and physical books are the 'broad banks' between which many late medieval compositions operate. Many Middle English manuscripts, especially those of the late medieval period, appear 'mixed' in their content. "Mixed," a descriptor of *material* production, refers to an assemblage of works not easily categorized by common authorship, genre, or other category we might usually use to distinguish one bound book from another. Composed in this way, books function as a textual form of human experience – an attempt at recreating an object capable at mirroring, informing, inspiring, and entertaining each small turn of human existence. Just as human experience is some mixture of love, fear, devotion, boredom, necessary work, and ecstatic joy, mixed-manuscripts have a piece for every moment in life, whether good or ill. These books resemble miniature libraries whose scale encourages consideration of more than one piece in a sitting.

[4] A matrix-based approach echoes Stephen Nichols's critique of Bédier: "Far from encouraging focus on the manuscript matrix, however, Bédier's insistence on a single manuscript had the effect of putting that manuscript into a relationship with its printed edition analogous to that of a unique manuscript of a modern printed book" *The New Philology* p. 6. A single manuscript alone is not enough – a manuscript's internal network is best understood when it is further networked with previous and contemporary manuscripts together. We can thus better hope to answer questions of 'how important is this conjunction' and 'how regularly are these read together' in the world of manuscripts to which those questions are essentially important. It is hard to shake the spectre of print when reading print and writing in the instantaneous print of word processing. Nichols urges us to do so, and I attempt in this project to further his efforts in imagining a hand-first look at literary culture.

John Trevisa, the 14th-century translator of Ranulf Higden, writes that a writer's job is selection and admixture in order to produce material both useful (like a medicine) and pleasant (like a spoonful of sugar):

> the nowble wryters of artes, to whom hit was **a** pleasure in this life presente to fixe theire studies and laboures abowte the knowlege of thynges and virtues moralle, thei ar to be enhauntlede and exaltede by merite with grete preconyes, as makenge a cominixtion of a thynge profitable with a swetenesse mellifluous
>
> [the noble writers of arts to whom it was a pleasure in this life present to focus their studies and labor on the knowledge of things and moral virtues; those are to be enchanted and exulted by merit with great praise, as making a mixture of a useful thing with a honey-like sweetness]

Writers mix the virtuous and the entertaining, the good and the fun, the serious and the light.[5] In his translation of Ranulph Higden, Trevisa explains that mixed compositions (which he calls a 'polychronichon' or 'tractatus') are more effective at showing order of experience:

> Thaughe the figmentes of gentiles and dictes of ethnikes be inmixte to this werke thei do seruyce to the Cristen religion and feythe. For it was lawefulle to Virgille the nowble poette to seche the golde of sapience in the cleye of Ennius the poete, and to the childer of Israel goenge in to the londe of promissien to spoile men of Egiptie.In whom alle things excerpte of oþer men ar broken in to smalle members but concorporate here liniamentally; thynges of disporte be admixte with saddenes, and dictes ethnicalle to thynges religious, that the ordre of the processe may be obseruede[6]
>
> [Though the fables of gentiles and maxims of ethics are intermixed in this work, they benefit the Christian religion and faith. For it was allowable for Vergil the noble poet to seek the gold of wisdom in the clay of Ennius the poet and for the children of Israel to go into the promised land to despoil the men of Egypt. In whom all things excerpts of other men are broken into small members but con-corporate {of the same body} here limbly; things of merry-making are admixed with serious issues, and ethical maxims with religious things, so that the order of the narrative might be observed]

[5] Neil Hathaway reminds modern readers of Isadore's pigment metaphor – compositional mixing for Isadore resembles mixing pigments for colors rather than mining or plundering. "*Compilatio*: From Plagiarism to Compiling", *Viator,* 20 (1989).

[6] Higden, Ranulf. *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden, Monachi Cestrensis: Together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*. Edited by Joseph Rawson Lumby. Cambridge Library Collection - Rolls. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139225458, *Liber I*, p. 17.

Excerpts of other human beings' effort, concern, and traces of their emotional lives are broken into small pieces and arranged in sensible order. Mixture is a key component of composition for Trevisa – excellence must be extracted and reworked, whether it results in the "gold of sapience" or the survival of the nation of Israel. Breaking larger works down, taking what seems good, and recombining in an admixture of a variety of sources is the basic notion of composition, something that Trevisa harnesses for the 'processe' of his own book, thus putting himself in the company of the nation of Israel and the poet Vergil. Above all, this material mixture reflects the mental process of association that makes up the foundation of thought.

Tolle, lege

Imagining a 'book' as a mode of cognition enmeshed in the concept and, often, instantiations of physical archives stretch back at least to the work of Augustine and his use of the term 'book,' which translates at least two separate terms in Augustine's work: *liber* and *codex*. This ancient divide collapses in late medieval England, becoming *boke*, which is the term that describes both the physical object and the mental referent to this day. Using only 'book' for both these instances undermines Augustine's subtle and consistent codicological vocabulary. For example, in *Contra Faustum Manichaean* XXII, he suggests that Faustus, widely famed for his learning, might contain within himself what is now translated 'book' of error: "Where Faustus read this I know not, unless it was in his own heart, as in a book of impious delusions" (49)[7] This example supplies 'book' for 'liber,' using a metaphor of reading for both Faustus's engagement with his source text and with his memory of it. Augustine knows not 'where' Faustus read it – i.e. in what volume, unless it is the 'volume' of his internalized memory, the *liber* of his heart.

[7] Translated by Richard Stothert. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140632.htm>.

When Augustine refutes the Manichean gospel's accuracy in *Contra Faustum* XXXII, he uses *codex* to refer to the physical copies of texts. Independently agreeing texts copied in several languages and in different manuscripts is a codicological claim to truth. Augustine explains:

> Your only answer to this would be, that you could not possibly alter documents already in the possession of all Christians; for at the very outset of such an attempt, it would be met by an appeal to older copies. But if this proves that the books (*codices*) could not be corrupted by you, it also proves that they could not be corrupted by any one. The first person who ventured to do such a thing would be convicted by a comparison of older manuscripts (*codicum*); especially as the Scripture is to be found not in one language only, but in many. As it is, false readings (*codicum mendosiades*) are sometimes corrected by comparing older copies or the original language. Hence you must either acknowledge these documents as genuine, and then your heresy cannot stand a moment (16)[8]

Conversely, for Augustine, *natura* is a liber – a remembered, encountered interpretation of a physical entity. Faustus's errors, Augustine argues, compound because he has read the book of nature looking to find fault rather than profundity and unity:

> your idea of what is evil is derived entirely from the effect on your senses of such disagreeable things as serpents, fire, poison, and so on; and the only good you know of is what has an agreeable effect on your senses, as pleasant flavors, and sweet smells, and sunlight, and whatever else recommends itself strongly to your eyes, or your nostrils, or your palate, or any other organ of sensation. But had you begun with looking on the book of nature as the production of the Creator of all, and had you believed that your own finite understanding might be at fault wherever anything seemed to be amiss, instead of venturing to find fault with the works of God, you would not have been led into these impious follies and blasphemous fancies with which, in your ignorance of what evil really is, you heap all evils upon God (20)[9]

The 'book of nature' just like Faustus's 'book of impious delusions' refers to something identifiable, a gathered body of legible instances, and Augustine uses the same word for both: *liber*, and both uses refer to Faustus committing error. Remembered or interpreted books are

[8] Translated by Richard Stothert. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140632.htm>.

[9] Translated by Richard Stothert. From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/140632.htm>.

prone to error but are the most fruitful for making association and thought. The book of the heart is a perceptive book, *liber*, one made for personal use, the bark of the tree.[10] Textual stability is in the realm of the codex, and provide faithful exemplars for mental books Compendia, for consultation by others or a forgetful self, are *codices*, the trunk, but new codices require *libri* as an intermediate step. One consults the book of the heart, the book of the mind, *libri*, to create a *codex*, and the book of the heart was created in, in turn, by the *liber* of experience and the *codices* one reads.

Augustine's *liber cordis* has a later analogue in *Piers Plowman*'s B.15.534, which asserts that "early Christian ascetics slept 'Baddely ybedded, no book but conscience," "doubl[ing] the surprise by pungently declaring that they did not even have a book" (483) on which to lay their heads or read. The book of the conscience, on which good and bad actions are written, derives, Schmidt argues, from Alain de Lille's recasting Jerome's commentary on Daniel which discusses a *liber viventium*, a *bonus liber*, and, opposed, a *malus liber*. Alain calls condemned consciences *liber diaboli manuscriptus* in *Summa de Arte Praedicatoria* and *libri conscientiarum* in *Distinctiones Dictionum Theologicalium* and in *De fide catholica contra haereticos.*[11] The latter, a treatise against heresy, proposes error not as a misreading but as a record of sins, completing the process of composition that spans between archive and thought. In misreading nature and God, we miscopy the exemplum into the book of our conscience, the *liber conscientiae*, which records the misdeed as such. If we copy too erroneously for too long, that *liber* indicates

[10] "Charlton T. Lewis, Charles Short, A Latin Dictionary, Lĭber." n.d. Accessed July 25, 2022. http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dliber4.

[11] Schmidt, A. V. C. 1982. "Langland's 'Book of Conscience' and Alanus de Insulis." *Notes and Queries* 29 [227] (6): 482–84. https://discovery-ebsco-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/linkprocessor/plink?id=ad8c4b1c-2d96-3037-a9b9-9df9bc5cdfe3.

habituated instinct, 'second nature'. Copy too much in the *malus liber*, and it becomes *liber cordis*.

In *Confessions*, Augustine furthers his distinctions between mental formulations and the physical instantiations of the works from which they are extracted. In the eighth book, Augustine's distinctions form the backbone of his conversion experience. Happenstance of the physical plays a major role in creating his mental *liber* – Augustine has physical copies of the letters of Paul scattered around his living quarters, which a surprise visitor, Ponticianus, happens across:

> Conf. 8.6.14: et forte supra mensam lusoriam quae ante nos erat attendit codicem. tulit, aperuit, invenit apostolum Paulum, inopinate sane: putaverat enim aliquid de libris quorum professio me conterebat.
>
> By change he noticed a book on top of a gaming table which lay before us. He picked it up, opened it, and discovered, much to his astonishment, that it was the apostle Paul. He had expected it to be one of the books used for the profession which was wearing me out[12]

Augustine calls his book a *codex* when he refers to a physical volume, something that is instantiated, has pages, is physically before him. The book *supra mensam* is thus *codicem*, but when the bishop refers to the books he uses professionally, he calls them *libris*, i.e. works which are not physically present and are more important for their mental content – i.e. something I recall in my work – than the physical instantiation. Mental perception of the book is countermanded by the physical copy, and Ponticianus finds it *inopine sane* – genuinely surprising. Alypius's surprise becomes a picture of Augustine's skepticism – just when his friend thought that he could predict Augustine's actions and habits, Augustine surprises him by owning and reading a different volume than he thought. Actual existence both forms and surprises

[12] Chadwick, Henry, ed. 1998. *Confessions*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, p. 72.

expectations, and surprise forms expectations: the codex forms the liber, and the liber the codex.

Codicological chance, in the form of *sorte sactorum,* erupts beyond the confines of Augustine's house – a few lines later, Ponticianus tells how he learned about the Life of Antony, which he recommends to Augustine and Alypius.[13]

> 8.6.15: sed illos vagabundos inruisse in quandam casam ubi habitabant quidam servi tui spiritu pauperes, qualium est regnum caelorum, et invenisse ibi codicem in quo scripta erat vita Antonii.
>
> In their wanderings they happened on a certain house where there lived some of your servants, poor in spirit: 'of such is the kingdom of heaven.' They found there a book in which was written the Life of Antony.[14]

Entering a house that they found by chance, Ponticianus's friends come across a book (*codex*) in the house of Christians they met by chance. A glancing encounter with a passage in a book changes the course of one friend's life. Augustine's engagement with codices rewrites the narrative around a bookish chance encounter. Chance encounter and the resulting surprise from 'chance' encounters are essential for human meaning-making; surprise indicates a paradigm shift or high-impact revelation. It accumulates a sort of residue – a sense that it has been labored over and treasured – as it is created, gathered, and placed resonates with those who interact with it. These changes are often minor, but, as in the case with Ponticianus's friend, changes can override previous prediction patterns to create one that is entirely new. These chance encounters build the book of the mind, but the *codex*, i.e. a textual object with pages that can be turned, flipped open, and indexed, provided new (for Augustine) opportunities for surprise that have not diminished.

[13] "Defining the Sortes Sanctorum: Gibbon, Du Cange, and Early Christian Lot Divination" William E. Klingshirn for distinction between *sortes biblicae* and *sortes sanctorum*.
[14] Chadwick, Henry, ed. 1998. *Confessions*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, p. 73.

Augustine's epistemology undergirds his retelling of his conversion experience. Whether Augustine really heard a child chanting 'tolle lege,' take up, read, or not is immaterial, given that he "aliud interpretans divinitus," takes the verbal leak from across the wall as a divine injunction to which he was sensitive in his raw emotional state. This *codex* which sat before him was, incidentally (or providentially), the same that Ponticianus had marveled at earlier in his narrative, the letters of Paul.[15] Antony, the saint only recently brought to his attention, serves as Augustine's model for reading.

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[15] 8.12.29: Dicebam haec et flebam amarissima contritione cordis mei. Et ecce audio vocem de vicina domo cum cantu dicentis et crebro repetentis, quasi pueri an puellae, nescio: 'tolle lege, tolle lege.' statimque mutato vultu intentissimus cogitare coepi utrumnam solerent pueri in aliquo genere ludendi cantitare tale aliquid.nec occurrebat omnino audisse me uspiam, repressoque impetu lacrimarum surrexi, nihil aliud interpretans divinitus mihi iuberi nisi ut aperirem codicem et legerem quod primum caput invenissem. audieram enim de Antonio quod ex evangelica lectione cui forte supervenerat admonitus fuerit, tamquam sibi diceretur quod legebatur: `vade, vende omnia quae habes, et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelis; et veni, sequere me,' et tali oraculo confestim ad te esse conversum. itaque concitus redii in eum locum ubi sedebat Alypius: ibi enim posueram codicem apostoli cum inde surrexeram. arripui, aperui et legi in silentio capitulum, quo primum coniecti sunt oculi mei: non in comissationibus et ebrietatibus, non in cubilibus et inpudicitiis, non in contentione et aemulatione, sed induite dominum Iesum Christum, et carnis providentiam ne feceritis in concupiscentiis. nec ultra volui legere, nec opus erat. statim quippe cum fine huiusce sententiae, quasi luce securitatis infusa cordi meo, omnes dubitationis tenebrae diffugerunt. Tum interiecto aut digito aut nescio quo alio signo, codicem clausi, et tranquillo iam vultu indicavi Alypio. at ille quid in se ageretur -- quod ego nesciebam -- sic indicavit. petit videre quid legissem: ostendi, et adtendit etiam ultra quam ego legeram, et ignorabam quid sequeretur. sequebatur autem: infirmum vero in fide recipite. quod ille ad se rettulit mihique aperuit. sed tali admonitione firmatus est, placitoque ac proposito bono (et congruentissimo suis moribus, quibus a me in melius iam olim valde longeque distabat), sine ulla turbulenta cunctatione coniunctus est. inde ad matrem ingredimur, indicamus: gaudet. narramus, quemadmodum gestum sit: exultat et triumphat, et benedicebat tibi, qui potens es ultra quam petimus aut intellegimus facere, quia tanto amplius sibi a te concessum de me videbat, quam petere solebat miserabilibus flebilibusque gemitibus. convertisti enim me ad te, ut nec uxorem quaererem nec aliquam spem saeculi huius, stans in ea regula fidei, in qua me ante tot annos ei revelaveras: et convertisti luctum eius in gaudium, multo uberius, quam voluerat, et multo carius atque castius, quam de nepotibus carnis meae requirebat.

As I was saying this and weeping in the bitter agony of my heart, suddenly I heard a voice from the nearby house chanting as if it might be a boy or a girl (I do not know which), saying and repeating over and over again 'Pick up and read, pick up and read.' At once my countenance changed, and I began to think intently whether there might be some sort of children's game in which such a chant is used. But I could not remember having heard of one. I checked the flood of tears and stood up. I interpreted it solely as a divine command to me to open the book and read the first chapter I might find. For I had heard how Antony happened to be present at the gospel reading, and took it as an admonition addressed to himself when the words were read: 'Go, sell all you have, give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me' (Matt. 19: 21).22 By such an inspired utterance he was immediately 'converted to you' (Ps. 50: 15). So I hurried back to the place where Alypius was sitting. There I had put down the book of the apostle when I got up. I seized it, opened it and in silence read the first passage on which my eyes lit: 'Not in riots and drunken parties, not in eroticism and indecencies, not in strife and rivalry, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in its lusts' (Rom. 13: 13–14). I neither wished nor needed to read further. At once, with the last words of this sentence, it was as if a light of relief from all anxiety flooded into my heart. All the shadows of doubt were dispelled. (30) Then I inserted my finger or some other mark in the book

When a passage of the gospel strikes Antony's heart, he takes the passage from Matthew as literal instructions for action, as having a special resonance in that moment. Augustine returns to his book, opens it to the first passage he sees, and finds his own maxim in Paul's letter to the Romans, which, once found, becomes his life's organizing principle like Lady Meed's "omnia probate" or Pier's "Do wel and have wel. and God shal have thi soule,' / And " Do yvel and have yvel, and hope thow noon oother / That after thi deeth day the devel shal have thi soule!'" Convinced by this special resonance, Augustine radically changes his life after this *coitus litterarum*, a planetary alignment of literary happenstance. Alypius turns the page to add more context to Augustine's revelatory passage, to ensure that he did not excerpt too aggressively, and finds "Now him that is weak in faith, take unto you: not in disputes about thoughts" (Rom. 14:1). He takes this as an injunction to accept Augustine in the faith and not to quibble about *disceptationibus cogitationum*, debates concerning reasoning, affirming Augustine's instinct to receive the conjunction of the child's chant, Ponticianus's retelling of the Life of Antony, and the letters of Paul as a mixture experienced together in a single interpretive act fictionalized in *Confessions*.

Augustine creates a mental 'book' through encounters with *codices* and the 'lyric' that children chant nearby and represents it in documentary fashion in *Confessions*. Augustine's experience was salvific, a healing of the soul in the most radical and profound manner. He gives his readers the bookish account not because he expects that they will be able to recreate it but

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and closed it. With a face now at peace I told everything to Alypius. What had been going on in his mind, which I did not know, he disclosed in this way. He asked to see the text I had been reading. I showed him, and he noticed a passage following that which I had read. I did not know how the text went on; but the continuation was 'Receive the person who is weak in faith' (Rom. 14: 1). Alypius applied this to himself, and he made that known to me. From Saint Augustine trans. Henry Chadwick, *The Confessions* (OUP Oxford, 2008).

because he wants to trace the constellation that led to his conversion. No book is a magical book unless it is: a collection will impress meaning upon different readers differently at different times. The medieval mixed-manuscript is an attempt to technologize the experience of happenstance – still one codex, the possibilities for imaginative recombination increase with the variety of works and the diversity of arrangement. Augustine's relationship with books is analogous to his theory of signs: the book of the heart is legible in its entirety to the individual but only in part, via physical instantiation, to those without.[16] Writing the *codex* is a sign of the *liber cordis*, whether the codex is largely the product of arrangement or of assertion.

'Reading' the book of the heart as a metaphor for memory became common among those most influenced by Augustine. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, reads his own memory as if it were a book given to him by God. Take this account of Thomas Aquinas's composition process, from Mary Carruthers's *Book of Memory*:

> we are told over and over again that Thomas's flow to his secretaries was unceasing: it ''ran so clearly that it was as if the master were reading aloud from a book under his eyes.'' He dictated ''as if a great torrent of truth were pouring into him from God. Nor did he seem to be searching for things as yet unknown to him; he seemed simply to let his memory pour out its treasures.'' And again, ''When perplexed by a difficulty he would kneel and pray and then, on returning to his writing or dictation, he was accustomed to find that his thought had become so clear that it seemed to show him inwardly, as in a book, the words he needed.'[17]

This account of memory is certainly exceptional – the regular comparison of mind to a 'book' reminds us that Thomas himself "makes this assumption about books in a comment on Ps. 69:28 (''Let them be blotted from the book of life''): A thing is said metaphorically to be written on the mind of anyone when it is firmly held in the memory . . . For things are written down in material

[16] Brian Stock's *Augustine the Reader* correlates the importance of reading to Augustine with his theory of signs outlined in *De doctrina Christiana*.
[17] Carruthers, Mary J., and Professor and Fellow Mary J. Carruthers. 1990. *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*. Cambridge University Press, p. 20.

books to help the memory" (9). When things are written down in material books, it so closely resembles the creation of memory (at least in use) that the 'metaphorical' writing we might say is the creation of a 'mental book,' mining a codex for a liber.

In the late Middle Ages, Augustine's *liber* and *codex* have been translated into a single word: Middle English 'boke. *Bok*, like book, refers both to a mental concept or a unit for reference in the way that *liber* does as well as to a physical instantiation of a codex. We can see an example of this in Ranulf Higden's prologue, translated into Middle English by John Trevisa, who writes "I haue y-kast and y-ordeyned..to write a tretes, i-gadered of dyuerse bookes, of þe staat of þe ylonde of Britayne".[18] The conceptual scale of book is variable and plastic, of a treatise less variable in that it is generally more content-heavy and less plastic since a treatise is considered complete in the sense that its authors generally use the word for to describe an already-ossified object. The widely-read penitential text, *Pricke of Conscience,* refers to itself and each of its parts as being a 'boke'.[19] But how do we distinguish between whether this use

[18] The idea of a treatise, exemplified in Trevisa's Higden, Nicholas Love, Robert Grosseteste, Geoffrey Chaucer, the so-called "Book of Quintessence", etc. emphasizes the derived essence of the production – the 'handling' of a topic or sources. Compare Robert Mannyng's the "Handlynge of Sinne," a treatise-equivalent term without a Latinate derivation. For emphasis on the physical nature, "manual" refers to the physical volume, the instantiation. Trevisa translates "manual" "þat ys an handboke" (Waldron p 1). Rolls Series, Vol. 6 p 353). 'Boke,' however, covers the widest swath of meanings; it is qualified, as above, to refer to specific sorts or aspects of the possibility; *passus, capitum*, or *boke* refer to parts. *Treatise* or *boke* to a whole.

[19] *Pricke* also calls the conscience a book:

> First sal pair awen conscience,
> Accuse þam þan in Cristes presence,
> Openly and noght in privete;
> For na thyng þan sal hidde be,
> Alle thyng sal be shewed þar oppenly;
> For Danyel says þus in his prophecy:
> *"Sedit indicium et libri aperti sunt."*
> "the dome satt and þe bokes er oppen wyde";
> And pus sal þe sene bat tyde.
> *Pe* bokes er conscience and noght elles,
> Als þe glose þar-on þus telles:
> *Consaencie omnibus revelabumur.*
> "Conscience", it says, "of ilka thyng
> Sal be shewed til alle mens knawyng (5440-53)

refers to a material instance and a mental instance of *boke*? Within the Vernon *Pricke,* the author refers to the work as a book, to its constituent parts as bokes, and then, finally, to the completed work as a 'treatise'. The author of *Pricke* points out that experience (i.e. wandering around in the book of nature) can be distilled via physical writing:

> To speke of Monnes . wrecchednes
> For al þat is writen . to loke.
> Is bote as an entre . of a Boke (266r)
> [to speak of man's wretchedness
> To look at all that is written
> Is but an entry of a book]

All the wretchedness of man, every evil and grievous thing that has happened is 'bote an entre of a Boke' [but an entry in a book]. This passage compresses mortal sins into the same amount of space as minor account reckonings – a sort of writerly version of the lament of *Song of Songs* 'all is vanity'. It is here not that all is vanity, but that all is equally an entry in a book. This bookish nihilism, or, perhaps more accurately, bookish nominalism, according to the author of *Pricke*, is no substitute for the experience of pain. The poem continues,

> *The Pricke of Concience*
> But Men may fynde . hose wol loke
> Sum Maner of peynes . I . writen in boke
> But what mon liuinde . is so witti.
> Þat couþe telle þe peynes . propurli.
> But hit weore he . þat hedde be þore.
> And seȝe þe peynes . lasse and more
> But he þat comeþ þere . for serteyn.
> May not lihtly . comen out aȝeyn.
> He most dwelle þer . and neuer out come
> For þus seiþ þe bok . of wisdome.
> *Non est agnitus qui reuersus est ab infernis.*
> Þat to seye . Men knoweþ non.
> Þat com from helle . þat euer þider was gon. (277, *Pricke*)
> […]
> *N*ow haue I . as I . furst vndertok.

The line in *Piers*, as Edward Wilson in "Langland's 'Book of Conscience': Two Middle English Analogues and Another Possible Latin Source" suggests that the *Piers*-poet read *Pricke*, a suggestion corroborated and expanded by Thomas Kittel.

Folfild . þe seuenþe part . of þis bok.
Þat are titled . to haue in mynde
[…]
Þerfore þis tretys . drawen I . wolde.
In Englisch tonge . þat may be calde.
Prikke of Conciense . as men may fele.
[The pricke of conscience
But men may find who will look
Some manner of pains I have written in book
But what man lives is to knowledgeable
That it could tell the pains properly
But it was he who had the
And say the pains less and more
Unless he that comes here for certain
Might not come out again
He must dwell there and never come out
For thus the book of wisdom says
No one is known to have returned from hell
That is to say, men don't know
Who come from hell who ever had gone thither
[…]
Now have I as I first undertook
Fulfilled the seventh part of this book
That are titled to have in mind
[…]
Therefore I would draw this treatise
In the English tongue, which may be called
"The prick of conscience" that men may feel]

The author has written 'some maner of paynes' in a book, i.e. the book before you and his own experience, the book of Wisdom 2:1 is a source-book, each of the major parts of *Pricke* is a book, and the whole thing written in English is a 'tretys'. The author argues that this distillation is salvific, that engagement with a book is less fatal than the experience, for instance, of going to Hell; that "Sum Maner of Paynes" is not as pricking as "what mon liuinde" (fol. 270r), but that lived experience "is so witti./ Þat couþe telle þe peynes . propurli," in other words, could bear

witness to the pain properly. But, as in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, the only problem with direct experience is that it can maim or kill you.[20]

By scaling down experience into entries, and organizing them into books, we are able to experience a distilled version of the infinite pain of death by reading. Emily Steiner calls explicitly themed versions of this distillation process "medieval compendia," which she defines as "texts designed to synthesize, summarize, and organize a lot of information about a subject, or about a text or set of texts" (73). She refers primarily to unified, encyclopedic works like the *Polychronicon* rather than a mixed-manuscript, which is *like* a compendium, but composed of selected *originalia*. *Piers Plowman*, on the other hand "makes a decisive and risky break from those very works which provided its conceptual syntax, the *compendia theologicae vertitatis*"[21] by providing no guidance other than an inconsistent narrator. This absence of an explicit explicatory frame, also a remarkable feature of mixed-manuscripts, sets *Piers* apart from its educational contemporaries, from sermons, and from compendia. Its resemblance, however, of those very genres from which it clearly differs distinguishes it from its more 'literary' contemporaries. Taking Steiner's sense, *Pricke of Conscience* resembles a compendium, which is "a mode of generic thinking", where Steiner uses 'genre' as the more general 'form' to indicate navigation between forms of writing contained in the same work. Trevisa's *Polychronicon,* in the same manner, is more obviously or demonstrably concerned with guiding readers through the information and claims in directed accretion than, say, *Piers Plowman* is.[22]

[20] As Ryan Lawrence notes about *House of Fame* in the "Movement" chapter of *Material Makyng: Creativity and Environmental Perception in Late Medieval Poetry*, "Geffrey goes on to say that the stars in the sky are too bright to look at anyway, saying that it would "shenden" his "sight" to "look on hem" (1016-17).
[21] Middleton, "Audience and Public" p. 112.
[22] Emily Steiner, *John Trevisa's Information Age: Knowledge and the Pursuit of Literature, c. 1400*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780192896902.001.0001.

The broadness of the uses of the Middle English term 'boke,' when it refers to most bound textual objects of the Middle Ages, bespeaks the capacity of the term more than it equivocates. [23] Modern readers must rely on careful contextual markers to use the medieval term, much like Richard Firth Green warns against the 'false friend' *truethe* in medieval texts.[24] Tritely put, a medieval book is what someone from the Middle Ages called a book.[25] A book can be bound, unbound, hundreds of pages long, a few dozen lines long, a part of a longer poem; all told, however, a medieval book is *a conceptual unit of work usually written and always interpretable*.[26] A 'book' can be materially conceived (specific, mental or physical) and physically executed in a single instance.[27] Because a book's instantiation can be imagined, books as such can exist mentally before and in lieu of existing physically. Thus, an book, especially one with mixed contents, contains many potential books which can be mentally perceived or conceived of by a given reader; privilege is usually given to obviously demarked groupings (proximity, metatextual marks), but is not necessitated by them. The Vernon manuscript might

[23] Even critical editions are suspect – as Nichols writes, "medieval manuscripts were not books in the way printing came to define them. Nor were their contents confined solely to the literary text of the work (as one finds in critical editions, for example)" (35). The latter point I make in my final chapter.
[24] *The Crisis of Truth.*
[25] Take Galloway's summary of Hanna's argument: "he specifies two kinds of agency-one embodied in manuscripts assembled by a book vendor or owner, to whom the book or booklet would be a found object, a given unit any further changes to which would exceed the intention of the original scribe; the other in manuscripts intended by the book producer to be sub-units, designed to be "joined with other booklets in the same or a similar format" (23). The former – an object in itself – is more likely to be designated as a 'bok,' whereas the latter, unless they are themselves imagined as complete in some sense, are significantly less so. Andrew Galloway, "Uncharacterizable Entities: The Poetics of Middle English Scribal Culture and the Definitive 'Piers Plowman,'" *Studies in Bibliography* 52 (1999): 59–87.
[26] Cf. TC Sawyer, *How to Read a Medieval Book*. This is a technical definition; imagined books are usually bound in the end, which, in the words of Elise Wang, "confirms the conceptual whole."
[27] Compare to Sawyer's account of the *Apocalysis goliae episcopi*, 'the dreamer of the AGE only comes to understand his own reading experience through a close examination of multiple imagined, material books—books that originate not in physical copy but as elements of his vision. If 'he forms of manuscripts can be read alongside or as an intrinsic aspect of, the forms of literary texts,' then so too might the structures of literary texts be read alongside or as an intrinsic aspect of the books they imagine. Through its imagined material books, the AGE relates historicized scribal practices and reading practices to conceptions of self and cognitive experience" (XX).

therefore be ‘a book’ or ‘five books’ (modern editorial table of contents) or ‘394 books’ (manuscript table of contents).

The structure of these Middle English books resembles found object or conceptual art assemblages like works of 20th century artists Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso who revived the notion of found art and assemblage, though the objects they interact with are primarily sculptural, physical, and ordinary. Later in the 20th century gave rise to the mixtape as a form of personal musical production. These first gained significant popularity on cassette tapes, which are effectively two-way musical scrolls capable of infinite repetition but relatively imprecise ability to select individual tracks. The process of gathering analog mixtapes resembled the formation of some late medieval books – one largely had to stay attuned to the radio with a keen readiness to hit ‘record’ in order to get the right song for the mix, especially when it came to new releases.[28] One could also lift tracks from others with the desired albums on cassettes and, later, CDs.

Taping also marked a return of creativity and collection power to the consumer. Unlike vinyl, which encodes music in a set order and with inalterable tracks, taping enables ‘remixes,’ the copying of songs from the radio, and the dubbing over of previous, imperfect versions (in which a DJ interrupts before the end of the final outro, say). Perhaps the most perfect and suggestively powerful expression of the capacity of magnetic tape is the “medium and genre known as the mixtape, assembled and compiled from pre-existing recordings which the mixtape producer reconfigures according to their personal preference.”[29] Mike Glennon builds on Paul

[28] The history of tapes and their significance for avant-garde musical production is found in Glennon, Mike. “Consumer, Producer, Creator: The Mixtape as Creative Form.” *Organised Sound* 24, no. 2 (August 2019): 164–73. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1355771819000207.
[29] Glennon, Mike. “Consumer, Producer, Creator: The Mixtape as Creative Form.” *Organised Sound* 24, no. 2 (August 2019): 166.

Miller's definition of a 'mixed tape', which is "ultimate example of a new art object … [wherein] …the cassette arrives at a point where it is the electromagnetic equivalent of the blank canvas' and the mix 'allows the invocation of different languages, texts and sounds to converge, meld, and create a new medium that transcends its original components'.[30] The rise of noise music, homemade compilations, remixed songs that would form the backbone of hip-hop, and the potential for wooing and befriending other teenagers made 'cassette culture' nearly ubiquitous in the 1980s and 1990s. We see striking similarities between the creation of vernacular medieval books, which contained a number different kinds of content, and the making of mixtapes, which "blur[s] the lines between consumption and production, or read/write culture, [made] clear in the production of mixtapes such as *Eat Shit Noise Music*, where the mixtape creator morphs to inhabit the roles of curator, label owner or sleeve artist, and the fan, such as Clayton, who receives the tape is subsequently moved to occupy an active role in musical production."[31]

Besides mixtapes for public consumption and musical experimentation, mixtapes were also created for personal enjoyment and as markers of friendship or romance. These highly personalized productions were often, besides the plastic material of the cassette, entirely handmade, decorated for the tastes of the recipient but, most importantly, having a track listing that was at once highly personal and relies on the resonance of one track with the next to make meaning and mood. What tracks are included, the order in which they occur, and how each speaks to each transforms how the individual tracks make meaning. For instance, pairing Marvin Gaye's "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" with Switchfoot's "Only Hope" might recast the

[30] Cox, Christoph, and Daniel Warner, eds. *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum, 2004.
[31] Glennon, Mike. "Consumer, Producer, Creator: The Mixtape as Creative Form." *Organised Sound* 24, no. 2 (August 2019).

pairing as religiously devotional while replacing the second track with Third Eye Blind's "Semi-Charmed Life" might suggest romantic pursuit and Oasis's "Wonderwall" might turn Gaye's romantic lyrics from a promise to a request for that attention in the ears of the recipient. This phenomenon of significant pairing, of changing the feeling or a sense of a production by using intentionally selected and gathered material produced by other people external to the creator of the tape is the sense of 'mixing' essential to mixtapes and to mixed manuscripts.[32] This creates an aesthetic object that is something between a medium and a genre and, in turn, gives rise to new genres of artistic production following.[33]

One only need imagine the direction scholarship on medieval book history might have gone if at the beginning of every bound work named credits appeared in the form of something like, "scribal work by Peter the Naysayer and his apprentice John, collection by Adam Farrier, ordering and correction by William of York". As in the world of filmmaking, this textual/literary collaboration forms finely meshed networks of collaborative artists and technical producers; the difference between, for instance, Colyns and the compiler of Cambridge Ms. Ll.4.14 is that the former wrote *the Boke of John Colyns* in its pages and the latter did not.[34] As Matthew Fisher reminds his readers,

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[32] Compact Disk Digital Audio (CDDA) relied more on centralized distribution and also had discrete tracks, and until the popularization of CD-R and CD-RW, tapes remained by far the most malleable and least controllable forms of audio media reproduction technology.

[33] In this equation, as mixtape is to hip-hope (medium/genre producing genre), so a mixed-manuscript is to *Piers Plowman* and similar poetic productions.

[34] Nichols corroborates thinking about manuscripts as collaborative 'productions':

> The medieval folio was not raw material for text editors and art historians working separately. It contained the work of different artists or artisans - poet, scribe, illuminator, rubricator, commentator - who projected collective social attitudes as well as interartistic rivalries onto the parchment. The manuscript folio contains different systems of representation: poetic or narrative text, the highly individual and distinctive scribal hand(s) that inscribe that text, illuminated images, colored rubrications, and not infrequently glosses or commentaries in the margins or interpolated in the text. Each system is a unit independent of the others and yet calls attention to them; each tries to convey something about the other while to some extent substituting for it (7).

Like cinematographers, directors, editors, colorists, and Steadicam operators required to make the 'singular product' of a film, the makers of the largest and best manuscripts collaborated in vellum or paper 'productions'. Even when

> The true threat of scribes was their competence, not only to provide textual corrections, but precisely their ability to make the "improvements" snidely condemned by modern editors. Turning away from the great canonical poetic texts of the late fourteenth century to the historiography of medieval England makes it possible to escape some of the strictures of the moral and aesthetic foundations that have long framed editing. Reading historiographical, devotional, and romance texts in the vernaculars, it becomes exponentially more difficult to identify, let alone articulate, the differences between an average author writing average rhyming couplets in average Middle English and a scribe improving upon the rhymes of his exemplar. Indeed, it is not clear the scribes of some of these texts were working from exemplars at all.[35]

The categorical difference between 'scribe' and author is far narrower in medieval textual production than is broadly supposed in critical inquiry. Only recently have modern scholars, naturally attracted to named authors and to the author-function, begun to think of scribes less as erroneous meddlers and instead recognize them as essential co-collaborators. Composition, translation, copying, correction, and collocation were all processes of book-making. The literary production here breaks away from the clean categories that the late 13th-century Bonaventure identifies in his Aristotelian prologue to the mid-12th century Peter Lombard's *Sentences*. Explaining the process of bookmaking, Bonaventure writes,

> The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. Someone else writes both the materials of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author.[36]

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only one human made a manuscript from beginning to end (think, more or less, Colyns), each task must be executed separately even if they are accomplished by one set of hands.

[35] Fisher, Matthew. *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England*. Interventions: New Studies in Medieval Culture. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012, 58.

[36] Qtd. Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 94.

In a labor-rich productions like those which gave rise to Vernon and Auchinleck, such a schema could operate quite smoothly, and when the subject is scripture, authorship carries with it heavy responsibility. In the 14th and 15th centuries, this dynamic has changed and mixed, if it ever really existed in these clean categories.

In fact, Alistair Minnis argues that *compilatio* develops from this scriptural tradition to reach a new "high level of sophistication" by the 13th century.[37] An author, like the author of *Piers*, is, according to the *Summa in questionibus Armenorum* of Richard FitzRalph, a 14th-century scholar at Oxford and archbishop, both "himself the person who asserts a passage" and "its 'editor or compiler'" at once – '*auctor*' is used to mean each of the two as well, but, according to FitzRalph, the term is best understood as a combination of the terms.[38] A book-maker can thus participate in any or all of the potential categories outlined by Bonaventure, though some aspect of both compilation and assertion (the activity of an *auctor*) must be present. Thus, someone who is primarily engaged in scribal activities can, when compiling or asserting, participate in authorship briefly and should be considered a co-author, even if they do not primarily assert.[39] Alistair Minnis later writes, "*Compilator*-discourse, I contend, functioned in opposition to *auctor*-discourse,"[40] citing Vincent de Beauvais as not the originator of the distinction, but as making a clear and "elaborate" distinction between the two.

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[37] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 97.
[38] Qtd. in Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 100.
[39] Compare Minnis: "Analysis of the duplex causa efficient by several generations of theologians produced a highly sophisticated theoretical model for assigning degrees of responsibility to the writers of a given text, or to the literary roles which they perform" (102) and in his 2006 article,
[40] Minnis, Alastair, and Chazan, Mireille. Essay. In *Nolens Auctor Sed Compilator Reputari: The Late-Medieval Discourse of Compilation: Etudes Réunies*, 47–63, 2006. https://doi-org.proxy.library.cornell.edu/10.1484/M.BHCMA-EB.3.3121.

'Textual companions,' i.e., works which frequently accompany others should serve to guide its modern reception and interpretation, are citizens of this in between world. United neither by authority nor by identity, some vernacular texts awash in anonymity and appeal to common readers somehow become physically and conceptually attached, meaning they circulate together, whether through scribal action, a compiler's attention to completeness, or reader preference.[41] This notion relies partially on Donald McKenzie's notion of "sociology of texts" and his argument for unification of disciplines *around* the object of the book:

> Our own word, 'Bibliography', will do. It unites us as collectors, editors, librarians, historians, makers, and readers of books. It even has a new felicity in its literal meaning of 'the writing out of books', of generating new copies and therefore in time new versions. Its traditional concern with texts as recorded forms, and with the processes of their transmission, should make it hospitably open to new forms. No new names, then; but to conceive of the discipline as a sociology of texts is, I think, both to describe what the bibliography is that we actually do and to allow for its natural evolution (McKenzie 16)

'Mixed-manuscript' is a new term only in its translation, but I am most interested, like McKenzie, in recuperating the description of the objects to which extant terms already refer.[42] Texts are social objects, and this dissertation explores groupings and the effects of those groupings on medieval and modern readers both, uniting the editorial and readerly approach to books which are themselves made as their component parts are collected.

The avant-garde impulse to make meaning through reinvention of created objects is a mode of invention with deep historical roots. Arthur Bahr notes in his book *Fragments and Assemblages*,

> ...they are, literally, collections of disparate textual pieces into a larger whole and that the precise disposition of those pieces invites readers metaphorically to assemble, out of their relation to each other and their surrounding structures, some broader set of meanings of

[41] Cf. R. Hanna, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England, in Stephen J. Nichols & Siegfried Wenzel, eds., *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Ann Arbour, 1996): 37-51.

[42] It also pays homage to the term *libri mixti* while maintaining a reminder of its handwritten nature.

> perspectives that would not be legible if those pieces were read in isolation. […] [N]either literary texts nor physical manuscripts are inherently compilations in the sense outlined above. Rather, each reader must determine whether the particular constellation of formal and historical vectors offered by a given object makes such compilation interpretations illuminating, that is, whether such an object adds up to more than the sum of its parts.[43]

What is at stake here is *legibility within the object* – i.e., is the book imagined from the material mixed-manuscript possible without the latter? Only in the barest theoretical sense. The collections are not, as Bahr has it, 'metaphorically' assembled, but assembled in memory and in given attention. There are two sets of intention and memory which coordinate in these assemblages: compilers who assemble the material book for his own purposes or for an audience, and the reader who either attempts to trace the intentions of the compiler or finds her own networks of meaning within the manuscript.

I do not suggest that we take as a critical attitude an unblinking romanticism of the text, but a generosity of interpretive spirit which accounts for a medieval writers', compilers', and scribes' individual and accumulated choices.[44] Scribal activity, compiler's arrangement, and authorial assertion combine in innovative artistic productions which take a sharp epistemology and a clear-eyed enthusiasm for manuscript technology as constraints toward innovation, not merely the mechanical accidents of a pre-print culture. Key to analysis of the actual texts is a sensitivity to variance and textual *mouvance*, the theoretical predecessors of the whole-book movement. An advocate of whole books, Stephen Nichols, writes that 'New Philology,'

[43] Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages: Forming Compilations of Medieval London* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 255.

[44] Although, as Cerquiglini writes, it is Romanticism that we have to thank for manuscript collections at all. He writes, "The "author's manuscript," researched and studied, is apparently a modern idea. Louis Hay notes that the first manuscript collections date from German Romanticism, when national tradition was glorified" *In Praise of the Variant* (8).

represents "a desire to return to medieval origins of philology, to its roots in a *manuscript* culture" (1).[45] Nichols continues to explain that such a study should

> seek to minimize the isolation between medieval studies and other contemporary movements in cognitive methodologies, such as linguistics, anthropology, modern history, cultural studies, and so on, by reminding us that philology was once among the most theoretically avant-garde disciplines (1).

Nichols, writing in 1990, sought to reclaim philology from the "technological scholarship made possible by a print culture" for which Erich Auerbach advocated. Overriding the *translatio* tradition of the Middle Ages, the "continual rewriting of past works in a variety of versions" (3), the philology Nichols and his allies advocate for a return to context and iteration, a view concomitant with the *manus*, the hand, of manuscript culture. A return to variation valorizes the handmade as different and no less essential than the lionization of precision in mechanocentric attitudes of text production.

Modern editorial approaches can thus override a work's medieval context to extract it for interpretive consumption. Left in its context, a work is still able to be extracted in quotation or in whole, but institutional insistence on historical context allows medieval compilations to resist easy ideological appropriation in service of ideologies unimagined by any medieval author or compiler. Resisting textual extraction, at least for part of the process of examining medieval texts is simply a self-conscious step on the editorial scale which Cerquiglini characterizes thus: "When the fantasy of absolute reproduction or the solely documentary project of fidelity to the manuscript (which is not a reading) is abandoned, from that moment on, editing becomes an activity with increasing choices and privileges" (22). The scale of editing does not merely range

[45] Nichols, Stephen G. 1990. "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture." *Speculum* 65 (1): 1–10. https://doi.org/10.2307/2864468.

from a present object to perfected authorial intent but rather interpretation of the object toward a goal of the editor which arises in relationship to the documentary evidence and a sense of the purpose of a composition. Russell Peck nicely summarizes the personal nature of editorial work:

> If we think of an editor as one who prepares old texts for new readers, it makes sense to think of Gower as an editor who, as he compiles his texts, would bring forth ideas from his beloved books for future readers, aware that *all readers inevitably edit what they read to see what they deem to be important*. As Boethius puts it, a thing (in this instance, a book) is not known by its 'nature propre', but rather 'by the nature of hem that comprehenden it' (Cons., V.6). People read personally, a proposition upon which the very structure of the Confessio, through its dialogue between Amans and Genius, depends. As readers we, like Amans, despite the admonitions of Genius, see what we are disposed to see, intuiting from the text what we desire to take. Reading is a kind of reciprocal self- construction: we read what we desire, each according to one's will, and call it our own.[46]

An editor's job is to 'prepare old texts for new readers,' to make them legible for readers approaching a text for the first or second time, but legibility should enable rather than preclude possibilities for importance through protection of variance and contact sites in manuscripts. Without attachment to the omnipotence of modern editorial practice, acceptance of variance would be productive. Resistance to variance and desire for a standard text is simply more modern, not better. The impact, say, for a university student or other non-expert would be minimal – abridgments, selections for assignments, and failures of individual memories work far greater changes than manuscript variance in taught manuscripts.[47] The normal mode of manuscript production in the English late Middle Ages was one book with mixed content.[48]

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[46] "John Gower: Reader, Editor, and Geometrician 'for Engelondes Sake" in Malte Urban, *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts* (Brepols, 2009), Peck (11-12).

[47] Despite attachment to reconstructive editing, close, open-minded examination of variance is often productive. In a conference presentation given by Hannah Smithson on Robert Grosseteste's "De iride," only by looking at minor variants did she realize that RG's math was not, as had often been supposed, erroneous, but that the majority of scribes had miscopied Arabic numerals as Roman, based on shape rather than numerical value. The copyist's error existed in the modern edition and was assumed to be Grosseteste's – the editorial practice was only saved by an examination of variants. And, had a minor variant been examined earlier, more time might have been spent on the implications of Grosseteste's theory rather than that his calculations were erroneous.

[48] Andrew Taylor, in "Manual to Miscellany: Stages in the Commercial Copying of Vernacular Literature in England," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.2307/3509013, writes "The thirteenth

Long before Minnis's essay, Malcom Parkes argued that Vincent de Beauvais "elevated *compilatio* into a literary form which served as a vehicle for others."[49] Broadly put, the distinction between an author and compiler is that the former asserts and the latter reports.[50] Amidst the many innovations of the 13th century, "*Compilatio* and *compilator*… mark fresh ways of thinking about textual composition – at least in the minds of the exceptional thinkers of the day" (56). The compiler, Minnis maintains, "puts 'little or nothing' that is his own into his *compilatio* in terms of *materia*, and if he does include personal comments they must be carefully labelled as such, with the term *actor*" (60). That compilation has little original material does not mean that it is lesser: "*Compilatio* has therefore its own sources of power, its own claim to fame" (60).[51] This fresh power of compilation, and its initial appearance of lesser responsibility appeals to a certain set of late-medieval English textual composers who do not name themselves at all, nor give themselves titles.[52] This puts them out of the range of Minnis's judicious purview, since the creators of these books and the literary productions they inspired did not call themselves compilers but sought, at least in some ironic sense, to "refus[e] any share of their authors' *auctoritas* and drew attention to their distinctive literary role."[53]

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and fourteenth centuries provide numerous examples of what would appear to be in-house productions, among them many of the so-called 'friars' miscellanies" (8) and suggests that this is a common, if often inelegant, mode of textual production.

[49] Parkes, "*Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*", p. 128-129, qtd. in Minnis.

[50] A. J. Minnis, "Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Role of the *Compilator*", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* 101 (1979), p. 385-421.

[51] And later: "[Compilers] saw themselves as being on the very cusp of intellectual change and accomplishment. Their discourse of *compilatio* may be read as a language of fresh possibility, expressive of excitement about the significance of a given enterprise, and their ability to meet its challenge by producing a tome which would be of such a scale and complexity that it would put earlier productions in the shade" (62) – Trevisa's compendious volume is a prime example of the new scale of compilatory creation.

[52] Minnis notes the error of the Rouses in condemning Chaucer's use of the term: "if Chaucer, in the General Prologue to his *Canterbury Tales* and in his Miller's Prologue, should chose to harness aspects of the discourse of *compilatio* for his own purposes (in particular, to disavow responsibility for the words of others), why should that be seen as either surprising or subversive" (62).

[53] A. J. Minnis, "Late-Medieval Discussions of *Compilatio* and the Role of the *Compilator*", *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur,* 101 (1979), p. 388. On p. 394, he remarks that Lombard does not call his work a *compilatio*, although others refer to it as such later one.

This dissertation expands the sense of *compilation* for use in 14th-century England – arguing that 'compilers' made manuscripts which contain accumulations of whole texts are something in-between *compilatio* (a collection of *auctoritates*) and *originalia* ("whole texts of authors, not just excerpts").[54] I content that, in a sense, the mixed-manuscript is a collection of *originalia*, or at least attempted *originalia*, but many lack authorial attribution. These productions are something in-between the sparse, clear authority and guidance of a *compilatio* and the thundering authority of the whole text. These are collections, personal, institutional, and mixed. The limits of the contents are constituted by the borders of physical bindings and time, and their makers operate between the poles of extraction and completion. When I use the term *compiler* in the following pages, I mean it in reference to these keepers of the odd average, the *compilator originaliae*, the gatherers of the wholes. Fourteenth-century authors, the author of *Piers* foremost among them, fictionalized the tension between imagined and physical books by at once including written sources and incorporating them with narrative markers, adding to Middleton's postulation that the poem "is made of a variety of utterly traditional materials and gestures… that its recipients found much in it immediately recognizable… a 'maverick masterpiece'".[55] By continually referencing the word *boke* within its lines, but never calling attention to what, exactly, *Piers* is as a codicological object, the poem integrates itself into a bookish culture, calling attention to it, and changing Middle English poetical writing in the process by creating vernacular metafiction of the archive.

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[54] Evelyn Mackie has a similar view of vernacular compilation, writing, "compilation can give some indication of reception. Access to any one text was through the collection, and the collection became known to the audience/owner through the texts it contained" ROBERT GROSSETESTE'S *CHASTEU D'AMUR:* A TEXT IN CONTEXT, p. 17.

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton revives the term 'originalia' in her afterword to *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches.* This parenthetical quotes John H. Van Engen's *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life*, pp. 261-2, qtd. in Kerby-Fulton.

[55] Middleton, "The Audience and Public of 'Piers Plowman', p. 103.

In the larger context of fourteenth-century book production, discovering pieces in extant codices for constructed mental collections was the work of compilers. These miners of the past found links, similarities, and productive diversity in mixed-manuscripts, booklets, and book shops and arranged them with profound effect – up to healing the soul itself. I expand Minnis's definition of "compiler" in a second sense – to vernacular authorship. When Chaucer claims to be a 'compiler,'[56] he is not in fact claiming to be a 'scribe' (a different job altogether, with even less responsibility than a compiler), he is claiming to be a compiler in the sense I suggest in the paragraph above – a *compilator originaliae*. The *Piers*-poet never uses, much less claims, the term 'compile' or *compilatio* in any version of *Piers*, nor does he claim the title of author.[57] Nevertheless, the *Piers*-poet, like so many late medieval and Early Modern authors, is coming to terms with post-*compilatio* authorship. What should the creator of *Piers* call himself when his poem mostly consists of quotations and expansive, partially rewritten sections of others' texts, all interspersed and woven together with startlingly original versification? This question forms the crux of the dissertation, and by examining both medieval manuscript culture and *Piers* in conjunction, I suggest that late medieval habits of book production and close analysis of the allegories of the poem will show that tracing clusters of companion texts in medieval mixed-manuscripts reveals part of the poem's composition process, clarifies which texts likely served as source material, and gives modern readers a better sense of the poem's reputation as a highly valued experimental poetical composition.[58]

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[56] Compare Minnis, and Taylor who notes that "Stephen Partridge has argued that by casting himself as a compiler in the closing sentence of his *Retractions* ('heere is ended the book of the tales of Caunterbury compiled by Geffrey Chaucer'), Chaucer usurps the position of the scribe, and thus, despite his apparent self-deprecation, lays claim to the status of the author" (245).

[57] '*auctor*' appears only a handful of times across the versions of *Piers*, always in reference to another person than the writer of the poem.

[58] Julia Boffey identifies two types of information available from manuscripts: "The first kind [of evidence]… stems from the texts of the poems themselves, and isf constituted by such things as internal autobiographical references, linguistic features, and stylistic affinities[….] The second kind of information emerges less from the texts, and more

Texting, Texting

In this schema, because preservation and maintenance contributes to the layering of effort, it follows that a physical copy of a poem, e.g., accumulates a massive amount of trace effort over the course of its creation, and if it is not the first copy of it, it retains massive traces of its composition and layers from all copyings previous to the one encountered.[59] The accumulation of agent-traces makes the object in question more psychologically massive (whether the traces are known to the hypothetical encountering agent or not) and lends the object in question a gravity of attention resting on a material context. My view of book production accords with Christopher Cannon, whose "analysis of form that takes these views for its governing principles [which] takes neither a thing nor a thought as its analytic object but, rather, the common ground between them; its founding premise is that *form is that which thought and things have in common*."[60] So it is with books and minds – material books and mental structures mutually resemble each other in a space described by the Middle English word 'boke'. I take as the focus of my study what I call the 'residue of effort' – which I identify as past exertion of effort by a past agent or force leaves that traces which can attract and maintain the attention of current agents.[61] Cannon's definition of literary form does not account for the weight that text-centered labour and iteration have for form and form*ing* – as, for instance, verbal works are

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from the reconstruction of the processes involved in the compilation, copying, and subsequent history of individual manuscripts; our text-based knowledge about authors can be extended by scrutiny of the evidence of particular groupings of works, by scribal attributions and comments, and by information added to manuscripts by readers" *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics*, p. 60.

[60] Cannon, Christopher. 2004. *The Grounds of English Literature*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, p. 5. His definition takes its form from Marx's definition of Capital and Althusser's concept of 'structure' in "The Object of Capital."

[61] I lit upon this term while reading Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique*, only to find later that Erik Kwakkel used the very similar "cultural residue" before I started writing. He defines it, "Through the choices made by these two parties, contextual evidence became embedded (encoded, if you will) in the manuscript's design. The evidence fused itself to the page and manifests itself in script and quire, like a kind of "cultural residue" that we can identify and use as reflections of the conditions under which the book was made and used" (70). In Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

copied together or as scribes repeatedly copy groupings, those works begin to form a group merely by habituation and repetition. The pieces themselves might not change from authorial instantiation, but their regular relation begins to unite them in the minds of their readers. And, as I will discuss, that mental unity often encourages physical overlap and conceptual blurring.

Written work does not reside apart from its substance, whether that be vellum, paper, or grey matter; medieval writers producing in the wake of the Aristotelian renaissance were well-aware of the potential in the burgeoning materialism of their age. Kellie Robertson proposes in "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto" that there is ample evidence for a material Middle Ages which at once eschews the 'pure materialism' which Enlightenment thinkers wished they could believe in for a thick materialism that overran the largely Neoplatonic natural philosophies of the early Middle Ages and solved major problems inherent in atomist views. Rather than taking an atomist view of "matter" and "void" regarding textuality, that is, a "text" and a "non-text" only vaguely interrelated by observed similarity, Middle English writers rely and pun on the term *matere* as referring both to the physical substance of the world and the subjects of their compositions.[62] Is a work in a mixed-manuscript is part of a whole book or in a mixed-manuscript? A work is *part* of a whole book, a real entity which is itself part of an entity, "as the finger is 'in' the hand and generally the part 'in' the whole" or whether it is, "in the strictest sense of all, as a thing is 'in' a vessel, and generally 'in' place." Furthermore, as Aristotle postulates,

> When what surrounds, then, is not separate from the thing, but is in continuity with it, the thing is said to be in what surrounds it, not in the sense of in place, but as a part in a whole. But when the thing is separate and in contact, it is immediately 'in' the inner surface of the surrounding body, and this surface is neither a part of what is in it nor yet

[62] Daniel Wakelin, *Designing English: Early Literature on the Page* (Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, 2018).

> greater than its extension, but equal to it; for the extremities of things which touch are coincident.[63]

A given work is *in* a mixed-manuscript, but how is that 'in' to be understood? Is it 'in' as a container or 'in' as a part? The more given one is to extraction of texts, the more likely to say that a mixed-manuscript is a container for instances of an abstract entity. The limited and material distribution of medieval works in manuscripts suggests that, for the medieval readers, experience of a given work was limited to an instance or two in the context of a mixed-manuscript, and those instances often occurred over a long span of time. A critical disjunct has occurred when modern readers who have access to a plethora of decontextualized, precisely abstracted texts treat them as if they are, in fact, precisely abstracted and not products, in part, of the gravity of traditional medieval companions.

It's always been mixed up

Professional scribes made bespoke books and had expertise in recommending groups of texts their customers tended to like. Rather than a linear model of transmission, manuscripts in the late Middle Ages (and earlier) circulated in 'groupings' that move laterally and diachronically, a phenomenon that M.A. Michael observed in Gothic Manuscripts, a likely model is "one that allows for alternative influences and tries to express their results as a three-dimensional structure. This might eventually lead to the creation of a 'network' of influences as more information becomes available."[64] Many of the productions which could be described as mixed-manuscripts are created over time, although the majority of the effort takes place in a

[63] Aristotle, *Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume 1: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton University Press, 2014). "When there are parts of a whole-the one that in which a thing is, the other the thing which is in it-the whole will be described as being in itself. For a thing is described in terms of its parts, as well as in terms of the thing as a whole, e.g. a man is said to be white because the visible surface of him is white, or to be scientific because his thinking faculty has been trained. The jar then will not be in itself and the wine will not be in itself. But the jar of wine will: for the contents and the container are both parts of the same whole"

[64] Michael, M. A. "Oxford, Cambridge and London: Towards a Theory for 'Grouping' Gothic Manuscripts." *The Burlington Magazine* 130, no. 1019 (1988), p. 107.

sustained period of work or nodes of work. Andrew Taylor argues that artists form what he calls miscellanies often from central booklets which are bound together and expanded upon from that core, making

> manuscripts where two or three scribes have collaborated artist has worked on two adjoining booklets. A certain number highly popular and survive in numerous copies, often small booklets or fascicles. These fascicles could have circulated independently for some time, but when the decoration is the same, MSS Harley 3860 and Bodley 652, or when the same fascicles, as is the case with MSS Douce I32/I37 and Harley far more likely that they were all purchased at roughly single case can it be established with absolute certainty booklets were copied, but the most likely source of many scriveners' alley.[65]

In urban settings, book enthusiasts had the possibility both to order bespoke books with carefully chosen texts and order of composition or to take recommendations.[66] Only recently has the critical tide turned regarding the order of medieval books, and have come to the realization that unfamiliar books were very likely to have been approached from the back rather than post-printing practices of front-based tables of contents.[67] This astounding fact alone should be enough to shake the confidence of the arbitrary-organization camp, but the easily discovered throughlines expounded in this chapter suggests that arbitrary organization was, if it exists at all, an exception of medieval composition rather than the rule.

The term defined

In order to determine what a "mixed-manuscript" is, a survey of terminology will help, starting with 'commonplace book.' Handwritten collections tended toward aphorisms, epistolary

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[65] Andrew Taylor, "Manual to Miscellany: Stages in the Commercial Copying of Vernacular Literature in England," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003): 1–17, https://doi.org/10.2307/3509013.

[66] Erik Kwakkel suggests something similar, "The artisan may even have provided suggestions as to how a manuscript could meet the reader's requirements. We may infer that the monastic scribe also knew what purpose the sheets in front of him would ultimately serve" Michael Johnston and Michael Van Dussen, *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). P. 73. Furthermore, as any patron of a self-respecting record store will tell you, the art of the delightful recommendation is knowledge hard-won and has the possibility of profound artistic impact.

[67] Cf. D. Sawyer, "Missing Books in the Folk Codicology of Later Medieval England," *Mediaeval Journal* 7, no. 2 (2018), https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:184a6883-d713-4519-a275-66911fd78515.

collections, and diaries after post-incunabular print begins to dominate the production of texts previously copied as part of large-scale manuscript productions.[68] Dominance of printed paper books distributes the mixed qualities of mixed-manuscripts to the level of a library of discrete volumes, a distribution made possible by the decreasing cost of codices. Shifting to a multi-volume system means that production of mental books – a term I expound on later in this introduction – requires more effort because the mind considers the objects discrete productions, making free association between texts which do not appear in the same physical volume more difficult. Furthermore, growing emphasis on the importance of the named author and on anthologizing as the primary early modern mode of collection split up medieval textual companions in the interest of 'organizing' ostensibly 'miscellaneous' literary texts to reflect new, author-centered priorities in collection.

Using the term *commonplace book* to mean 'any book with assorted contents' is likely motivated by its introduction into English 60 years before 'miscellany'.[69] The original definition appears not long after Colyns begins his work: "1578 T. COOPER *Thesaurus* (new ed.) Introd., A studious yong man..may gather to himselfe good furniture both of words and approved phrases..and to make to his use as it were a common place booke.". A *commonplace book*, at least as it was originally conceived, was concerned not so much with literary production as it was with collecting phrases, words, scraps of wisdom, for almost exclusively autodidactic purposes. The term *miscellany*, however, is not so late as Parker claims, although this is likely due to an update in the OED and not to any error on his part. It appears first not in 1638 as Parker claims

[68] When do letters and diaries happen the most?

[69] This terminological distinction follows from David Parker who, in *The Commonplace Book in Tudor London* chooses the term 'commonplace book' to describe Harley 2252 and defines a Tudor commonplace book as "a book (or collection of booklets later bound together) with useful and various items written into it by one or several together) with useful or various items written into it by one or several compilers with no larger purpose than to be of use and entertainment to its owner" (2). While Parker's definition *does* largely describe the manuscripts he later describes and comments on, his seems more expansive than even the earliest definitions of the term.

(2), but in 1598, a mere twenty years after *commonplace book*. The term is first used as a collection of a single author but quickly refers to a collection of texts which are disparate in subject matter.[70]

The definition which Parker selects is from 1638, which despite his claim that "none of these early uses refers to a specific volume" (2), does, in fact, refer to such a thing, preceded by a 1615 definition of the same species: "1615 P. WENTWORTH (*title*) The Miscellanie, or, A registrie, and methodicall directorie of orizons. 1638 T. HERBERT *Some Yeares Trav.* (rev. ed.) 262 The Alcoran is a miscellany of other prodigious things". I do not think that these terms are in competition, and I think that each refers to a different species of book.[71] A commonplace book reverberates with the precise iterations and indices of print culture, though written out by hand, organized either by an index of headings or chronologically collected during the life of its compiler(s), and is intended primarily as a reference book rather than a book for reading. A medieval mixed-manuscript is the product of a manuscript culture (i.e. a manuscript copied from manuscripts), and is organized around 1) a central text or texts (often romances or hagiographies)[72] or 2) a central theme (soul and body, the nature of time, etc.) but does not describe literary, medical, philosophical, or theological anthologies which are largely generically identical.[73]

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[70] 1598 H. INCE tr. J. Kimedoncius *Of Redempt. of Mankind* II. xii. 142 In the Miscellanies [L. Miscellaneis] of D. Ierome Zanchie of godly memorie, there is the iudgement extant of the Church and schoole of Tigur [etc.]. 1611 T. CORYATE *Crambe* sig. b4^{v}, For the inuentorie of my Bookes freight being a miscellanie of things of diuers kinds both in prose and verse, will (I hope) giue your Grace a full contentment, though the Title thereof doth not seeme to promise so much.

[71] Carol Meale extends the definition further by stating "that some at least may be of an ephemeral nature, to the extent that they were chosen for inclusion on the basis of their immediate relevance to the owner, with no regard being given to their potential long-term significance," "The Social and Literary Contexts" (185).

[72] There are exceptions to this – Julia Boffey identifies a similar structure in Bodl. MS. Lat.misc.c.66, a book constructed by Humfrey Newton, which was "built up around… legal memoranda and notes relating to the Newton family estates" *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics*, p. 23.

[73] Lerer reverses this terminological distinction: "Some of these manuscripts have been considered *miscellanies*: collections of texts that grew by accretion over time or that were brought together by chance. Others have been considered *anthologies*: collections that were brought together with an overarching theme or purpose, where the

A manuscript as large as the Vernon, however, likely had several major core works like the *South English Legendary* and *Pricke of Conscience*. tend to contain historical, literary, and often practical sources, although the line between what is literary and what is practical tends to blur for many pieces. For instance, it is unclear one can refer to a hagiography as purely literary, or a Christmas day prognostication as purely practical. Both also tend to be the product of a single compiler or team of compilers in less than the lifespan of that compiler.[74] An anthology, unlike a commonplace book, is usually literary (broadly speaking: they often contain theological, philosophical, or theoretical texts) and, unlike a mixed-manuscript, is usually referential to a single, named external point of collection (the name of an author or a listed organizing principle).

To make mixed-manuscripts mean as such, the objects of the collection need to be preserved with the 'events' of the original, i.e the texts, comments, and order of the mixed-manuscript make the object mean. There are a number of terms for hand-written (and, later printed) collections bound as books. Until this point, the most common terms for these creations have been commonplace book or miscellany. The term "mixed-manuscript" is a literal translation of German *mischhandschriften*, a term used by, among others, Ulrich Frost in his book on John Colyns, though he calls Harley 2252 "Das 'Commonplace book von John Colyns." I have opted for a term neither historically attested (e.g *florilegia* or *libellus*) nor directive regarding its purpose (e.g. anthology, summa, compendium, miscellany) because 'boke' or 'treatise,' the terms most often used in late medieval England for these productions, have obvious and complicated modern uses which are both too general and refer to post-print

relations among the texts reflect the tastes or interests of a scribe, a bookseller, a reader, or an institution" (21). Seth Lerer, "Medieval English Literature and the Idea of the Anthology," *PMLA* 118, no. 5 (October 2003): 1251–60, https://doi.org/10.1632/003081203X68018.

[74] cf. *Robert Thornton and his Books*, eds. Michael Johnson and Susanna Fein.

technologies, increasing the likelihood for accidental equivocation. I avoided directive words (and so left myself open to understandable charges of blandness) in order to give a literal sense of the object: it has contents by different authors in different genres and was produced by hand. This term avoids the strong sense of 'commonplace book,' that is, collections of commonplaces (*loci communes*): "A passage of text considered to be generally relevant or appropriate, which may serve as the basis for a discourse or discussion; a topic suitable to the purpose of a rhetorician."[75] 'Miscellany' meets all the criteria for these compositions, and indeed was created for just such a purpose, but the term undercuts the associative ties between the contents and privileges the initial appearance to the later reader (miscellaneous, arbitrary, random) over the initial care of the compiler.

The suggestion of a theme is enough to spark a chain of interpretation, but a mixed-manuscript is only 'miscellaneous' if the criterion of classification is subject matter, which is "the weakest criterion for generic grouping because it fails to take into account *how* the subject is treated".[76] Attempting to classify by subject – already a fraught process – strings pieces together only in the loosest sense.[77] Instead of classifying works by subject, I look at the effect of a material compilation on fictional and poetic compositions, taking the medium as a 'genre'. These manuscripts often appear to be without organization or the result of mere convenience; without the attention to the effort exerted in their construction and creation, it is too easy to allow them to remain so. 'Mixed-manuscript' identifies the bound, physical manifestation of the practice of

[75] "commonplace, n.2 and adj.". OED Online. December 2021. Oxford University Press. https://www-oed-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/view/Entry/37245 (accessed February 24, 2022).
[76] Robert Stam, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, p. 14.
[77] The organization of materials for easy access or to establish canonicity is the strength of an anthology – an impulse which does exist in mixed-manuscripts. The Vernon manuscript does contain moments of anthologizing; I, however, am proposing a use-based or reception understanding of the manuscript.

compilation from which and into bookmakers copied text groupings and companions as well as the material that came to hand or that they sought out for inclusion.

The early modern Middle English mixed-manuscript is, in part, a product of the increasingly paper-supported literary culture arising in the early 15th century; the advantages included the relatively low cost of paper compared to parchment, the ability of certain classes of readers to keep stocks of blank paper, and the ease of insertion of leaves and binding of gatherings. Ulrich Frost, whose bibliographical analysis of Harley 2252 *Das* Commonplace Book *von John Colyns* is unparalleled, quotes Robbins and Rigg who say (respectively) that "commonplace books proper are simply notebooks of facts or references for the owner, and the inclusion of poetry is accidental" and that commonplace books are "collections of miscellaneous material assembled simply for the interest and amusement of the compiler" (qtd. Frost 77). As David Allan writes in *Commonplace Books and Reading in Georgian England* (which Ulrich quotes), "as Cameron Louis has argued, [commonplace book] had long served as little more than a 'catch-all for any MS of a miscellaneous nature', invoked by default to describe variegated compositions for which 'there appears to be no satisfactory alternative term'" (26).

The suggestion of *summa* is too close to the widely-used term 'anthology' and *florilegium* bespeaks something more like the commonplace book as I have defined it above. Given this and the frustration with which Frost ends his thoughtful but inconclusive survey of terms for collected-books, mixed-manuscript is in fact the satisfactory term for what Colyns creates. The literary function of the mixed-manuscript is overtaken by the increasingly commercial, less personal, and increasingly printed anthology and its social function is largely overtaken by the indexed quotations which become the commonplace book. Much of the confusion around discussion of books like Colyns's arise from a multiplicity of terms which are

variously divorced and equivocated. Not all are created equal, however, and the differentiation I have laid out between commonplace book, anthology, and mixed-manuscript will contribute to the consensus necessary for further traction in the studies of compiled books.

In fact, as Parker notes, "The spine reads: JOHN COLYN. / MISCELLANEOUS COLLECTIONS/ ROMANCE/ OF/ IPOMYDON/ ROMANCE/ OF/ MORTE ARTHUR…." (89), suggesting that at least the 19th century re-binder of the mixed-manuscript was more comfortable with the book as part of miscellaneous aegis rather than that of the commonplace book, a practice well-developed in that century. Further noteworthy is the emphasis on the romances as texts of primary value. While it is unsurprising that these romances, as are all large and obviously literary works, are valued over the remainder of the contents, it serves as confirmation for the structure of this book. In fact, Colyns's romances were likely produced between 1460 and 1480, and "Colyns's inscription at the end of *Morte Arthur* suggests that he acquired the booklets (both *Morte Arthur* and *Ipomydon*, since they clearly came from the same place) in or before 1517" (Parker 95).[78] The romances served as the keystone of the book around which the arch stones of lyric, religious, and commercial pieces served to form the whole book.[79]

Where Thornton's Lincoln Cathedral MS 91 (not to mention his British Library MS Additional 31042) has the "Prose Life of Alexander," for his historical content (as well as marginal records of familial ownership and manuscript provenance), John Colyns, the compiler of Harley 2252, the primary subject of the following pages, enters his historical content largely in numerical form: after the proverbs (medicinal, practical, philosophical) which take up fols. 1-3r, he copies annals, numbers, statistics, and lists of churches for fols. 3v-14r, followed by letters

[78] Meale dates Colyns's romances thus.
[79] As Johnson notes, the folia have certainly been reordered, but the sole changes are likely the switch of quires 1, 2, 3, and 4 to 1, 4, 2, and 3 (36).

and petitions, after which poetry begins to follow, interlaced with ordinances, statutes, memoranda, and letters continue. After the Chronicle of the royal houses of England (fols. 51b-53b), the poetical content begins in earnest: from fol. 54r, the beginning of *The Lyfe of Ipomydon*, the content of the book until fol. 161r is poetical (with a brief break from fols. 142r-146v for a treatise on book-making and a King's ordinance). In other words (words which Colyns might himself enjoy), something like the middle 65% of the book is poetical, nearly without interruption. Of that poetical 107 or so folios, some 66 are taken up by *Le Morte Arthur* and 30 by *The Lyfe of Ipomydon*: the *cor* of Colyns's *boke*.

Frequently, modern public sense of what a manuscript contains accords better with the desire to classify than with what they contain. Ad Putter notes, for instance, that "more famous manuscripts, such as the Auchinleck manuscript and BL, Cotton Caligula A. ii, may have acquired a reputation as romance repositories, but in fact they contain a variety of material, including saints' lives and shorter poems...,"[80] a supposition relying on an earlier assertion of Ralph Hanna's: "The early textual history of English romances and lyrics thus confirms Ralph Hanna's impression that 'miscellaneity' is the norm rather than the exception in medieval English book production." (83).[81] For Putter, the lyric is not necessarily constitutive of the miscellany (although this is not the purpose of his essay), but something which is certainly convenient compilatory mortar: Now, one obvious reason for why we find the odd Middle English lyric in this and in other multilingual manuscripts is that, unlike longer romances, short poems could easily be inserted to fill empty space on a folio or fly-leaf (85-6). This assessment

[80] Putter, Ad. "The Organisation of Multilingual Miscellanies: The Contrasting Fortunes of Middle English Lyrics and Romances." In *Insular Books*, 81–100. Proceedings of the British Academy. Oxford University Press, 2015. P. 82.

[81] Ralph Hanna, 'Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England', in Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (eds), *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 37–52.

does not preclude the necessity of lyric for the miscellany but rather draws attention, frankly, to the convenience and economy of including short poetry. If the book is physically constructed before it is filled (as was Colyns's), it is important to have material which can be varied in length (by stanza breaks, one- or two-column formats, wide variety of lengths) which is nonetheless literary.

In his contribution to *Imagining the Book*, Derek Pearsall writes, "The manuscripts written by and associated with John Shirley are nearly all miscellanies, as are those written by Robert Thornton and John Colyns" (17). The books made by Colyns and Thornton are surely mixed-manuscripts of the kind I describe here, but I can see no reason he should not have assigned them as miscellanies. Shirley, however, has a stronger anthologizing impulse, perhaps in part because his manuscripts were designed for frequent dissemination and with an eye to printing. Shirley's anthologies, while not entirely attributive (a few pieces in MS Gg.4.27, for instance, are *not* attributed to Chaucer) belie a collective rather than associative impulse.[82] This does not prevent it from being what I call a mixed-manuscript – certainly the methodology of reading across manuscripts applies – but the manuscripts might better be called anthologies, given how central (if problematic) a role they play in establishing Chaucer's canonicity.[83]

The prognostications in Harley 2252, for instance, are preceded by a slew of Skelton's poetry, copied while he was out of favor and unpublished: "its presence in this one MS is of great importance in assessing the current status of Skelton as poet and the circulation of his works during the 1520s when he was, for much of the time, in disgrace with the court" (96). The *boke*'s contents alternate between the edgy poetry of controversial political beliefs and moralistic

[82] Kathryn M. Veeman, *"Sende Þis Booke Ageyne Hoome to Shirley": John Shirley and the Circulation of Manuscripts in Fifteenth-Century England* (University of Notre Dame, 2010).
[83] "Chaucer's Chronicle," John Shirley, and the Canon of Chaucer's Shorter Poems" Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards. *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*. Volume 20, 1998, pp. 201-218

lyrics on the nature of fate, each section complimenting others while straining against them in the same stroke.[84] In order somewhat to combat Julia Boffey's concern that, "Modern editions of Middle English lyrics of all kinds must invariably 'uproot' the poems from their original contexts in some way, but do they sometimes transplant them in new beds which are too neat, too ordered, and which imply rather too much homogeneity of genre and function?" (3), I wish to address the worry that codices akin to "[p]resent-day thematic lyric anthologies… were virtually unknown in the Middle English period" (Duncan xxiv).[85]

These 'mixed' productions are not anthologies (subject matter / performer-based classification), although many medieval productions (especially those produced in the 15th century and following) are. Even these mixed productions frequently contain anthologies or moments of anthologizing activity, as Derek Pearsall notes in, "The Whole Book: Late Medieval Manuscripts Miscellanies and their Modern Interpreters": "probably the best general description we could come up with about the nature of such compilations [is] miscellaneous collections with evidence of occasional anthologizing impulses" (28) and "most contributors to [*The Whole Book* (1993)] modestly confine themselves to parts of the manuscript, whether those parts are defined generically or codicologically, and try to find an organizing impulse behind them" (28). 'Behind' is the critical weak point in the argument Pearsall critiques. Assuming that the organizing impulse is identifiable as such drastically overestimates the ability of human being in one time

[84] Johnson notes: "*Ipomadon*, a traditional Fair Unknown narrative, strains against the mercantile texts Colyns copied, while the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* nicely complements the jingoistic tone underwriting a number of his texts" (26).

[85] Johnson remarks, "In fact, the critical edition is a necessity for most literary analyses, for we need a stable, unified text for our readings…. On the conceptual level, many medieval compilers often were not constrained by modern concepts like "genre," as they freely cobbled together disparate collections that frustrate our desire to categorize texts. Nor were compilers always constrained by "authorial intent," as they frequently broke up the works of authors and placed them into collections serving the localized, particular ends of their compilation Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), (5, 6-7).

period to make reasonable assumptions about the unstated motivations of human beings centuries before the time of examination and, frankly, about the ability of human beings to guess at the unspoken motivations of others whatsoever. I have endeavored not to guess at motivations of the compilers of the manuscripts I examine here, although (my) modern habits of author-centric discussion of texts likely leach in from time to time.

Composition of 'a text' is already often collaborative even in its earliest initiations. The concentricity of these circles of composition does not offer – to the reader, essentially – a single node of origination even though factually, i.e. in the mind of the author, there is.[86] Perhaps if we think of 'found family' rather than blood family, that is, a strong, non-hierarchical associative network built around experiential or communal bonds.[87] The meaning-horizon of a given work for a medieval reader is determined by the deictic found-family of expectations, which is to say, a mixed-manuscript. Beyond that, each text also belongs to a 'genre', in the sense of 'identifiable category.'[88] Audience expectation operates within a certain horizon line, but that horizon is disrupted (expanded) by its association with the next text. Anne Middleton suggests that this happens on the writer's side too. She argues, "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."[89] In other words, there are *two* buried intentions in a work of poetry – the one Glissant and Middleton describe which is

[86] Sebastian Sobecki, *Last Words: The Public Self and the Social Author in Late Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 4.
[87] Compare, for instance, Elvia R. Arriola, "Law and the Family of Choice and Need," University of Louisville Journal of Family Law 35, no. 4 (1996-1997): 691-702, in which the author remarks, "We exercise a choice to stay in a relationship which is not sexual but *is* intimate-to create a family of choice and need". The compiler finds texts associated by his inclination, texts which seem to go together, even those which appear by convenience.
[88] Genre is an affect and is useless beyond that: it should be considered as a sort of pre-rational snap judgment. Any engagement with genre beyond an immediate snap judgment has rapidly diminishing returns, or, more often, hampers perspicuity rather than encouraging it.
[89] Anne Middleton, "The Audience and Public of 'Piers Plowman,' Lawton, David. 1982. *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer.

authorial, and the intention on the part of the audience to read a work *a certain way* when a piece's structure indicates a set of engagement strategies suggested by genre expectations.[90] As Middleton puts it, not only is the intention of the author consumed and broken open; "like Book, [Langland] is consumed, but the reader arise[s] to live."[91] *Piers* is cannibalistic and autophagous at heart – the poem eats the books it lives in, the poem eats itself, the poem eats its author, the poem eats you if you look it in the eye. It consumes and assimilates anything it can; the poem is starving to mean exactly right, buts its allegorical teeth and structural jaw make it monstrous.

We may find that the initial question which undergirds the investigation has revealed at least two others -- to ask *when* the poem was written is also to ask *who* wrote *what.* In the examples I have engaged (Engl. poet. 1.a, Lincoln Cathedral MS. 91, Bodleian Ashmole 61, and Harley 2252), only a few scribes take part in the production of the manuscript. Barring rubrication, illumination, and illustration, most mixed-manuscripts are produced by one scribe and nearly all by two at most. The more personal and less comprehensive a production is required to be, the more likely that the whole process was executed by one person. In the instances of Thornton and Harley 2252, the process of collection of materials and works, copying, and reading all appear to have, initially, been organized by a single interested party.[92] These books are identifiable as the effort of a single compiler in large part because they inscribed their names. This, more than any other factor, unfairly reduces the role of the scribes and compilers.

[90] Middleton goes on to write, "since both readers and writers want the text to be intelligible and useful, and since for both the means of making it [are] so grounded in common social practices and textual experience, both make some accommodations in order to achieve this fit between intention and reception" (102).
[91] P. 117.
[92] The obvious exception is the stanzaic *Morte*, which John Colyns, the scribe and collector of the rest of Harley 2252, was likely purchased in a London bookshop and used as the central column of the manuscript's structure.

This dissertation is concerned with clusters of works, frequent textual companions, which occur in several middle English mixed-manuscripts, which take on a particular gravity and collect 'moons', so to speak, or smaller texts which travel with them from manuscript to manuscript. In this cosmogonic metaphor for textual travel, I further propose that some texts have such great gravity that they pull other texts into themselves.[93] *Piers Plowman* begins as one piece among many in its earliest iterations and begins not only to be read regularly with texts which surround it but also to begin to assimilate those texts, forming a group of 'textual companions'. Whether a text is included in a compilation or is kept separately is determined by three factors: the first, and most important for my purposes, is how important or authoritative the work is considered, the second is the relative age of composition, and the final depends on the purpose of the manuscript production; furthermore, personal mixed-manuscripts tend to collect with other texts as do anthologizing manuscripts. A text which is important on its own and is written by a contemporary of note is likelier to exist by itself than to be collected with other works. Shorter poems and those which are practical (ink recipes, weather prognostications, etc.) also tend to be collected in mixed-manuscripts. Manuscripts that are authoritative (ancient texts, texts written by archbishops, etc.) also tend to be mixed in their collection. The schema I propose for manuscripts produced in England from 1200 to 1500 is as follows: [94]

1. Mixed-manuscript for personal use

[93] Manuscript moons are not part of a totalizing network as supposed by ANT; rather, they more strongly resemble the threads of the web Ingold suggests in Tim Ingold, "When ANT Meets SPIDER: Social Theory for Arthropods," in *Material Agency*, ed. Carl Knappett and Lambros Malafouris (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2008), 209–15, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-74711-8_11, the spider has "attentiveness of movement" and developing skill (214) with which she creates and attunes the web rather than the decentralized ANT network. Mixed-manuscripts are networked, developed, and structured with skill, not by incidental contact alone.

[94] Take, for example, Bodleian MS Digby 86 – it contains everything from Robert Grosseteste's *Le Chasteau d'amour* (in part) to a copy of "The Fifteen Tokens of Domesday" to animal fables ("The Thrush and the Nightingale" and "The Fox and the Wolf"); consider also Thornton's two manuscripts and John Colyns's "Boke" known as Harley 2252.

    a. These are usually copied for or by the owner, have a wide range of material, little decoration, and often poor or amateurish copying practices. Remaining examples tend to be late and often copied on paper.[95]
2. Mixed-manuscript for anthologizing purposes[96]
    a. Often professionally copied by a small handful of scribes and containing pieces usually in one language. Typically, Latin texts are also similar in genre; English tend to be broader.
3. Single-work manuscript for sale (late 15th)[97]
    a. Professionally copied, often small (even a single quire) for distribution via lending or sale. Can form part of a manuscript (1) within a personal collection.
4. Single-work manuscript for preservation or status[98]
    a. Professionally produced, usually decorated, and often religious subject matter.
    b. Later examples are often poetic works which are not religious or scriptural per se.
5. Single-work manuscript when the work contained acts as a compendium
    a. One of my arguments is that *Piers* often falls into this category – it is likely that the *Canterbury Tales, The South English Legendary, Ancrene Wisse,* and *Confessio Amantis* do as well, but both (*Piers* as a whole, *Canterbury* selected) appear in types 1 and 2 as well.[99]

In many fourteenth-century miscellanies, the works work in conjunction, in balance with one another. Often, there appears to be a central theme or motivation for collecting the works together, but I do not think that dedication to one central theme or argument is of particular help for apprehending the usefulness of a manuscript context. Rather, I want to advocate for a reading *with* context, a sort of interpretive principle of accumulation to compliment an accumulational aesthetic.[100] A work without the context of a miscellany, then, is like a planet without its motion: remove the work from the codicological context, and it becomes something different.[101]

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[95] E.g. Thornton's or Colyns's book.
[96] E.g. John Shirley's Chaucer anthologies or Grossetestian collections – often 15th-century or later.
[97] Compare the *Stanzaic Morte* in Harley 2252 or the *Alliterative Morte* in Thornton's book.
[98] Many copies of the *Chasteau d'Amour* are preserved like this, although it might call into category 5. Psalters and religious handbooks often fall into this category as well.
[99] The copies of AN *Chasteau* bear witness to the many ways in which a single text might travel. Evelyn Mackie writes, "*Le Chasteu* was not always part of a collection. Both the Augustinian canons of Leicester and the Carmelites in London had copies of *Le Chasteu* not combined with any other text. In Leicester, the volume was kept with other works of Grosseteste" (18). A single work, itself a compilation and translation, was thus kept discrete, as part of mixed collections, and anthologized.
[100] Édouard Glissant, *L'Intention Poetique* (Editions du Seuil, 1969).
[101] When I refer to a 'system' of texts, I do not mean to conjure up connotations of systematic theology or the syllogistic thought of scholastics per se. I instead refer primarily to a value-system in which the impact of a particular text is amplified or changed at least by the surrounding texts.

I treat *Piers Plowman* as a member of the fifth category and a sort of replacement for a privately collected medieval literary miscellany.[102] The miscellany provides an established model which the *Piers*-poet used to assemble and unify separated works and generic works while being able to showcase his favorite pieces in a context he established, like Vincent of Beauvais, Brunetto Latini, and a long line of compilers before him.[103] The Piers-poet is able to re-direct, to arrange as he sees fit, much like a scribe or compiler.[104]

Ties that bind

What ties those disparate texts together across the span of a bound book? Resonance between pieces of verbal art must come in the form of words or terms. Terms, that is, words of emphasis, character names, etc. are materially bound via allegorization, identical terms encourage association despite genre or tone differences that would, without allegory, prevent easy association. If you have a *Castle of Love* and a *Pricke of Love* in the same manuscript, the reader is encouraged to consider the ways in which love is firmly protective but also goading. A philosophy of text-based gathering with special reference to medieval works and practices must rely on allegory, which gathers terms together under an aegis of association.

[102] Broadly speaking, miscellanies are collections of different texts, often by different authors, in different genres, all bound into a single volume or a clear series of volumes -- what might be called a 'literary miscellany' -- is one which operates similarly but contains obviously literary texts. The compiler of the miscellany often reveals a clear motive and theme, despite the differences in genre, and each text therefore exerts a generic pull on the texts which surround it; this creates a conversation between the pieces within the compilation not present in any single piece on its own. This model for reading *PP* provides new insights into this confoundingly-structured text, reading it not just as a long poem (which modern readers, arguably, read strictly linearly) but rather as a series of fractured pieces which produce, as it were, a generative friction.

[103] Latini said of his *Tresor* "This book is called 'Treasury'. For, just like the lord who wishes in one small place to collect something of great worth, not only for his delight, but to increase his power and protect his position in both war and peace, places in it the most valuable things and the most precious jewels that he can, to the best of his ability; just so is the body of this book compiled from wisdom, as one which is drawn from all the parts of philosophy concisely into one digest." A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 200.

[104] Matthew Fisher convincingly asserts the mischaracterization of scribes as meddlers in *Scribal Authorship*, arguing rather that they take a large hand in the composition of medieval English chronicles.

Whether the allegorical associations are *meant* is unknowable in these productions, since we have merely collected works by different authors which contain references to the same sorts of concepts. Those terms are permitted to resonate across time, author, and the pages of a book if we imagine that they are undergirded by Glissant's conception of *généreuse naïveté*. In his schema, there is an intention, buried but "inseparable from the more or less imperfect matter that books would propose," producing a "series of unfinished works" from which a "livable lesson might emerge." Otherwise, "in an accumulation of perfectly organized matter, might the unconvincing stagnate and putrefy?" (7). The intention of a book is buried, behind a shell, threaded through the sinews of the work, the oeuvre,

> and if it is in effect possible to examine the distance between intention and the oeuvre, then we are justified in freeing the notion of a "willful" literature (in which intention gains over the unpredicted part which hitherto belonged to the hazardous realm of the book). It is this possibility which first solicits me here, before falling again, definitely, obsolete: intention, even "willful" will die realizing itself (8).

A literature full of will, one in which the buried intention *might* be discovered, or feels as if it might be discovered, will, upon realizing itself, die and leave a trace of itself in the mind of the reader. Forming a critical interpretation of an object requires this transfer – from the buried, subconscious aesthetic intention of a compiler, a sense of intention hatches in the mind of the reader, destroying itself in the process.

To say that a 'compiler meant' or an 'author meant' is to gesture to the bird in mind and say 'behold, an egg'. A 'text,' thus, has a material life and a life in the mind of its readers. It must be both, for minds and artefacts influence each other: the latter exists only by exertion of human will, and the former engages with the latter to form itself and create more artefacts. Traces of human volition and effort remain in anything artificial, even when found objects are arranged. As with any art-object, to insist that a mixed-manuscript is *for* one thing or another

exclusively or to argue that a work is *for* this or that is to read with an agenda undercuts the potential profundity of the object and runs the risk of identifying all residues of effort as marks of a single ideology. When objects from the distant past are under consideration, sense for the profundity of the object is at once curtailed and unleashed by the theorist's uncollapsable modernity.[105]

Allegory and this method of gathering have a necessary commonality: allegory is a generative mode of creation *and* interpretation which, once initiated, continues to connect upon contact, whether that contact is medieval or modern. Allegory forms the networks within most mixed-manuscripts and provides the associative power (or at least prompts the approach) for freeform cross-interpretation. Allegory is also technically explicatory: it is a mode by which the teleological significance of a historical event or secrets of a literary work are made clear. The work of compilation is the 'authorial' process of weaving works together into a larger narrative. Granted, most of these works were composed by different people and, likely, for different individual purposes. But when there is institutional or individual desire for an overarching narrative of complexity unpredicted by any of the initial authors, a mixed-manuscript is undertaken.

This process has its clear analogue in scriptural composition, compilation, and interpretation. Jewish and Christian scriptures were written individually by, traditionally, several

[105] *Généreuse naïveté, mais ardeur nécessaire, faute de quoi le départ est taré, racorni. La première parole est pour crier cet unique du monde et de l'être. Dépasser l'ambition extatique de l'Un, c'est construire avec patience, sans renier l'éclat primordial, les paliers d'une connaissance qu'on sait enfin approchée.[…] Mais comment distraire l'oeuvre des ouvrages qui la constituent? Y aurait-il une «intention» (quelle?) qui serait au long de ce trajet, inséparable de la matière plus ou moins parfaite que proposeraient les livres?* [Generous naiveté, i.e. a necessary ardor, otherwise departure is mad, twisted. The first utterance is to shout its uniqueness and being. To pass beyond the ecstatic ambition of the One is to build with patience, without disowning the primordial brightness, the stages of an awareness which we at last know has approached. […] But how to distract the work from the works which constitute it? And would there be an 'intention' (which?) which would remain on this trajectory, inseparable from the material more or less complete than the books would suggest?] Édouard Glissant, *L'Intention Poetique* (Editions du Seuil, 1969).

individual human authors by inspiration, Christians would have it, of God through the Holy Spirit. These works were written for specific audiences (e.g., as a legal guide for the nation of Israel or as correction for the congregants of the church in Corinth) at specific times. Only by compilation often motivated and informed commentary by other authorities do the individual books of the Bible form what would become called the Bible. The authors of the New Testament books were recipients of, and, in the case of Paul at least, experts in the already-compiled Jewish scriptures and made explicit commentary on those works. Furthermore, that commentary is often intended to re-write and re-interpret the significance of the Jewish scripture. Take, for instance, the following passage from Galatians 4:23-31:

> But be zealous for that which is good in a good thing always: and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I am in labour again, until Christ be formed in you. And I would willingly be present with you now, and change my voice: because I am ashamed for you. Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, have you not read the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, and the other by a free woman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman, was born according to the flesh: but he of the free woman, was by promise. Which things are said by an allegory. For these are the two testaments. The one from mount Sina, engendering unto bondage; which is Agar: For Sina is a mountain in Arabia, which hath affinity to that Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But that Jerusalem, which is above, is free: which is our mother. For it is written: Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not: break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for many are the children of the desolate, more than of her that hath a husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he, that was born according to the flesh, persecuted him that was after the spirit; so also it is now. But what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bondwoman, but of the free: by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.[106]

Of the many allegorical reimaginings Paul presents in this passage, that of Isaiah 54 is perhaps the most striking. Following as it does on Isaiah 53, one of the most explicit messianic prophesies, Paul asserts that Jerusalem, the holy city, is the mother of Christians. He then quotes from Isaiah, asking his readers to imagine that Israel, allegorized as a barren woman abandoned

[106] All quotations taken from the Douay-Rheims translation.

by her husband and married to God in Isaiah, was barren until Isaac and the chosen line, but also that Christians, by faith, are just as much the referents of this passage. The referential allegory Paul uses serves, for his readers, to unify what might be otherwise disparate but vaguely related books. By hooking in Isaiah 54 (and other passages), Paul prompts compilers to include his work in The Book. Once Isaiah and Galatians are in the same compilation, the two are more likely to be co-considered not as individual works but as the same narrative or soteriological structure which are incidentally separate. The time that separates their compositions only reinforces the truth of the connection, and the incidentally separate human authors only serve as proof of the powerful unity of divine authorship or inspiration.[107]

The mode of composition-for-compilation that Paul uses in Galatians is similar to the second stage of the process in question, that used by authors like the *Piers*-poet, although Paul's is more along the lines of an ancient/modern referential model, and the *Piers*-poet employs the composition-compilation model. I suspect that Grosseteste is an early adopter of the model that the *Piers*-poet would later employ, and this accounts for the unapologetic narrative seams which appear between the scriptural summary, daughters' debate, castle of love, and soteriological account. This mode of composition flatly combines the two levels of authorship from the first: some chapters may be originally composed, the links between the chapters are made explicit and

[107] Perfect unity is only divine. Although the fantasy of authorship imagines a single authorized text, in the case of something like *Piers Plowman*, a work written over many decades, there are many moments of 'authorization,' and authorial finality is usually determined externally – by death or, today, the external constraints of a publisher. The will of the author is never singular, uncompromised, and self-complete – one imagines an audience, fears a publisher's deadline, anticipates an editor's comments in the act of composition. As I will show in later chapters, dread of misquotation and mis-interpretation fills the author of *Piers* because he fears, from time to time, God and the institutional church. God does not fear himself, and his 'authorial will' insofar as the composition of scripture requires it would be absolute and uncompromised by fear. Even a singular author, when discussing the Middle Ages, is faint imprint of print culture – in critiquing Bédier Nichols writes "the analogy of the modern holograph manuscript is so real that Bédier even postulates a medieval poet, like Jean Renart, revising his work for a "second edition" on the occasion of copying a new manuscript for a patron" (6). Our understanding of 'versions' is modern – thinking about producing a second edition of a work complete, discrete, and disseminated is a ghost of print and does not accord with the material evidence remaining from the late medieval period.

streamlined for purposes of continuity, but the complexity of a widely variegated composition remains.

The depth of reality or thickness of effort for a lasting and exciting composition need not come from a compendious imagination, weaving a grandiose illusion of originality, or cannibalizing one's own life – the selection of sections or whole works for inclusion in a larger work (what I might now tell my students is 'plagiarism' or 'stealing') is merely part of the compositional process. A compiler-author's intervention, the originality of the task, is the conscious streamlining of the narrative, or at least the soldering together of the lifted sections. They thus do work of a chapter-author, a compiler, and anticipates some of the interpretive moves previous expected from the audience, which limits the open possibility of an actual mixed-manuscript but directs the attention of the audience and their associative arcs. Audience expectation as encased in manuscript context often counters authorial inclusions – its critiques of institutional corruption and individual self-doubt, at odds in the poem itself, seem to be "unproblematic" for its later audiences.[108]

Before the process of vernacular narrative construction emerges as a unit of thought in Middle English practice, the primary work of what we now call authorship was one of compilation and the provenance of 'books' was compilations for most of the history of Middle English.[109] The work of a medieval reader was to make inferences and connections across the smaller works included in the manuscript before them. The works composed by 'authors', then,

[108] Middleton, "Audience and Public," p. 111.
[109] Compare Christopher Cannon's *The Grounds of English Literature*, in which he argues "Until the fourteenth century, in fact, English literature has seemed an 'unstable continuum' a shape in which the spaces between texts are more common – and therefore seem more definitive than writings themselves (32).
A notable and underexamined exception to this practice is *Layamon's Brut,* which I do not take as an object of study. Consider, however, the opening lines, which contain no fewer than nine of the work's 38 mentions of 'book,' indicating that its author too is cognizant of the compilation-inspired work he creates.

were akin to chapters or sections: a prayer to Mary, a poem about carpenter's tools, a treatise on spheres, or a cosmological poem were each composed for the purposes of the writer and an immediate audience. If one desired to have a translation of a commentary or wished to have a prayer to Mary or a cycle of sermons to hand in writing, to be distributed or passed on, one would compose the work for the immediate purpose. The second layer of authorship (often collapsed in modern composition processes) is that which is referred to as compilation.

English mixed-manuscripts encourage us to think of texts as social entities rather than autonomous objects.[110] At least for the purposes of literary criticism, a given work's place in a manuscript affects its meaning to a degree, and its textual companions – i.e. works which medieval readers frequently bound together across manuscripts, time, and compilers. Medieval works benefit from contextual reading, adding textual companionship to comparative *operati*. Thus, the context of Orfeo-in-Ashmole 61, for example, differs from Orfeo-in-Auchinleck. By tracing the similarities between the contexts of a focus work, especially when an identical work appears in both. Orfeo appears in Ashmole immediately after a poem condemning sloth, "Agenst sleuth / Rise up, unlust, oute of thi bed!".[111] Sleep, relaxation, and the perils thereof provide key plot points in *Orfeo*, but when the poem in Ashmole 61 accompanies a poem condemning the seven deadly sins ("The Wounds and the Sins"), the famous fairy-story looks different in context. Following *Orfeo* is another moralizing piece, often referred to as 'Vanity'. It begins with a restatement of Ecclesiastes:

> O vanyté of vanytés, and all is vanité.
> Lo, how this werld is turnyd up and downe:
> Now wele, now wo, now tranquilyté,
> Now werre, now pese and now rebilyon (1-4).

[110] Hanna, 1984.
[111] George Shuffleton, in his explanatory notes, hints at a similar possibility: "*Vanity* can be read as a coda to *Sir Orfeo* (item 39), another work that muses on the fragility of human life" (589),but says nothing of the poem preceding it.

> [oh vanity of vanities and all is vanity
> Lo, how this world is turned up and down
> Now war, now peace and now rebellion]

Moralizing, religious material surrounds Sir Orfeo in Ashmole and accompanies it elsewhere. This does not necessitate that Orfeo is a 'moral tale' because it could be contrapuntal, but it does suggest that discussion of mortal sin and moral apocalypse are incumbent to understanding Orfeo, which reads like an apocalypse in the company of these companions. It seems that compilers and readers we can imagine had sloth in mind or at least ready to hand in framing the story through Herodias's kidnapping-via-slumber.

Each text speaks back to each – 'The Wounds and Sins' speaks to Orfeo, and Orfeo back to 'Wounds.' Nevertheless, modern critics find a 'moralizing' approach to this poem unattractively didactic. A.C. Spearing, for instance, wrote, "I cannot see the smallest sign that the English poet represents Herodias's behavior as sinful…. a severe reader – a monk, let us say, judging by the standards of monastic asceticism – might well see such activity as exemplifying sloth, but then such a reader would be highly unlikely to waste his time on the equally slothful activity of reading or listening to *Sir Orfeo*".[112] This mode of criticism violates Spearing's later suggestion that in

> medieval culture it was not the consciousness of men that determined narrative, but narratives that determined their consciousness. An exaggeration, perhaps; but I do not think it too much of an exaggeration to say that whereas the modern assumption has been that consciousness precedes narrative, the medieval assumption appears to have been that narrative preceded consciousness.[113]

Spearing admits that this estimation is prone to exaggeration, but nevertheless holds on to the suggestion that 'narrative' precedes consciousness. I would modify this further – 'narrative' is

[112] A. C. Spearing, *Readings in Medieval Poetry* (CUP Archive, 1989), 75.
[113] Spearing, A. C. 2005. *Textual Subjectivity: The Encoding of Subjectivity in Medieval Narratives and Lyrics*. OUP Oxford.

too directional for my purposes here and 'consciousness' is difficult to precede experientially. Instead, I suggest that association precedes and enables conscious, interpretive thought. Consciousness required for association of one piece with another, if that is indeed what occurs, is not interpretive but a mode of arrangement, which is aesthetic and instinctual. Only when a piece is 'on display,' when the invitation-to-interpret is obvious does critical or interpretive thought seek to make sense of the conjunction. The act of association is motivated by aesthetic judgment or convenience, the act of interpretation accomplished by critical and conscious cognition. The conjunction of these pieces, when it is brought to light, suggests at least two possibilities – either these companions suggest that Orfeo is a cautionary tale about sloth or that the workmanlike moral verses against sloth are regularly accompanied by a temptation to sloth in the exciting fairy-story.

What should we do with this information? Well, for one, I think it becomes difficult to flatly reject an allegorical, or at least a moral reading of *Orfeo* as a sort of tale of eremitic heroism and forgiveness. A copy of *Orfeo* appears in Auchinleck followed by "The Four Foes of Mankind" which resembles 'Vanity' in its pessimistic outlook, but is preceded by a group of romances, so we might suppose that the Auchinleck-*Orfeo* is less likely to be a temptation and more likely to be a 'romance with a lesson'. Those romances are preceded by a paraphrase of Psalm 51, a Psalm of David which would have had an illustrated initial of David the King, and the "Sayings of St. Bernard" before that. Spearing's suggestion for the poem's modern significance could have been corroborated and expanded: he remarks, "For the twentieth-century reader, then, *Sir Orfeo* can be read as a poem about psychological disintegration and how it can be overcome by the healing power embodied in music. The association of music with healing, and especially with the healing of mental disorders, is also traditional. One of the best-known

cases was David's use of his harp to heal the madness of Saul; and David and Saul are sometimes compared as harpist-kings in medieval commentaries on the Orpheus myth".[114] Here, Spearing hits upon significance quite well-aligned with what the manuscripts offered but does not mention that medieval readers probably came to similar conclusions if the text-groups which surround Orfeo are any indication of medieval critical reception. Spearing's close readings are so well-attuned that he hits on resonance that many readers, myself included, would miss but for the material association.

Recapitulation || Chapters

Chapter One, "Surprise Christ as political fantasy," showcases mixed-manuscript reading in an English manuscript of unusual size, Bodleian Eng. poet. a. 1, colloquially known as the Vernon Manuscript. The chapter focuses on the companion texts of "Ypotis" and the Middle English "Castle of Love." Ypotis is a relatively unknown dialogue between the emperor Hadrian and 'Ypotis,' a name derived from Epictetus, the stoic philosopher. The catechetical poem offers at once a Christian rewriting of a classical political dialogue and a piece of stoic wisdom, but by rewriting Epictetus's character to be the Christ child, the poem fantasizes a ruler who listens seriously to Christian advice about humility, refraining from sin, and whose stoic satisfaction is not contentment-in-the-world but Christian salvation. Its pairing with Grosseteste's "Castle of Love," steers the latter poem – ostensibly theological instruction for the laity – toward its political potential. This time, the poem takes commentary on two lines of Psalm 85 and turns it, for part of the poem at least, into a judicial dialogue between the daughters of God deciding the fate of Adam (read: everyman) before the almighty judge. While each poem on its own reads as primarily catechetical, the habitual conjunction of the two in manuscripts suggests that the two

[114] A. C. Spearing, *Readings in Medieval Poetry* (CUP Archive, 1989), 80-1.

together are part of a Christian political fantasy that imagines a world in which rulers genuinely listen to the advice of the 'least of these,' the traditionally powerless who embody the true spirit of Christ. The fantasy might have been realized – at least twice, the advice found its way into judicial guidance and political upheaval.

Chapter Two, "Pieces" shows how the cluster in Chapter One is absorbed by *Piers Plowman* A, a work which also appears in the Vernon manuscript, in the process of forming *Piers Plowman* B, a later version of the poem. In A, B, and C, Passus 4 focuses on what is frequently called the 'Trial of Wrong,' who has committed a litany of crimes against a personification of Peace. The episode ends with Peace being heard, the King calling for Peace, and Wrong settling the case out of court with the help of Meed. This ending was apparently dissatisfying to the *Piers*-poet, and he centers Passus B.18 around a rewritten version of Grosseteste's "Castle of Love," relying on a mode of association familiar to readers of mixed-manuscripts both to compose the poem (forming a new allegorical cluster around the notion of Peace) and demonstrating associations employed in reading mixed-manuscripts. This expansion, one of the most explicit in the poem, at once shows modern readers how late medieval vernacular authors harnessed the associative power of *compilatio originaliae* in combination with the poetic unity afforded by a consistent structure, *ordinatio*, and narrative voice – here, the dream-visions, consistent allegorization, passus structure, and the first-person Will/narrator who guides the reader through the poem. The unity of the two Peaces, attested by scribal confusion in RF, suggests a soteriological evolution: the much-beset farmer-Peace of passus re-allegorizes as one of the daughters of God, exalting a compromised unhappy Peace-on-earth to the heavenly star of the four sisters who, through the guidance of their sister Peace, come to a compromise that saves mankind.

Chapter Three, "The Consequences of Turning Pages: Meed, Conscience, and the Not-Pardon," looks at the authorial consequences for the *Piers*-poet of engaging in this new genre of composition that lies somewhere between authorship and compilation. The debate of Meed and Conscience, the core of the historical composition process of the poem, exemplifies the warring pressures at hand in the poem. On the one hand, Meed rewards without thought to consequence and complies with any request made of her; she exemplifies the impulse to expand, to add what texts feel right when they feel right, and not to worry about whether the inclusion is appropriate or the *auctoritates* have been selected with proper focus. Conscience, full of anxiety, wants to make sure that the consequences of selection and action have been properly considered, that the authoritative parts of quotation are complete, and that the moral consequences of Meed's "yes, and" attitude are kept in check. The tearing of the pardon provides a solution to this problem of text-stacking (dialogue) with text-splitting (commentary, sermonizing). I pair this with the pardon episode because the two taken together offer a whole mode of how one might read a mixed-manuscript. Passus 3 offers an iterative, additive reading method, and the pardon in Passus 7 a splitting-open, contemplative method more closely resembling commentaries or sermons.[115] By splitting the pardon in half and thus turning its documentary seed to a three-leafed sprout (do well, do better, do best), the poet finds power in gradation and redeems Meed's method by adding selectively to create shades of meaning rather than disagreement, disjunction, and lopped quotations.

[115] Elizabeth Salter argues convincingly for this structure in *Piers Plowman: An Introduction*. Perhaps akin to Bernard's suggestion that contemplation 'splits open' the seed of a verse. Schmidt suggests "the monastic philosophy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, especially the Bernardine tradition of interior self-understanding becomes after the turning-point of the first inner dream the guide that directs the Dreamer's 'spiritual journey' through the *Vita*" (296).

Chapter Four, "The Last Medieval Scribe: John Colyns and Authorial Control," takes the twilight of manuscript culture as its focus. For a few years until c. 1521, a mercer named John Colyns constructed a paper mixed-manuscript, Harley 2252, which contained, among other things, the only extant copy of the *Stanzaic Morte* and the earliest copy of John Skelton's *Speke, Parot*. Colyns accomplishes at least two things with this pairing – by associating the traditional Arthurian *Morte* and the newly-composed and politically seditious *Parot*, he updates the staid Arthurian composition to suggest that its fictional moments of paranoia about treason are applicable in the days of Henry VIII, when he is assembling his book. He simultaneously protects the already allegorically elusive *Parot* from the danger of its anti-Wolsey implications by associating it with a traditional poem concerned with political unrest, obscuring the specifics with the covering of romance. Lastly, Colyns bookends Skelton's poem with Latin notes, attributing any increase in its fame or status to his association with the high-status poems he selects for his book. By associating the up-and-coming laureate – already politically well-connected – Colyns imagines that his mixed-manuscript provides Skelton's poetry with potential textual companions that would ensure its lasting fame. His hope is well-founded but dashed only a few decades later when Skelton ensures his own fame in a series of authorized printed edition.

CHAPTER 1: SURPRISE CHRIST AS POLITICAL FANTASY

Tell me, my daughters,--
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,--
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge.
-King Lear

This MS is indeed a noble and admirable one.
Its immense size, and the beauty of the vellum,
of the writing, and of the illuminated letters have long since attracted notice ...
It would be a good deed to print it all.
(W. W. Skeat, 1867), qtd. Scase "Introduction"

Vernon as mixed-manuscript

The Vernon manuscript (Bodl. MS. Eng. Poet. a. 1), the making of which "must have extended beyond the 1380s and could have continued into the early 1400s or beyond"[1] is important for the history of English Literature and unusually large.[2] I have limited the following

[1] Scase, "Editorial" Wendy Scase, *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript: The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. A. 1* (Brepols, 2013) p. 3.
Evelyn Mackie lists textual companions for the AN *Chasteau*: "*La Seinte Resunection,* a drama on the resurrection, survives in two manuscripts, *Le Roman de Philosophie,* Simun de Freine's late twelfth-century adaptation of Boethius' *Consolatio philosophise,* is extant in three codices, and the *Romance of Hom,* a mid-twelfth century romance, in five. Each of these texts is found in manuscripts which also contain *Le Chasteu d'amur"* (4), suggesting that textual companionship is language-specific.

[2] I.A. Doyle's description of the manuscript (selected) is as follows:

> The Vernon Manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. poet. a. 1) and its 'sister', the Simeon manuscript (London, British Library, Additional 22283) are the largest known collective volumes of Middle English verse and prose, both physically and in number of texts. Vernon may have had when complete 422 or 426 leaves, it still has 350, and, with its binding, weighs about 22 kilograms. Simeon now has fewer than half of its probable 382 original leaves. The Vernon Manuscript's leaves each measure 544mm high by 393mm wide (approximately 21½ x 15½ inches) and Simeon's 585mm x 390mm. Vernon's leaves were possibly 550mm x 400mm before trimming and Simeon's 590mm x 400mm.
> […]
> Despite the number and diversity of the contents and the length of time required to obtain exemplars to copy and to illuminate, there are few main structural divisions. The first quire in the Vernon Manuscript (fols i-viii), the Original Table of Contents and an English prose translation of Aelred of Rievaulx's De Institutione Inclusarum, ascribed to Thomas N, was written by a different hand (designated Scribe A) from the rest of the volume. He also wrote the folio numbers on the verso of each opening through nearly all the volume, and listed them in the Original Table of Contents. Since Scribe A fails to list and foliate some contents (after fol. 394vb) at the end of Part IV, or any of Part V, the listing and foliation must have been done before these last items had been written or were known.

study to two works which appear one after the other in Vernon: *Ypotis* and the English translation of Grosseteste's *Castle of Love* which appear together not only here but in Ashmole 61, BL Add. 22283.[3] Vernon has several intriguing features for a mixed-manuscript; not least is the index of titles and the title of the manuscript itself: the manuscript lists 394 numbered sections, but above the rubricated Roman numerals, the index begins: "Here bygynnen Te tytles off Te book / Tat is cald in latyn tonge salus anime and in englyhs tonge sowlehele" [Here begin the titles of the book / that is called in the Latin tongue, "salus anime" and in the English tongue "sowlehele". [4] In short, the whole production, cover to cover, is concerned with the healing of souls and is also a book. Susanna Fein remarks,

> This poetry was not merely to be read (as we might be prone to think of reading as a simple straight-once-through process), but rather consumed in a metaphysical sense, so that it might bring "sowlehele" to the devout, penitent user. One needs to picture the meditant man or woman retreating regularly to a private spot, reading a text through many times over an extended period, quite likely committing it to memory, and pausing

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> […]
> Although Parts I-V were all copied by the one main hand B, with only one change of script (to Textura for the diagram on fol. 231v) and the supply of some rubrics and all folio numbers by Scribe A, the separable parts need not all have been written in the order in which they were eventually assembled, foliated and bound. Fol. 105, which begins Part II, has a larger initial and a border with a central hanging shield, suggesting that it was once envisaged as coming first. The separate contents, or portions of them, need not have been copied without interruption, short or long. There are many changes of ink or nib at turns of pages or within them (e.g. fols 167rc, 246/7, 262vc, 263rc, 286/7, 307ra, 311ra, 317vb, 318ra, 344vab). There are occasional inadvertent variations in size of the writing, and deliberate ones for headings and endings and Latin quotations, in taller more formal display script. The overall impression is of long stints of copying. Regular spaces were left for rubrics, initials, and illumination to be supplied, done perhaps quire by quire or in bigger batches.
>
> […]
> Some of the contents of Parts II-IV of the Vernon Manuscript are found also in London, British Library, Additional 37787, a small volume of devotional verse and prose, made by or for John Northwood, Cistercian monk of Bordesley Abbey, North Worcestershire, sometime after 1388. Northwood's book is closely related to the Vernon Manuscript in language, the texts, and their grouping, so that Mrs N. S. Baugh concluded that the Vernon Manuscript was from a common source; but there is no similarity in script or decoration between the two.

[3] Ypotis also appears with a copy of *Piers Plowman A* both in the Vernon manuscript and Douce 323.

[4] This project and most projects in the foreseeable future owe a great debt to Wendy Scase, whose 2011 digital facsimile, transcription, and collected essays in *A Facsimile Edition of the Vernon Manuscript: A Literary Hoard from Medieval England* enabled scholarship on the collection in ways previously unimaginable. Before this, Derek Pearsall edited *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, which was only critically updated in 2013 by Wendy Scase's collection *The Making of the Vernon Manuscript: The Production and Contexts of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. poet. a. 1, Texts and Transitions*.

> over its words and verbalized images to make connections, find patterns, discover signs and meanings, participate with compassion in its depiction of holy suffering, and absorb its objectified shape, that is, what it becomes when perceived whole rather than as a series of discrete signifiers[5]

Fein describes here making a mental book from the physical: as the book is internalized, like medicine, it dissolves into the reader's mind and soul and heals it, knitting together the sections of the book in the reader's mind while it knits together the reader's mind. At least one of the scribes of the Vernon manuscript told later readers that the book "is cald in latyn tonge salus anime and in englyhs tonge sowlehele" – calling the book something destabilizes the mixed-manuscript until it solidifies it into a read network, like seeding a supersaturated solution to form crystals. Raskolnikov follows Fein's line and suggests that, "Using the term sowlehele has the benefit of allowing us to think in medieval terms about psychology" (10) and argues that the "term sowlehele describes works that produce a performative, didactic, and pastoral discourse aimed at explaining the self to itself" (10) and "focuses on the performative aspect of works like the Body/Soul debates; works of sowlehele enact and produce the very thing they describe" (10). The book is identifiable by its function and by its contents: it is the thing that causes soul-healing and it also has the following titles contained in it.

The work of creating a large manuscript like Vernon requires technical exactitude but has allowances in its compendiousness, a requirement that the reader take up the work for soul-healing.[6] Masha Raskolnikov, in *Body Against Soul*, reminds her readers that "[Vernon] contains many short devotional works, saints' lives, a number of debate poems, and several long works,

[5] ("Herbs, Birds, and Cryptic Words for English Devotional Readers," Essays in Medieval Studies 15 [1998]: 35–44), qtd. In Raskolnikov 9.

[6] As Susanna Fein writes, "in reading this poem of 'sowlehele,' we swallow the medicine, and each time we reread the poem meditatively, discovering more of its embedded meaning, we increase the dosage and improve its effect." ("Herbs, Birds, and Cryptic Words for English Devotional Readers," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 15 [1998]: 35–44, qtd. in Raskolnikov 9.

including the Northern Homily Cycle," and an A-text of *Piers Plowman,* all of which lend themselves to meditative reading for the soul's benefit" and that "works of *sowlehele* enact and produce the very thing they describe"[7]. In other words, the weight of the soul-healing is on the reader encountering the compendium. Its structure is suggestive and full of potential, but beyond pairing, the trace of a compiler's effort, there is no guidance for *how* the readings ought to interact, just that they might speak well to each other. The conjunction of *Castle of Love*, *Ypotis*, and *Piers Plowman* A points to two things. First, each of these texts (in their English iterations for the first two) circulate regularly in mixed-manuscripts and see a significant amount of overlap with each other directly. If one widens the scope to include mutually shared companions like *Northern Homily Cycle*, the *South English Legendary*, and *Pricke of Conscience*, just to mention a few of the most voluminous, one begins to see a how central to English literary production these groupings and their cousin texts are.

Secondly, this conjunction is reflected in later editions of *Piers Plowman* – the metropolitan outlier in Vernon, it takes into itself pieces of its regular companions, imitating the long tradition of vernacular compilation. Wendy Scase writes, "But, in the case of Piers Plowman, a 'foreign' source for an exemplar might be somewhat unexpected, given that this work was written by a poet whose origins are thought to have been in broadly the same area of Worcestershire. The likeliest location for an exemplar of Piers containing eastern dialect features is of course London, the emerging centre of vernacular book production at the end of the fourteenth century. The copying of multiple manuscripts of the B and C texts of Piers Plowman has been located in London, although the A text has often been thought not to have enjoyed much circulation in the capital. The dialect evidence of the Vernon copy of the A text, the

[7] Raskolnikov, Masha. *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory.* Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2009. muse.jhu.edu/book/27775.

earliest surviving witness to this version, suggests that the A version was copied in London and that it was to metropolitan sources that a scribe who used a Worcestershire dialect turned when he needed to acquire a copy of it". This suggests that the makers of Vernon sought out *Piers* intentionally and had to go far afield (i.e. out of their dialectical zone) to find a copy of it. This suggests that, unlike many of the other pieces gathered in the manuscript, the producers of Vernon wanted to include a copy of *Piers* and had to go to the city in which it was being produced to find one. This further suggests that *Piers* was indeed a highly desirable, cutting-edge urban production of experimental poetry, fitting into Ralph Hanna's supposition that

> the most plausible explanation of the transmissional A evidence is that, authorially, there is nothing like an A version, and that what we possess derives from an in-progress draft, probably one that had circulated in Langland's coterie and achieved what I tactfully call 'general release' only belatedly – which I would define as 'perhaps as long as a decade after'… what was surely the formal 'publication' of the B version

Much like John Colyns's early copy of John Skelton's poetry, Vernon's A-text of *Piers* should thus be considered an 'early release,' like a demo copy, a coterie copy – a work in progress, but one too hot to keep from collecting with the established verse of Castel, Ypotis, and saints' lives.

The Vernon's title, *sowlehele*, is not genre identification but rather a use for the mixed-manuscript. To avoid unhelpful genre attachment, Robert Stam in *Film Theory: An Introduction* gives a helpful reimagination:

> Genre taxonomies in film have been notoriously imprecise and heterotopic, […] While some genres are based on story content (the war film), others are borrowed from literature (comedy, melodrama) or from other media (the musical). Some are performer-based (the Astaire-Rogers films) or budget-based (blockbusters), while others are based on artistic status (the art film), racial identity (Black cinema), locate [sic] (the Western) or sexual orientation (Queer cinema). Some, like documentary and satire, might better be seen as "transgenres." Subject matter is the weakest criterion for generic grouping because it fails to take into account *how* the subject is treated (14).

Conventional definitions of genres tend to be based on the notion that they describe conventions of content (such as themes or settings) and/or form (including structure and style) which are shared by the texts which are regarded as belonging to them. If I am to define a medium, or a genre of media production (mixed-manuscript, rather than a 'text', i.e. any of the contents), then the terms for book classification (chapbook, anthology, florilegia, mixed-manuscript, and, probably, novel) are closer to artistic status or budget-based because they focus on size and a vague assessment of the contents.[8]

Each reader of Vernon (and each reader at different times), will find different mental books within the massive codex; the contents are varied enough and the book big enough to make even its most dedicated readers' mental books renew *ad infinitem*. Aiming the collection toward a goal (*sowlehele*, e.g.) allows the reader to recombine pieces around a theme endlessly to find every facet of every piece. Analysis of Vernon plays two roles in this project. It first offers an opportunity to examine the effect of reading a now well-known piece, Grosseteste's *Daughters of God*, alongside the little-examined *Ypotis* to understand how mixed-manuscript reading practice worked and how adjacent pieces in mixed-manuscripts can mutually inform and were so used.[9] Groupings of manuscripts are recognizable to medieval readers to such a degree that they form textual companionships, and those companionships take on such great gravity that

[8] Within Vernon, books both coincide with the titles and demarcate subunits of works. For instance, in the table of contents, the *Pricke of Conscience* is listed as "Te pricke of conscience, Tat is departed in seuen bokes", which are marked in the text by rubricated lines ("Her beginneT Te fyfTe Book" for example); likewise, the Ancrene Wisse "After / þe schrift . falleþ to speken of penaunce . þat is ded boote . / And so we habbeþ in ȝong . out of þis fyfþe Book / in to þe sixte . / *A*l . is penaunce" (fol. 388r).[8] Likewise, William Nassington's *Speculum Vitae* draws attention to its own construction using *boke* as the unit of the imagined whole, which is subdivided into *thinges* "And nomely . in seuen þinges to loke / As here is writen in þis Boke. (Nassington, Speculum Vitae). *Speculum* is followed by *Pricke of Conscience*, which is the most bookishly self-aware book in the Vernon-book.This grouping is noted and examined by Thomas Kittel in his forthcoming book, *A History of Contact between* Piers Plowman *and* The Prick of Conscience. Furthermore, *Pricke* and *Speculum* have a "shared vocabulary" and are "also part of a formal and geographical book along with *Somme le roi* (34-5).

[9] The larger cluster has scientific texts (*Wher the put of helle is. Of the planetes. Of the elements*), a strong Franciscan bent (the Marian orisons and two dialogues which feature St. Bernard), and further political works (*Of Robard kyng of cisile hou he was meked til he knew god*, et al.).

texts within the same travel group are from time to time attributed to the same author. *Ypotis* appears in conjunction with *Piers A* in at least Vernon and Douce 323, and Douce 323 contains Charter of the Holy Spirit, which appears in Vernon as well. *Pricke of Conscience* appears in Ashmole 61, Vernon, and Additional 36983, which has, like Vernon, Cursor Mundi, the Meditations on the Life of Christ, Ypotis, and the Abbey of the Holy Ghost. The Daughters of God / Castle of Love appears in Vernon, Simeon, and Ashmole 61. These nets of associated texts are precisely those recreated in *Piers* – pieces from Cursor Mundi and Pricke of Conscience as well as Guy of Warwicke certifiably appear in *Piers*. In addition to these influences (and indeed, countless well-documented others), the author of *Piers* inserted English translations of *Le Chasteau d'Amour* as well as *Ypotis* in the creation of a work which both gathers in the way that a mixed-manuscript and guides the reader in making the connections the author finds most compelling via allegorical guidance.

The Vernon manuscript is far and away an English manuscript – Wendy Scase notes that "many texts include Latin, and a few include French[, b]ut not text is *exclusively* in a language other than English" (5-6). Vernon is also an object that is centered around "large compilations associated with preaching and the celebration of the festivals of the Church year"[10] as well as a large number of both 'individual,' in that the rubrics indicate a separate composition, as well as embedded texts. Around 700 pages remain, and 16% -- 115 pages – are taken up by the *South English Legendary*, an anthology of saints' lives. 120 pages constitute the *Northern Homily Cycle*, another collection. Each of these anthologies regularly appears in some form in English mixed-manuscripts, and the networks in which these texts are nodes are wide-ranging. Another 150 pages contain the *Pricke of Conscience* and the *Speculum Vitae* – both of these works are

[10] Scase, 4-5.

also themselves aligned with Steiner's notion of compendium, and comparing these loose, thematized collections with the narrative of *Piers* reveals both their influence on the text and the ways in which the latter poem strikes out on its own. All in all, 385 pages – slightly more than half of the manuscript -- are dedicated to only four works – encyclopedic works to be sure, but only four. These form the core of the Vernon manuscript, the massive gravity wells, so to speak, which are circled, in this manuscript and elsewhere, by similar clusters of smaller texts. So, the Vernon has largely religious clusters at its core, but uses its weight to establish the legitimacy of English, although precisely who the audience is for the Vernon (and its sister manuscript, the partially completed Simeon, BL Add. 22283) is unclear.[11]

Englishing Romance?

Chasteau is widely collected, in Anglo-Norman in French mixed-manuscripts in the 13th century and in English in English vernacular mixed-manuscripts. Andrew Taylor notes a large number of the French productions in "Manual to Miscellany", and Evelyn Mackie lists them all in the introduction of her 2003 thesis. *Chasteau* also clusters with "Waddington's *Manuel*[; they] appear together in at least four other manuscripts… It is not just that the two are often found in the same volume; the *Manuel* is actually attributed to Grosseteste in two copies of Robert Mannyng's Middle English translation*, Handlyng Synne*" (13). Only the poems taken together suggest a political aspect – without a resonance of advice to kings, each text separately suggests a vaguely catechetical use, what Shuffleton, the editor of the Ashmole 61 version, calls "providing… education in some basic elements of the faith."[12] I suggest that these works serve

[11] Scase, p. 4.
[12] Shuffleton is quick to add, "*Ypotis* makes a strong connection between the texts that adjoin it in Ashmole 61. The text that immediately precedes it, *The King and His Four Daughters* (item 26), is also a kind of dialogue, and is primarily concerned with the establishment of Adam in paradise and the nature of his fall, and ends with a case for the necessity of the Redemption. *Ypotis* revisits all of these questions, though it has less to say about the workings of

as a 14th-century predecessor to the 'dullness' that David Lawton identified as a marker of the "impressively homogenous public voice of fifteenth-century poetry [that] was engaged in … constructing a public sphere parallel to and connected with the structures of power."[13] The cover of fiction, and its own strategies of embedding political comment in orthodox material suggests that "The Chasteau d'Amour is Grosseteste's acknowledgment of the need to set out his own pastoral theory of obligation and hierarchy in lay terms."[14] Instead of a 'homogenous voice' produced by named authors, this construction of the public sphere is accomplished by mixed-manuscripts and collections which can present specific political opinions while maintaining anonymity in their expression, setting the English context apart from the "Anglo-Norman religious writings" which accompany the French version. Combining selective anonymity with named authority creates a 'cultural feel,' or a sense of a cultural press of an avant-garde archive.

These mixed and blended texts critique centralized authority without drawing ire on living writers – rather, writers of the past and encoded anonymous productions combine in a slurry of suggestions without possibility of individual prosecution. This pairing of poems doubles down on the wise child paradigm and allegory as political guidance. The two together suggest a powerful, youthful medieval fantasy that replaces the tired antique legal code and wisdom of emperors with dynamic, allegorical guidance. Where before men and classical learning were the best advisors, here women and children become wise advisors and the interrogators of the staid and ineffective power structures borrowed in from the classical period.

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the Redemption and more to say about the creation," but this is less interpretation that a remark on its resemblance. "Introduction"

[13] David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54, no. 4 (1987): 761–99, https://doi.org/10.2307/2873098 p. 793

[14] Hoskin, Philippa. *Robert Grosseteste and the 13th-Century Diocese of Lincoln: An English Bishop's Pastoral Vision*. BRILL, 2019.

No longer bound by Hellenistic misogyny, these poets dream of a political age guided by the exemplum of the gospels in which the God-man points to children, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha, and the woman who anoints him as exemplars of faith and as having insight superior to the academics and apostles.

General national application of religio-political models to real-world kingdoms which were set largely amidst political persecution is no easy task. It is this task that Grosseteste's poem tackles – how might one avoid widespread imprisonment or killing citizens in the name of a moral standard while accounting for fears of political dissolution? The Daughters of God was, in a reading influenced by its pairing with *Ypotis*, developed to solve the problems which arise from the application of principles aimed at the salvation of an individual to governance of a state. His poetic theory had practical application, and Grosseteste had a powerful ear in Simon de Montfort to implement his theories, Philippa Haskins includes *Chasteau* as a record of Grosseteste's suggestions:

> Here Grosseteste described to Simon de Montfort his duties when acting as a judge: it was his responsibility to create a balance, and to make sure he shows both justice in deciding guilt, and mercy in handing out punishments. As Grosseteste noted in his Anglo- Norman work, the *Chasteau d'Amour*, justice, that is just punishment, was itself a form of mercy. While lenience was not in itself meritorious, too harsh a punishment, wrongly meted out, caused resentment, not personal reflection.[15]

Grosseteste embedded real suggestions for governance in a poem ostensibly about While the poem might initially appear to be mere catechetical material, its position suggests that it is a work addressing, in its own way, problems of moral governance by religious leaders via affectively suggestive works.[16]

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[15] Hoskin, Philippa. *Robert Grosseteste and the 13th-Century Diocese of Lincoln: An English Bishop's Pastoral Vision*. BRILL, 2019, p. 70.

[16] *Piers* makes this argument on the personal level. As David Lawton writes about the first appearance of Piers, "It is, as it were, a question of kingship: man must govern himself in a wise and godly fashion as a king should govern a

Analyzing the pairing of the English "Daughters of God" and *Ypotis* in the Vernon manuscript shows the interpretive possibilities arising from two historically associated but not obviously related to modern readers because they are most often edited separately, if at all.[17] This reading method tests the viability of the relational reading method that was widespread in the late Middle Ages, a relationality carried out via allegorical interpretation of text groups. One of the frequent applications of allegory is to imagine how a compelling narrative or important text might fit a situation, context, or narrative which is apparently unrelated. One such application, especially for medieval rulers, is to imagine what Christian governance might look like in opposition to the ancient political theory. After the Donation of Constantine, the operations of the Christian church were constantly enmeshed in the political realm and more subject to corruption and influence thereby. So, what to do when, centuries after Constantine, the Church not only holds property and power, but also has either effect on or control over most governmental affairs in one way or another?

Daughters of God as a legal text has roots in Hugh of St Victor's sermon, but "the four virtues are called neither 'sisters' nor 'daughters of God'... [but] in Bernhard's [sic] sermon Misericordia… explicitly calls God her 'father'".[18] The "sister-/daughter-allegory is not yet consistently developed," though Mercy is consistently a 'daughter' of God in keeping with 2 Corinthians 1:3, where God is referred to as the "father of all mercies" (411). Bernard of

country. The ideal, on the social level, is clearly not the actuality: Piers's failure to keep order in his half-acre is a sure sign of this, and Piers himself articulates the precondition, individual penance on a universal scale: "Of preyeres and of penaunce my plou3 shal ben hereaftir" (A VIII, 106)." David A. Lawton, "The Unity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry," *Speculum* 58, no. 1 (January 1983): 72–94, https://doi.org/10.2307/2846614, p. 77.

[17] Shuffleton's TEAMS edition of Ashmole 61 is a notable and admirable exception to editorial habits of extraction; his volume inspired and enabled much of the theory in this chapter and beyond. "Codex Ashmole 61: A Compilation of Popular Middle English Verse | Robbins Library Digital Projects," accessed June 28, 2022, https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/shuffelton-codex-ashmole-61.

[18] Mattias Tveitane Mattias Tveitane, "THE FOUR DAUGHTERS OF GOD: A Supplement," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81, no. 4 (1980): 409–15. See also his "The Four Daughters of God in the Old Norse King's Mirror," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73 (1972): 795-80.

Clairvaux is still the most likely source for sister-centered developments, thought Tveitane remarks that Julien de Vezelay should be considered another 12th-century contributor to the increasingly popular narrative. Hugh's, Bernard's, Innocent III's, and the Rex and Famulus author's compendia are all likely candidates both for Grosseteste's composition and for *Konungs skuggsjá* as well. Grosseteste's version was widely adapted and re-written as literature while *KS* was incorporated into the legal code of Norway. By the 14th century, the political potential of Grosseteste's composition was, as Vernon shows, well-known and incorporated into this mirror-for-kings cluster. Political advice via literary production is merely a suggestion – fictional exemplars are not codified as incorporated documents in English law code but as modes of interaction in the courts themselves.[19] The literary production thus does not *become* law but informs how one should perform it.

Associating the Daughters of God allegory with proper governance first appears in *Konungs skuggsjá*, which is retold in the *Code of the Norwegian Realm* in 1274. In particularly difficult cases, judges were urged to read the four daughters story aloud to temper their judgments, suggesting that the Adam and Eve are tried by God, who relies on the four sisters, his daughters, to pass just judgment.[20] *Konungs skuggsjá* had to have been written between 1143

[19] For a full discussion of fictionalizing as a mode of legal discourse, see Elise Wang's forthcoming book, *Felony's Dark Imaginings*.

[20] As Jorn Oyrehagen Sunde translates in "The Virtues Building Jerusalem: The Four Daughters of God and Their Long Journey to Norwegian Law in the Thirteenth Century" from *Tracing the Jerusalem Code*:

> (There have been many judgements in which God has punished [judges] severely because they have been too lenient, or even more severely because they have been too strict. And that is why they shall judge leniently if the arguments balance each other, because the balance of justice is very fine. But the more find the balance, the more blessed are those who manage to please the four sisters, who shall be present in all just judgements which delight God and seem well measured to man. These are Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace. Mercy shall guard the judgement from anger and hatred. Truth shall see to it that lies are not told. Justice shall see to it that the judgement is not imbalanced by injustice. The task of Peace is to hold back so that an excessively rash and harsh judgement does not corrupt justice. And the judges shall see to it that these necessities for settlement are present in all judgements. And to guard against misjudgements one must be familiar with the pitfalls, and keep in mind that there are four reasons for false judgements. Either they are made through fear — if one fears the person on trial. Or they are made through greed — if one takes bribes. Or they are made through hate — if one hates the one on trial. Or they are made through

because of the "allusion to the Byzantine emperor Manuel Comnenus" (60) and its inclusion in the *Code*, which was composed probably starting at the latest in 1270. Given internal legal evidence, 1260 may be the terminus ad quem of its composition. In most accounts, the Norwegian version is said to develop independently in Old Norse, but the similarities of *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Chasteau d'Amour* are striking. Jessie Murray, whose 1917 edition of *Chasteau* still stands, suggests that "On peut donc sans risque d'erreur grave placer la composition du Château d'Amour vers 1230."[21] Kari Sajavaara calls the Latin *Rex et Famulus* a "Latin prose exemplar of the *Four Daughters of God*" on the basis of Sister Mary Immaculate's (called Sister Mary Creek in Sajavaara's book) 1942 *PMLA* article "The Four Daughters of God in the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Court of Sapience*". [22] Sister Mary actually remarks "the dependence of the *Rex et Famulus* on Bernard's sermon [is] obvious enough" (955) and actually wonders, "Was Grosseteste, then, the real author of the *Rex et Famulus*?" (964), but dismisses this hypothesis as unsustainable, continuing

> While one would like to think so, the absence of definite Grossetestean traits of style makes it apparent that the reference to Lincolniensis was only an illustration of the custom of accrediting the best-known writer of a theme with the authorship of the original or its several versions. [...] If he [the Ashmole translator] found the episode in some version of Le Chasteau d'Amour it seems that at least a few of the extant manuscripts would contain it. It appears more likely, therefore, that the poet was drawing on the Latin source. He may have thought that Grosseteste was the author of this work also.

> friendship — if one will aid one's comrade. And it is badly-done when these bastards are welcomed, and the four legitimate sisters chased away, since the judgement will hence be viewed as a misjudgement in the eyes of man and even more so in the eyes of God. That is why it is better if this chapter is read loud when a sentence is to be passed in a major case.)

Jørn Ø Øyrehagen Sunde, "Chapter 23 The Virtues Building Jerusalem: The Four Daughters of God and Their Long Journey to Norwegian Law in the Thirteenth Century," in *Chapter 23 The Virtues Building Jerusalem: The Four Daughters of God and Their Long Journey to Norwegian Law in the Thirteenth Century* (De Gruyter, 2021), 500–519, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110639438-024.

[21] Robert Grosseteste, *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's Chateau D'amour. Edited by Kari Sajavaara*, 1967, 64.

[22] Ibid., 67

Rex et Famulus antedates the vernacular compositions by at least a century in MS. Royal 6. A. xiii fol. 173r-174v and, at least in the flight of Peace, have structural similarities.[23] The origins of Grosseteste's version are complicated and overlapping, but one version or another takes much of Northern Europe by storm, starting in the 12th century, and continue to be retold through the 14th, when, now translated to English, it is written into the end of *Piers*.

The 'Castle of Love' (aka 'Daughters of God') [24] and Ypotis make up part of a Franciscan religio-political cluster (one of at least two – the cluster of saints' lives at the beginning of the manuscript abuts poems which have political application): continuing the explication of the active life of the soul, which is the general purpose of Vernon, in a specific mode of political fantasy. "Castle" imagines a world in which the powerful are bound by blood or moral obligation to listen to wise counsel and implement just laws[25]. The balance of the sisters presented by Wisdom in "Castle" is strikingly unconcerned with material possessions or power in reference to land, the allegorical castle is itself a place of in-betweens – not a stronghold so much as an enclosure, and notable for its location between the ditch and the tower, not as a building made for control of the landscape. And, lastly, the child Ypotis encourages Hadrian to "Forsaketh richesse and wordes winne / and taketh his penaunce in pouerte" (fol. 297v). This understanding of Vernon directly opposes suppositions like Doyle's:

> Part 3 [of the Vernon manuscript], the largest, of such a miscellany of long and short poems, after the opening Northern Homilies, with no obvious thematic sequence, that it seems likely that they were simply copied consecutively as exemplars came to hand,

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[23] Tony Hunt, "'THE FOUR DAUGHTERS OF GOD': A TEXTUAL CONTRIBUTION," *Archives d'histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire Du Moyen Âge* 48 (1981): 287–316.

Dating from C. William Marx's *The Devil's Rights and the Redemption in the Literature of Medieval England* (1995).

[24] The former title refers to Grosseteste's complete composition, which includes a harrowing, an allegorical reading of the castle as the Virgin Mary, and an extensive retelling of the life of Christ. The latter title refers just to the dialogue between Mercy, Righteousness, Truth, and Peace.

[25] Later iterations of this mode of political composition include *Confessio Amantis* VII, in which "Pagan and Scriptural *auctoritates* on politics are grouped together" in the compilation Gower assembles (Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, 184).

> either the whole contents or a selection from each manuscript. The Speculum Vitae and the Prick of Conscience are each long enough to occur normally in separate manuscripts, sometimes with other pieces, though they are found together in one fourteenth-century volume with Yorkshire linguistic features. Most of the other items are not long enough to have stood by themselves in bound volumes, but circulation and copying in wrapped quires was common....[26]

Doyle is interested in organization via length, linguistic features, or and formal features. This is only one of the ways in which modern critical obsession with genre is crippled by its own myopia; by looking only for features which align with contemporary type-constructions, critics lose sight of other organizational possibilities. Medieval compilers were more prone to organize by telos or 'contemporary use-value.' In other words, it is more helpful to imagine, based on close examination, what the work might-have-been-used-for rather than what the text "is". It is our job not to preclude possibilities outside of our own sense of how things ought to be, or our best sense of how they work now, but rather to exercise our theoretically capacious imaginations for what the link might be. To claim that a manuscript has no intentional organization, or very little, is to assume that medieval scribes were lackadaisical at best, to believe the laziest reading of Chaucer's poem to Adam Scriveyn.[27] Scribes were clearly able to plan and construct manuscripts from beginning to end into which category of care Vernon falls.

Catechism as anti-consolation

A matrixial approach is more than a contemporary assertion because it leads to previously untracked and demonstrably important interpretations of often well-known texts. *Ypotis* gives "Daughters" a scribal and a political context with which to form this matrix of meaning towards a vision of the superiority of Christian political science over ancient wisdom.

[26] Derek Albert Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript* (D.S. Brewer, 1990), p. 4.
[27] cf. Matthew Fisher, *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (Ohio State University Press, 2012).

Ypotis and *Chateau* co-reveal their influence on *Piers Plowman*. Each piece pushes the other to provide a more complete political picture, and they are also each likely candidates for structural influences on *Piers*, given that "[Grosseteste] He included elements typical of thirteenth-century sermons, *exempla*, biblical and patristic *auctoritates*, but the poem is not a sermon" (69), suggesting that *Chasteau* has a similar compilation-inspired structure. Despite Nicholas Watson's claim that "[a]s a member… of the gentry Rokele family… Langland would well have grown up with a substantial library of Anglo-Norman instructional works," Watson makes no argument that necessitates the *Piers*-poet's engagement with the French "Chasteau," meaning that his knowledge of the poem might well have been of an English translation.[28] That the *Piers*-poet knew Grosseteste's poem is true, and Watson argues for firmly for that from pages 150-3 of his essay "William Langland Reads Robert Grosseteste", noting a number of resonances that are strikingly similar in plot and image clusters.[29]

Ypotis has a less well-documented but also served as a source for *Piers.* Curtis Gruenler, in "How to Read Like a Fool: Riddle Contests and the Banquet of Conscience in *Piers Plowman,*" suggests that *Ypotis* is a candidate for a piece that the *Piers*-author might have read. Besides the inclusion of "mostly didactic" material (598), Ypotis presents individual actions in Adam's fall as corresponding to the seven deadly sins, e.g.:

> In glotenye he sunged vyle,
> Whon he him putte in þat perile
> Of þat treo þe appel to take

[28] Nicholas Watson, "William Langland Reads Robert Grosseteste," *The French of Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne* (Boydell & Brewer, May 2017), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787440135.010.
[29] *Piers* and *Chasteau* share no linguistic similarities that would imply that the *Piers*-poet's source was French. Perhaps the strongest suggestion that the *Piers*-poet's source was Anglo-Norman is that the English copy in Vernon is also the earliest extant translation of the poem. Of course, Vernon contains the earliest extant copy of *Piers Plowman* as well, so Anglo-Norman as a source cannot be established from manuscript evidence. The linguistic evidence does not point strongly to a French source, and the English translator of "Castel" does not deviate enough from the Anglo-Norman to suggest the former is a source. English versions are, I suspect, more likely candidates for source material. This does not counter the *Piers*-poet's relationship with Anglo-Norman, but "Castel of Loue" is not the strong link Watson makes it out to be.

Þat god forbed him, and his make (fol. 297a)
[In gluttony he vily sinned
When he put him in that peril
When God forbit him and his mate
To take the apples from that tree]

The Emperor asks, "What ded payeth best God of Mon" [What deed of man pays God best?], setting the poet up for a soteriological explanation, but the poem suggests – appropriately enough for a mirror for princes – that human action is capable of heavenly reward. Ypotis's response on fol. 297va touches on subjects that become some of the thorniest passages in *Piers*: "A Mon may with good word god bought / And god dede / Wynnen hevene blisse to his meede" [A man may with a good word buy good / And a good deed / wins heaven's bliss to his reward]. This injunction is followed by a condemnation of "fele dedes" [fell deeds] – essentially recreating the dissatisfying simplicity of the pardon in *Piers* B.7: do good and receive heavenly reward, do evil and receive eternal punishment.

The revelation midway through *Ypotis* that the titular character is a surprise Christ and that before that the metaphysical system was a binary of 'do good, avoid evil' reverberates in the character of Piers himself, who becomes Christ when put in contact with the Daughters of God in B.18/C.20. Even if there is no demonstrable link between the two poems, other than that they appear in the same manuscript and in conjunction with Grosseteste's *Chasteau*, these tantalizing resonances appear only when the poems are considered as a mixed-manuscript cluster. *Ypotis*'s own relationship with its apparent source text, "Altercatio Hadriani et Epicteti" is informative but loose, as is often the case with medieval translations. Consider the following excerpt taken from Daly and Suchier's edition:

23) H. Quid est mors? E. Perpetua securitas.
24) H. Quid est mors E. Timenda nonnullis, si sapiens legas, inimica vite, nomen animantium, metus parentum, liberorum preda, testamenti gratia, post obitum sermo,

> supreme lacrime, post memoriam oblivio, fax rogi, onus sepulti, titulus monumenti; mors omnium malorum finis est.
> [23. H. What is death? E. Perpetual security.
> 24. H. What is death? E. The fear of some, if you, being wise, read, the enemy of life, the name of living, the dread of parents, the plundering of children, the favor of a covenant, a discussion after death, greatest grief, oblivion after memory, the torch of the funeral pyre, weight of the sepulcher, title of the monument; death is the end of all evil.][30]

The fictionally but theoretically possible third-century dialogue is between two adults, the Stoic Philosopher Epictetus and the Emperor Hadrian, and provides a primer in stoic philosophy which is so unapologetic that it borders on the sardonic. As anyone who has taught Stoic philosophy will tell you, mere presentation of Stoic tenets is rather unconvincing, though Epictetus's Handbook does precisely this: no attempt is made to explain or meliorate the principles involved. Take the Stoic life or leave it; the responsibility is yours and yours alone.

Ypotis takes the same model – a conversation with the Emperor Hadrian – and substitutes Christianity for stoicism, a child for the adult philosopher, and a dogged sincerity for the spare wit. In fact, Ypotis is an evolution of 'Epictetus,' but the purpose at once catechizes and guides Hadrian toward a medieval vision of Christian rule. In fact, the intervention of this piece might be the suggestion that the "greater marvels of Christianity" "might be seen as a humiliation of pagan learning" (600) when "By the end of this Middle English adaptation, Ypotis is revealed to be Christ himself, and the original rehearsal of classical, schoolroom learning between Hadrian and Epictetus has morphed into the story of the boy Jesus in the temple. Because the wisdom of Ypotis is clear from the start, there is no folktale-style reversal in which the emperor is humiliated" (600).[31] The author upsets expectations to suggest that Christian wisdom, even in the mouth of a child, is superior to ancient wisdom rather than losing ground to proponents of

[30] Lloyd W. Daly and Walther Suchier, *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti Et Epicteti Philosophi* (University of Illinois Press, 1939).
[31] Curtis Gruenler, "How to Read Like a Fool: Riddle Contests and the Banquet of Conscience in *Piers Plowman*," *Speculum* 85, no. 3 (July 2010): 592–630, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0038713410001272.

classical superiority. The author reimagining Hadrian's relative leniency toward Christians as the result of a conversation with "Epictetus" the Christ-Child, and the compiler of Vernon places the two together to doubly reinforce that leniency toward common citizens is the mark of theologically sound rulership. Structurally, the surprise reveal of Ypotis's true identity is similar to that of the explicit revelation of the identity of the prisoner and the son in "Castle".

The introduction in the middle-English versions of Ypotis compares Hadrian's meeting with the child who will be revealed to be Christ similar, though we only know that Hadrian's interlocutor is a remarkable child:

> And whon þe child . of gret honour.
> Was come bi fore . þe Emperour.
> Vppon his kneos . he him sette.
> Þe Emperour . ful feire he grette.
> ¶Þe Emperour . wiþ mylde chere.
> Askede from wheþene . he come were.
> ¶Þe Child onswerde . al a pliht.
> From my Mooder . I . com now riht.
> And from my Fader . þe heiȝe Iustise.
> To techen men . þat beþ not wyse.
> Ne folfulleþ not . Godus . Lawe (fol. 296v)[32]
> [And when the child of great honor
> Had come before the emperor
> He set him upon his knees
> The emperor greeted him full fairly
> *The emperor with genteel manners
> Asked from whence he had come
> *The child answered in like manner
> From my mother I have just now come
> And from my Father the high justice]

It is not clear why the child has appeared before the emperor – simply that he has great reputation and is called before the emperor on account of that. Ypotis, however, is not interested in the Emperor's friendly line of questioning – he cuts straight to the slightly allegorical chase,

[32] All transcriptions from Scase's transcription of the Vernon manuscript.

remarking that he came just then from his mother, and he answers 'al a pliht', or out of fear. The child emphasizes his youth by remarking that the 'place he is from' is his parents, but also takes the opportunity to early hint that he is no ordinary child, since his father is the one "he calls the high justice," the highest judge there is – God.[33] This link sets up a possible allegorical network with *Chateau*, since the father of the Christ-figure, 'Wisdom' is unnamed. That would make Peace, Righteousness, Mercy, and Truth the sisters of Wisdom and the children of Justice. Ypotis, in an allegorical sense, is an ideal image for an intellectual advisor who is not himself politically powerful. Descended from a justice, the child is vulnerable in the way that Boethius was vulnerable or Socrates was vulnerable – the philosopher dedicated to the truth who works too close to a seat of power, but even more ensconced in fiction than either Socrates or Boethius. This dialogue rests on the child version of a philosopher actually being Christ himself for the rebuke to work.

Ypotis and *Chasteau*'s Wisdom are companion fictions which aim at rewriting a sense that classical learning supplies the best ethical fictions. Christ is the best character to represent that impulse, and so he receives a starring role in each of these pieces. Ypotis begins to hint at his secret identity by giving his father's name; he says that he comes from his mother just now, and "from my Father, whom you call Justice," but a literary world which mixes personal names and named personifications freely, his revelation is not a dead giveaway for his divinity. The child Ypotis is the offspring of an allegorical figure and an ostensibly human woman who is without a name at the beginning of the poem – to prevent the jig from being completely given up; justice is obscure enough. Regardless, this is a hint of something that will make sense later – this child is at once human and at once a personification, much in the way that the incarnate

[33] Perhaps a reference also to the divine child of Virgil's fourth eclogue.

Christ is at once God and man. A similar revelation occurs in Ypotis: in a dialogue largely outlining the basic tenets of Christian doctrine, the child-interlocutor Ypotis reveals himself to be Christ himself educating the emperor Hadrian about himself. The connection between 'Four Daughters' and 'Ypotis' becomes a little clearer: this is another conversation-central poem which reveals one of the main interlocutors to be Christ within a literally political poem. These revelations use ordinary legal metaphors to explain soteriological complexities as well as to propose a political schema not primarily dependent on ancient philosophy or mythic wisdom.

The trope of disappointing political leaders comes to a head when Ypotis is listing the ways in which one might end up in hell after dying suddenly in sin. It is telling at which point the emperor interrupts his monologue:

> For heore fals oþes . þat þei maken.
> Þe fend of helle . schal hem taken.
> ¶Summe be slayȝen . in þe weye.
> And summe in water . þei schulen dye.
> Al þis be tit . of heore Glotonye
> Þorw false oþes . and lecherie.
> Þen seide þe Emperour . þis leue i wel.
> Þat þis is soþ . eueridel
> [For their false oaths that they make
> The fiend of hell shall take them
> *Some will be slain in the roadway
> And some in the water they shall die
> All this be soon because of their Gluttony
> Through false oaths and lechery
> Then the emperor said this I know well
> That is all truth]

"False oaths" are the sin of the prisoner in the 'Daughters of God' -- a vague expression of sin which was politically threatening because of the way in which it threatens the delicate connections of a political order. Even the emperor's interruption is an attempt to calculate how bad sinning is:

> But tel me child . ȝif þat þou con.

On how fele deþes . may dye mon.
Þe child onswerde . deþes þre.
I . chulle ow telle . whuche þei be.
Þat O deþ is bodilich . here.
And a Mon be strong . in strengþe . and fere
In his Bodi . wiþ Inne
Ar lyf and soule . may parte a twynne.
¶Þat oþer deþ . is deþ of schame.
Ȝif Mon dye . in dette . or in wikked fame.
¶Þe þridde deþ . as seyen þis clerkes.
Ȝif a Mon dye . wiþ oute goode werkes.
[But tell me child, if you can
About the many deaths that may kill man
The child answered: deaths three
I will yell you which they are
That one death is bodily, here
And a man may be strong in strength and hale
In his body – within
Are life and soul, may part atwain
*that other death is death of shame
If man die in debt or with a bad reputation
The third death as say these clerks
If a man die without good works]

This is a relatively rote answer – the emperor can't get away with murder because he has more than bodily death to worry about. Typical of Christian moral rhetoric, the force of soul-death underpins the injunction towards proper conduct. Any leader, however powerful, might die a death of shame or a spiritual death in an instant. Ypotis is has reversed the consolation genre into a moral threat – if the Emperor does not listen to the advice of this philosopher child, he will die eternally in addition to present misery. The Emperor asks only catechetical questions, so the 'fictionalization' is thin, but Ypotis returns a hard countermand to the questions.

Unlike the Latin original, *Altercatio Hadriani Augusti et Epicteti philosophi,* in which death is 'perpetual security' on Epictetus's view, the child asserts that there are three deaths for human beings – death of the body, death of the reputation, and the death of the soul, which is contingent on the death of the body. Death is no sanctuary on Ypotis's account – it is multiple

and marks both consequence for action and a point of reckoning. Mortality is not, as the Stoics would have it, merely inevitable and something to be shrugged at and put away as another instance of inevitable. Death has slim comfort for readers of *Ypotis*, but the slim comfort is spoken to a powerful ruler who has predilections a Christian audience would find morally repugnant and harmful. The confidence with which Epictetus speaks is dangerous for rulers to possess while they act in power: this is a reminder that the emperor of Rome is not, in fact, immortal. He could die at any moment, Ypotis reminds him, and that death would be no shelter, not merely an end to suffering, but a sudden and permanent calling to account, a luxury available to Ypotis and to the ostensibly immortal daughters and son of God.

In the *Four Daughters*, the only hints readers have of a ruled class are the person of the prisoner, charged vaguely with treason, and his family, on whom Soth wreaks vengeance. Throughout Vernon, most of the works which seem to be addressed in any way to an audience which is not noble has to do with the regulation of moral behavior. The real choices available to those not born to be nobles are thus between morality and immorality -- not a life without choice, but certainly one without the latitude of nobility. The emperor is asking how many sins, unshriven, will remain unforgiven upon death, but the wise child's rebuke is initially too gentle for the emperor to take notice. The implications of the child's reminders seem to have little effect on the emperor. In a forced adaption to the catechetical, he follows the child's stern philosophy of death by asking obliquely about grace:

> Þen seide þe Emperour.
> Tel me child . paramour.
> Hou fele sunnes . beoþ vnschriuen
> Þat god of heuene . nul not forȝiuen.
> [Then the emperor said
> Tell me child, please,
> How many sins are unabsolved
> Which God of heaven shall not forgive]

For a ruler interested in overrunning his Christian subjects, this verse provides an excellent text by which one might exact obedience or patience in the face of deliberate evil. Hadrian is trying to turn Ypotis's warnings about death back on the child – if he is truly one of the "sons of [his] Father who is in heaven", he must not resist the emperor, whether the emperor do him good or ill. Ypotis answers:

> Þe child onswerde . sunnes two.
> Misbileeue . is on of þo.
> Ȝif a Mon . for no Resoun.
> Leeueþ not on godes passioun.
> [The child answered – sins two
> Misbelief is one of them
> If man for no reason
> Believes not in God's Passion]

His first sin is to disbelieve the Resurrection, which[34] is presented here as an unreasonable position – if one does not believe in the fact of the Passion, then one does not have access to reason. Ypotis briefly recounts the events of the Passion and then tells the emperor that the second sin is to have 'wanhope', or to lack faith in the potency and importance of God's mercy in salvation. The primary lesson from "Daughters" of God has ringing echoes through "Ypotis", and the overall lesson becomes clear: if a ruler neglects mercy on a national scale, his rule will end in chaos. If he neglects it personally, he will forfeit his eternal salvation. A ruler is charged with attempting not to abuse his power, and his subject is responsible for enduring the decisions

[34] St Paul the Apostle argues that entire validity of the Christian faith rests on the verity of the resurrection: "[12] Now if Christ be preached, that he arose again from the dead, how do some among you say, that there is no resurrection of the dead? [13] But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen again. [14] And if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. [15] Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God: because we have given testimony against God, that he hath raised up Christ; whom he hath not raised up, if the dead rise not again. [16] For if the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again. [17] And if Christ be not risen again, your faith is vain, for you are yet in your sins. [18] Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ, are perished. [19] If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. [20] But now Christ is risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep: [21] For by a man came death, and by a man the resurrection of the dead. [22] And as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive," (1 Corinthians 15).

and judgments of higher powers. [35]This is the intervention *Ypotis* makes in the trajectory of *Daughters*. By uniting a poem with a long spiritual pedigree with an ancient secular poem thinly veiled with a Christianized veneer, the pairing makes the poems mutually validating by uniting an ancient dialogue and an allegorization of a psalm to form coherent bond between the pair. Ypotis has lightly sprinkled allegory, enough for *Daughters* to hook the dialogue into its allegorical system and have the two operate in tandem naturally enough to form a repeating manuscript cluster.

Fantasizing a charter for Peace

The political bent of *Chateau* is an addition of Robert Grosseteste, the attributed author of the piece, who has a small handful of Anglo-Norman texts attributed to him. Evelyn Mackie remarks that the attribution of *Les Peines de Purgatorie* to Grosseteste is thin[36] and the attribution of the fascinating but still understudied *Le marriage des neuf filles du diable* to Grosseteste is unlikely given the drastic difference between its style and *Chateau*.[37] *The Rules* was "prepared for Margaret de Lacy, countess of Lincoln, twice widowed during the years of Grosseteste's episcopacy" (62), so its attribution is likely. *Chateau* is something of a surprising addition to Grosseteste's canon, but "no serious challenge has ever been raised regarding his authorship" (63). It is widely attributed to Grosseteste but was also regularly modified scribally and widely adapted into other pieces. Julia Boffey suggests that the name of a regular authorial attribution either elevates the status of the poem or outweighs the competition entirely. She writes, "the mention of an author's name in a heading or colophon must denote some attempt on

[35] Cf. *Piers Plowman* B.13.201
[36] She cites, Relihan, R. J. (ed.) (1978) 'A Critical Edition of the Anglo-Norman and Latin Versions of *Les Peines de Purgatorie'*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Iowa, the last critical edition of the text.
[37] A notable exception is C. Leglu's "The Devil's Daughters and a question of translation between Occitan and Anglo-Norman French: 'De las .vii. filhas del diable' (British Library Add. MS 17920)".

the part of a manuscript-compiler to 'place' the piece with which it is associated, and to supply the background or context. Sometimes… the emphasis seems reversed, and the prestigious name can carry more weight than the poem" (65). Grosseteste plays the former part, that of 'placing' Chasteau, establishing the place of 'Daughters of God' in English literary tradition. Like Augustine, Grosseteste, because of his reputation as an authority in combination with his ecclesiastical position, was a favorite attribution for theological works in manuscripts well beyond what modern scholars think he is likely to have written.[38]

Although the debate is an allegorization of Psalm 84, Grosseteste makes his story narratively self-sufficient by including a retelling of Genesis. The first half of *Le Chasteau d'amour* summarizes the creation of the world and sets up, via a retelling of Genesis, the legal debate over the fate of the prisoner, allegorized humankind. The vast majority of it, lines 555-1522, is taken up with a narrative retelling of Christ's incarnation in a castle allegory reminiscent of Dante's *Paradiso*, his life, crucifixion, death, debate with Lucifer, resurrection, and ascension. This portion is incorporated throughout *Piers* as well, but in lines and fragments – notably, the Castel of Caro, the Harrowing of Hell in passus B.18, and fragments scattered primarily from B.16-18. The daughters of God section, itself embedded in Grosseteste's poem, breaks free from its earlier context to land squarely in B.18.

[38] Grosseteste's attribution stretched beyond his pen, and at least one scribe wrote that he authored *Pricke of Conscience* (*Pricke* ed. Morey, n4 and compare rubrication in Digby 14) among other works. Grosseteste's name and subsequent authority is less important as an indicator of what person put pen to paper and more of under whose aegis the legitimacy of the work was initially protected and as a marker of what texts are so strongly associated with one another that they form inter-manuscript, non-topical connections. Mackie further argues that the extant manuscripts show signs of modification for particular audiences, specifically noble female readership (65-6) and also for scientific or philosophical audiences as is the case of the compilation by David Aubert (66). Compilers thought that *Chasteau*, in its Anglo-Norman iterations at least, was a work well-suited for cosmological compositions like Aubert's and as "the fullest expression of his pastoral theology for a popular audience" with special emphasis on the positive role of Mary in salvation history while eliding the traditional censure of Eve. Richard William Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Clarendon Press, 1992).

In short, most of the *Chasteau* is a verse summary of salvation history. The first section is a retelling of creation and the fall of Adam. Eve appears only as a gift for Adam "to wyve / to helpen" and is only tangentially mentioned in the fall. Adam's fall is treated almost as an inevitability: "Þo he of the Appel eet / Godes heste he to-brek" (191-2) because he "raþure he dude his wyues bode / Þen he heold þe heste of gode" (195-6). Eve totally disappears from the poem at this point. The poem focuses exclusively on Adam to provide a prisoner for the remarkable dialogue between the sisters. In order for the trial to make sense, the crimes for which the prisoner is being tried ought to be outlined. The debate of the sisters, while traditional – Grosseteste adapts Bernard of Clairvaux – is the only expansion into narrative of the sections of the poem. The fall of Adam and the gospels are already extensive narratives with long histories of adaptation and retelling.[39] Psalm 84 only barely suggests narrative, is thinly allegorized in the Midrash, and finds its place in allegorical debate poetry only in the 12th century.[40]

In keeping with Grosseteste's reputation as an intellectual with a pastoral bent, the translator of the Vernon-text adds a note that calls *Castle* a 'treatise' – like *Pricke*, notably – and describes its purpose and audience.[41] The poem was written for the benefit of 'lewed,' or

[39] Hope Travers states firmly, "Bonaventura and Grosseteste are directly dependent upon Bernard." Travers, H. (1907). The Four Daughters of God A Study of The Versions of this A11egory With Especial Reference to those in Latin, French, and English (dissertation). John C Winston, Philadelphia, PA. (111)

[40] Rebecca Moore, in "Jewish Influence on Christian Biblical Interpretation: Hugh of St Victor and the 'Four Daughters of God'" is convinced that, "The most likely scenario is that Hugh of St Victor wrote his notes on Psalm 85 before Bernard gave his sermon. The two were in correspondence with each other. Hugh or someone at the Abbey of St Victor may have told Bernard about the use of the four virtues in Psalm 85 in this new way. Both men had access to the same sources in Christian tradition. But Hugh has better credentials than Bernard when it comes to having access to the Jewish sources. So Hugh develops a non-Christological interpretation of the psalm, and Bernard re-works Hugh's interpretation into a Christological reading. This seems much more plausible than to argue that they both stumbled upon the midrash at the same time and both happened to find it rather interesting" (158) *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture*. The irony was likely lost on Grosseteste, though it is not lost on me, that his work most popular with the laity relies so heavily on a Jewish scripture and Jewish commentary on that scripture for its existence at all.

[41] A term also associated with *Piers*: "Lawton points out that among alliterative works the term 'tretise' is associated with *Piers Plowman* and *Mum and the Sothsegger* in addition to *Wynnere and Wastoure*: see Lawton, 'The Unity of

uneducated, men. 'Uneducated' might refer simply to those who cannot read, those who cannot read Latin, or those who do not have university training, since the composition lends itself well both to intertextual comparison and to being read aloud as a dramatic performance, as it is later in the East Anglian play *The Castle of Perseverance* as well as "Parliament of Heaven" from the N-town plays.[42]

> Her byginnet a tretys
> Þat is yclept Castel off loue
> Þat bisschop Grosteyȝt made ywis
> For lewede mennes by houe (Vernon fol. XXX)[43]
> [Here begins a treatise
> That is called Castle of love
> Which bishop Grosseteste made indeed
> For the benefit of lay men]

Chasteau derives from an earlier tradition begun in the Midrash Tehillim and popularized by Bernard of Clairvaux's famous sermon on the Annunciation. Its predecessors in England include a dialogue between Veritas, Justitia, Pietas, and Misericordia (notably, *not* Pax), a sermon on Psalm 84, [44] possibly written by Grosseteste's friend Alexander of Stavensby.[45] Grosseteste left his mark on the tradition by incorporating the first *narrative* allegorization of the psalm into his wider work, essentially changing medieval interactions with this psalm. The allegorical castle and restatement of creation and the crucifixion seem to be the parts most strongly associated with Grosseteste himself. The section of the poem, as witnessed by the manuscripts, which "contains only the allegory of the King and his four daughters, which constitutes approximately fifteen per

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Middle English Alliterative Poetry', p. 80; and Lawton, 'Gaytryge's Sermon, "Dictamen", and Middle English Alliterative Verse', p. 331 n. 9." ("The Need for Allegory" Breen 200).

[42] TEAMS N-Town, Play 11 n57-108.

[43] This translates:
"Tractatus in lingua romana secun
dum dominum R. lincolniensem episcopum .
De principio creationis mundi" The Latin preface to *Chasteau* eschews talking as much about the purpose of

[44] T. Hunt, "'The Four Daughters of God': A Textual Contribution," in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale etlitteraire du moyenage48* (1981): 287-316.

[45] Mackie, p. 72.

cent of the poem; the excerpt is simply titled Des .iiii. files Deu and is unascribed."[46] Rather than a mere relational matrix, Grosseteste's pastoral composition modifies the allegorical sense beyond Bernard which, in turn, added to Hugh of St Victor's to use the allegorical daughters of God as a socio-political allegorical exemplum. Hugh's allegory resembles Martianus Capella's – descriptions of place, described mood indicators, and their actions are written to accord with the allegorization required by the psalm. Barbara Newman characterizes Grosseteste's composition as "a poem in his Anglo-Norman vernacular, *Le Chateau d'Amour,* which has been described as a theological treatise in the form of a chivalric romance. Ostensibly composed for the education of the laity, *Le Chateau* lifts the 'four daughters of God' from the Talmud, makes them sisters of Christ without whom God could not govern his kingdom, and embroils them in debate over the redeemability of man."[47] The poem seems to have been written "prior to the episcopal period,"[48] and may be part of an early-career composition of a similar structure to *Piers*, that is, a compiled treatise of rewritten episodes translated and gathered from other works. Its attestation as a romance, however, likely stems from its early confusion with *Le Roman des Romans*, attested by the scribe of BL MS Royal 20.B.XIV "seem[ing] to have forgotten which text he was copying next" when copying *Romans* after *Chasteau*. Grosseteste's major innovation is making a trial into a multi-part allegory and nesting a political allegory – a sort of mirror for princes set within a gospel account. *Chateau*'s situating of the daughters' dialogue emphasizes the self-sacrificial role of rulership idealized by A Christ-figure offering himself the final political solution to the problem of the Adam prisoner.

[46] Mackie, p. 11.
[47] Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 2.
[48] Mackie 12

The translator of the Vernon edition has further bookish ambitions aligned with Grosseteste's ostensible original goal, although its link to the Bishop is attributive rather than claimed. The translator in Vernon considers the project of translation part of mixed-manuscript elucidation.

> As vche mon ouȝte . wiþ al his mihte.
> Loft song syngen . to god ȝerne.
> Wiþ such speche . as he con lerne.
> No Monnes Mouþ . ne be I . dut
> Ne his ledene . I . hud.
> To seruen his god . þat him wrouȝte.
> And maade . al þe world of nouȝte.
> *O*N Englisch . I . chul mi resun schowen
> For him . þat con not I . knowen.
> Nouþer French . ne Latyn.
> On Englisch . I . chulle tellen him.
> Wherfore . þe world was I . wrouht.
> Þer aftur . how he was bi tauht
> […]
> *Þ*Auh hit on Englisch . be dim . and derk.
> Ne nabbe no sauur . bi fore clerk.
> For lewed Men . þat luitel connen.
> On Englisch hit is . þus bi gonnen.
> Ac whose is witer . and wys of wit.
> And ȝerne bi holdeþ . þis ilke writ.
> And con þat muchel . of luitel vn louken.
> And Hony . of þe harde ston souken.
> Alle poyntes . he fynde may.
> Of vre be leeue . and godes lay.[49]
> [As each man ought with all his might
> Eagerly sings loftsongs to God
> With the speech he can learn.
> No man's mouth will be shut nor
> Will his Latin be hidden
> To serve his God that wrought him
> And made all the world of nothing
> In English I shall show my reasons
> For him that cannot know
> Neither French nor Latin.
> In English I shall tell him
> How the world was made
> Thereafter, how he was taught

[49] Both passages original to the English translations; this is a large expansion of the brief AN note.

[…]
Although it is obscure in English
And has no appeal to clerks
For laymen who know little
It is thus begun in English
But whoever is clever and wise in wit
And eagerly beholds this same writing
And can unlock from a little
And [can] suck honey from a hard stone
He may find all points
Of our belief and of God's law]

The translator of the Vernon "Castle" continues a tradition begun by Grosseteste in the Anglo-Norman. He writes,

Touz avom mester de aÿe,
Mes trestouz ne porront mie
Saver le langage en fin
De ebreu, de gru, ne de latin
Pur loer lor creatur.
Ne bouche de chanteur
Ne seit clos de Deu loer
E son seint noun nuncier!
Ke chescun en son langage

[We all have need of help, and not everyone can know the languages of Hebrew, Greek or Latin, in order to praise their creator. Let not the mouth of any singer be kept from praising God, nor from declaring his holy name. So that each in his language may truly know his God and his redemption, I begin my discourse in the vernacular, for those who do not have any Latin or learning][50]

The English is meant to continue the authorial prologue of the Anglo-Norman (quoted above), and given that "'mayster Groshede' is credited with translating the text [of the *Husbandry* treatise] 'out of frensshe and in to Englysshe,'"[51] and that title of the Vernon translation (and others) names Robert Grosseteste as the author, I suggests that the Middle English translation

[50] Text and translations of the Anglo-Norman are from Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn, Thelma Fenster, and Delbert W. Russell. 2018. *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, C.1120-c.1450*. D.S. Brewer.
[51] Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster, and Delbert W. Russell, *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, C.1120-c.1450* (D.S. Brewer, 2018), p. 41.

was thought to be Grosseteste's, although that is so unlikely as to be almost impossible. Nevertheless, I focus on the Middle English of the poem here because it was considered authorial by the compilers except where the Anglo-Norman proves interesting for modern critical purposes. French has moved from a clarifying vernacular, for the translator of the Vernon-"Castle," to another in a list of languages unknown to lay readers.[52]

The second half of this tale relies on the physical interactions between the allegorical characters suggested by the Psalm and the familial relationship of God the Father (the King) and Christ, His Son. This begins a mode of allegory which relies on familial and sexual relations between the personifications to provide the generative matrix. In Grosseteste's poem, he provides exposition of scripture via allegory (certainly a mode of creative expansion) as well as expansive composition. At its most basic, the four daughters of God is an allegorical conversation between the King (God), his daughters Mercy, Sothness, Rightfulness, and Peace. The conversation follows an account of creation (part of the same work), which provides a framework of salvation by law:

> Þat he habbe . I . wust wiþ Inne
> Þe þreo lawen . wiþ outen synne.
> Þulke two . of Paradys.
> And þulke of þe Mount . Synays.
> Þat to Moyses . I . ȝiuen was.
> Þat neuer ȝute . I . holde nas.
> Of non . þat euer dude sunne.
> Who mihte þenne . such Mon munne.
> Oþer þenchen . or I . knowe.
> Þat such wonder . mihte schowe.

[52] These notes confound somewhat the question of audience. Wogan-Browne remarks, "Legge proposed that Grosseteste wrote the Chasteau to educate the sons of Simon de Montfort (Legge 1950, 100–1), two of whom were brought up in Grosseteste's episcopal household, but Mackie's earlier dating of the Chasteau challenges this, and she suggests the Franciscans at Oxford during Grosseteste's lectorship there as a more likely audience for Grosseteste in the 1230s (Mackie 2003, 154–5)" (41). Unless the brothers at Oxford were bad Latinists (which seems unlikely), Mackie's suggestion that "manuscript evidence suggests that it was composed prior to this period, and that the text enjoyed a much wider audience, among both scholarly and lay communities" (2) must be correct and has manuscript corroboration. She notes further, "Four of the 18 manuscripts clearly identify women as part of the audience for the work" (3),

Siggen I . may . in þis stude.
Þerof . þat ich er dude
For nou Ichul tellen . of þe stryf.
Þat a Mong þe foure sustren liþ.[53]
[...that he have, I know, within the three laws without sin: those two of Paradise, and that one of Mt Sinai that was given to Moses, which was never upheld. By anyone who committed sin [For] whoever might, then, remember such a man or ponder or know him, so that such a wonder might be displayed, I may speak about him in this place about it, that I previously did {?], for now I shall tell of the debate that fell among the four sisters.]

This marks a transition point and re-entrance of the narrator to bind up the seam between the two parts. The daughters of God (or Castle of Love, the title given more often in manuscripts) is itself the product of an imaginative expansion from the eleventh verse of Psalm 84 (or 85), "Misericordia et veritas obviaverunt sibi; justitia et pax osculatae sunt", which is in keeping with a not irregular habit of psalmists to swing gently into allegorical expression.[#] The Sons of Korah seem particularly to favor allegorical and metaphorical modes of speech in their psalms. This

[53] Cele dous de paradis
E cele du mont synais.
Ke feut a Moysen donee 195
Kunke droit ne fu gardee.
De nul qui pechie feit
E ki est done ke si cler veit.
Ki de teus horn peust penser
E teu merevaille nuncier. 200
lei reposera mun dit
Si vous dirrai un respit.
Ki bien toche ma matyre
Por co le voil ci descrifre.
V n reis esteit de grant poeir *205*
De hon voleir. de grant saveir.
Iceu rois un fiz avoit
Ki trestut son seu savoit.
Tut autre tens cum fu le pere
Si est le fiz en sa man ere. 210
Dun saveir dune substance
Dun voleir dune puissance.
Par ki trestot ordineit
Quanka son reaume apendeit.
Quankil voleit comenceir 215
Par son fiz le vont cheveir.
Quatre fillies ot ceu rei
A chescune dona par sei.
Son aff er ant de sa substance
De son sen. de sa puissance.

episode has more than one allegorical figure interacting, the actions seem to be unambiguously anthropomorphic, and the immediate sense of the relationship (beyond a basic recognition of "reconciliation") is difficult to quickly ascertain, all of which combines into powerful metaphoric expression. Where "deep calls to deep" [*abyssus invocat abyssum*] could be a slightly anthropomorphized expression of an 'echo', Psalm 85 requires more work and complexity in interpretation. This requirement for effort and its status as a scriptural text make this verse particularly ripe for accumulative allegorical layering.

In instances earlier than the twelfth century, few Western allegories, if any, have robust generative allegorical matrices. Even in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis*, the allegorical marriage is between a god (symbolic in his own way, but not the sort of personification like Philology) and an allegorical figure. But let us not forget that this marriage provides the ground for the allegory to take place and expand throughout the educational schema which forms most of the material for the allegory. The allegory is deeply relational – the King/God has a generative relationship to produce his son (we might assume the relation is still with the Virgin Mary, but it is not made explicit in the text). What is not clear is what sort of generative relationship was capable of producing the daughters of God – they are allegories, yes, but they are most certainly his daughters. The son is a sort of copy or (in Trinitarian terms) of the same nature as his father:

> *H*it was a kyng . of muche miht.
> Of good wille . and gret in siht.
> And þis kyng . hedde a sone.
> Of such wit . and of such wone.
> Of such strengþe . and of such chere.
> As was his Fader . in his manere
> Of on wille . heo weoren bo.
> And of on studefastschipe . also.
> Of on fulnesse . heo weoren out riht.
> And boþe heo weoren . of on miht.
> Þorw þe sone . þe Fader al be gon.
> Þat bi lay . to his kynedom.

Wiþ wit . was his be gynnynge.
Þe Fader wolde . to ende bringe
[It was a king of much might
Of good will and of great sight
And this king has a son
Of such smarts and of such habit
Of such strength and of such manners
As was his father in his manner
Of one will they were both
And of one steadfastness also.
Of one plenty they were entirely
And both of them were of one might
Through the son the father went
All the things pertaining to his kingdom
With knowledge was his beginning
The father would bring to end]

With the father rests power and full knowledge, and through his son is the power executed – this resembles a practical relationship between and an older human king and his younger and more vigorous son for ruling a kingdom, but it also clearly applies to the process of salvation – the will of the Father (whether to save or to judge) is executed by the power of the sacrifice of the son. This account of the relationship between the king and his son is still orthodox and not particularly expansive – the language of the allegory is still vague enough for this to describe a kingdom or a mode of salvation.

The real shift in the allegory comes with the introduction of the daughters, and their status both as children of God and aspects of the king:

*F*oure douhtren . hedde þe kyng.
And to vchone . sunderlyng.
He ȝaf a dole . of his fulnesse
Of his miht . and of his wysnesse.
As wolde bi fallen . to vch on.
And ȝit was al þe folnesse . on.
Þat to him self . bi lay.
Wiþ oute whom . he ne mai.
His kindom . wiþ pees wysen.
Ne wiþ rihte . hit Iustisen.

Good is . to nempnen hem forþi.[54]
[The king had four daughters
And to each one individually
He gave a portion of his whole
might and wisdom
As would befall to each one
And it was all the one fullness
That to himself was assigned
Without whom he might not
Counsel his kingdom with peace
Nor with right nor justice
It is good therefore to mention them]

The daughters of God are refractions and so partake partially in his substance without being substantially identical in the way his son is. They have an aspect of their father's knowledge, his power, and each has an office to execute – and yet, they, like the son, have power which is sourced and identical with that of the father. This is not the end of the power dynamic, though – though the power has its source and complete form within the father, he cannot "reule… wele" (240) "withouten them every dele" (239) – that is, without each branch or aspect of his power, which the daughters seem to have final control over, he is still able to rule, but not to do so well.

[54] Quatre fillies ot ceu rei
A chescune dona par sei.
Son aff er ant de sa substance
De son sen. de sa puissance. 220
Chescune diversement
Solunc co ka lui apent.
De sa substance ot chesoune
e trestuit est substance une
ke a lur pere avenoit;
ne sanz ceo ne poeit
sun regne en pes governer
e od dreiture justiser.
Bien est ke lur nuns recorde:
La premere est misericorde. 230
Fille au rei la einz nee
La secunde est V erite.
E justice la tierce apres
La quarte soer ad avun pes.
Sanz ceus quatre ne peut mie 235
Rois governer grant seignurie.

A form of inchoate power rests with the king – although it is actually not clear if his entire power is distributed to his daughters or if their aspects only constitute a part of his total power.

However completely the power is distributed, one thing is certain – the relative influence of each daughter lies in their difference and in the distribution. Nowhere in the poem does the son differ with the father, nor does the narrator indicate that that is a possibility – apparently, because the son is so similar to the father, he does not deviate from nor impede the king's plan and offers to receive the punishment of the dishonest servant. The daughters, because they have identical substance with the father in distinct but separate parts, have capacity to disagree with, counsel concerning, and preclude any courses of action. The action in question here is redemption, cast in political language "Withoute the foure that I named / May nothing ryght be demed" (249-50), which translates the Anglo-Norman, "Saunz celes quatre ne poet mie / reys governer grant seignurie" [Without these four, I am not able to rule as king nor grant sovereignty] (235-6) The prospect of pain unto justice levied upon a poor man whom the king had elevated to great position and whom he loved dearly provides the nexus of stress which prompts the intervention of the daughters, who must be present in order for the king to rule. This pulls the poem away from being strictly a metaphor for salvation into the arena of the political.

Mercy, apparently summoned by or attuned to the possibility of pain, arrives first: she announces herself, her name, and her lineage (for the benefit of the reader). Her request, given her name, is not particularly surprising – she asks for mercy (she asks at least for his life, if not his release). Despite the rather unsurprising request, her reasoning brings new information to light: "hys enmyse dyd to hym trespas […] hys enmyse for envye / they dyde hym that trecherye" [His enemies did trespass to him… his enemies on account of envy did him that treachery] (283, 285-6). There was no mention of this in the narration of his crime – merely two

lines earlier, she states “Hys commandment sone he brake. / Judgement on hym was leyd”[he soon broke his commandment; judgment was laid on him] (260-1). Mercy presents new information unavailable to the king, that the enemies of the prisoner in question have committed the same sin against him that the prisoner has committed against the king – the breaking of an oath or the breaking of faith. This is the best defense that Mercy can imagine, a reminder of the pressures and betrayals which might bring someone into breach of the law – she does not deny the crime but mollifies with context. The teeth of her argument are logical binds but the “gode skyll” (291) of their relationship. She reminds him of her identity, “Mersy I ame” and procedes to remind him that if he wants her as his daughter, he “must have mersy and pité” (290). She does not say that he has named her, but that she is who she is, and he must honor their relationship by granting her request.

No sooner has she thus insisted, “Whyll that I may fynd mersy” (294) but the first half of the verse from the Psalm appears, ushering in Sothnes. At initial contact with allegorical engagement, the slightly more adversarial sense of *obviaverunt* is more fruitful: Mercy and Soth oppose each other, not merely that they are met together. Sothnes is summoned by Mercy’s argument and asks if she would “for hyr myld herte / Brynge this prisoner owte of smerte?” [for her gentle heart would bring this prisoner out of pain] (299-300). Is the prisoner’s pain to be forgone merely because Mercy cannot stomach it? For reasons she does not reveal, Sothnes has the greatest interest in the prisoner’s “peyn” – not the punishment per se or even his death, but that a breach of trust merits felt pain. To counter Mercy’s demand, she states that she wills that the prisoner not be released and brings an apocalyptic political threat to bear. She argues, “A trew thyng, Fader, I tell thee: / Yiff all thyng myght savyd be / For whom my syster wyll praye, / Schall non of them stond eye / I ame Sothnes… And that name I hade of thee” [I tell you a true

thing, Father: if everything that my sister prays about is going to be saved, none of them shall ever stand. I am Truth, and that name I got from you] (302-308). Sothnes makes a totalizing claim here – the issue is not this particular instance which Mercy has individually contextualized, but rather the threat of universal mercy – if mercy was granted in every case in which she asked it, nothing and no one would stand forever. It is important to remember that Sothnes is approaching the problem theoretically – the action of collapse necessarily follows from granting universal mercy. If the king grants mercy here, he might be unable to not grant mercy in the future. Just as Mercy's argument is potentially flawed because she suggests a "two wrongs make a right" fallacy as her argument, Sothnes's argument is a slippery slope, both fallacies are consistent with a version of the principles they wish to uphold.

Where Mercy offers up her father's perception of his duties to his daughter as a light threat, Sothnes makes a political threat to the kind after she reminds the king that it is he who named her:

> Men callys me kyng in every kyth,
> And yiff Sothnes wones thee wyth,
> Mersy of hym may thou have none,
> Bot I, Sothnes, fro thee gone.
> Pyté of hym may non be wroght,
> For hymselve wyll it nought.
> Kyng of Sothnes, do than ryght
> And late avenge thee of that wyght" (309-316)[55]
> [Men call me king in every region
> And if Sothnes dwells with you
> You'll have no mercy from him
> Unless I, truth, depart from you
> Pity of him may not be wrought

[55] Beau pere, ta fille sui
e de ta substance issui;
ne deit Misericorde estre oye
si Verite ne la guie.
Si ma sorur peust sauver
tuz por ki voudra prier
tune serrez ja dute,
ne nul mesfait compere

For himself desire it not
King of Truth, then do the right
And avenge yourself on that being]

Sothnes reminds the king that his subjects all call her king, suggesting that she is the face of political power in the kingdom, a statement reminiscent of the "law over king" modes of rulership, an anti-authoritarian view of kingship that Grosseteste strongly supported and included in his advising of Simon de Montforte: "Grosseteste could instruct Simon about both the salvation of souls and Magna for the bishop excommunicated transgressors of the Charter"[56] Politician as she is, she never makes her exact threat explicit, but allows the king to fill in the gaps – if she no longer dwells with the king, then how will he rule subjects who do not recognize him as king because they do not recognize him as the king. Sothness, now apparently with the king in a bind, calls in the favor and tells him that if he wants her to stay, he must have no mercy, thinking that truth her own realm is more important than her sister's equal realm of mercy. Her threat overinflates her position She counters Mercy's plea exactly – no mercy, no pity unless you want Soth, whom men call king, to leave. Either Sothness is suggesting that the prisoner will not get mercy, or does not desire mercy (ostensibly because if he did, he wouldn't have committed the crime in the first place), or a rejoinder that the king ought not to will that the prisoner have mercy. It is the last, for she continues as she has for her entire speech to command the King but ameliorates the threat with a nod to his power – a gentle (we might imagine) "King of Sothness".

Sothness makes a mistake in her final injunction, one which is unavoidable – she asks the king to "do… ryght" and avenge himself. But in asking the king to do right, she has overstepped her bounds from what is "A trew thyng… I tell thee" to what ought to be "do then ryght / and

[56] CARPENTER, D. A. "Simon de Montfort: The First Leader of a Political Movement in English History." *History* 76, no. 246 (1991), p. 15.

late avenge thee". In moving past the theoretical, she has moved past ontological questions (over which she has dominion) into moral questions, and, with the word "ryght" still hanging in the air, the poet reveals that Ryght herself has been standing there unnoticed, waiting for Sothness to finish her complaint. In stark contrast to Sothness's threats of vengeance, she enjoins the group with a "myld mode" (320), a calm mind. Right, somewhat surprisingly, has very little to say and little of her own agenda: she, like her sisters before her, reminds the king of her name and its source, but uses the state of things as they are as a justification for future action. She uses a form of petitio principi, but a particularly subtle form of it. She says, "Seth I ame Ryght and thou hast me, / As Soth it seys, it must be" (323-4) – since she is here, and Sothness says that she is here, and the king has her (no threat of separation here!), therefore the actions which the king has already taken must be right. This, of course, avoids the need to discuss hypotheticals at all. Right does not wish whatsoever that the prisoner-servant is at ease, so his current imprisonment is perfectly within her wishes.

After Right makes her wishes known, we learn why she is able to maintain equanimity – she describes herself as merely the enforcer of the will of Soth, "That Soth hath seyd, I, Ryght, it wyll / For it is reson and skyll" (327-8). What is Right to do is what Soth has said – what initially appeared to be Sothness's gaffe was actually a savvy rhetorical move. Righteousness affirms everything Soth has claimed, but not as future action and thus different, but a continuance of the current reality. That reality is that the prisoner is in prison, the trial will happen when the king wishes, and Right will make sure – "wyll have all onder hond" (331) – that he understands Soth, and that she will enforce the judgment Sothness insists on. Right, contrary to what one might expect, tells the king that she merely gives out what Soth has already said. Since Soth said it, it must be true, and Right merely enacts what Soth says ought to be the case. Right relies on the

name of her sister to make judgments but does not allow for the limitations that her person entails. The only hint of an agenda (one which appears to be tacitly present), is in her closing remarks: she reminds the king that while the prisoner "thyn hest held" (335), obeyed the king's wish, the king's four daughters "were with hym with spere and scheld" (336). Her statement here begins to be a bit dissonant – she emphasizes that Peace joined the fight for the servant when he was in favor, but the language of military support is not the language Peace herself uses. The treachery of the servant has earned Right's "vengeans" (340), since the servant has forsaken all four sisters. In the end, then, she has arrived at a collective position, one which follows the state of things as they are naturally, in Right's estimation, but one which ultimately relies on a unification of all the sisters (including Mercy, who has already flatly disagreed, and Peace who has not yet spoken) in identical hurt which logically requires that Right take vengeance. None of the other sisters nor the king have to act – if they but stand by, Right will quietly make sure the prisoner is 'uneasy', which, you must understand, is always how it was going to be.

The narrator enters here to re-set the scene before Peace speaks, remarking that "Never nouther ne speketh him good / Ne non that Merci vnderstood. / Ac as a mon misirad / On vche half he is misbilad. / Ne helpeth him no thing wher so he wende, / That his fo in vche ende / And istrumpt him al start naked , / Of might and strengthe al bare imaked" [Never another spoke good of him / none that understood the importance of 'mercy' / But as a man misadvised / on each side he is maltreated / nothing helps him wherever he goes / that his foe in every place / and stripped him naked / of might and strength made bare] (423-432 Vernon version). The narrator rather clearly takes the case of the prisoner against the arguments of Right and Soth. Soth apparently does not understand Mercy, which again undercuts the range of Soth's insight. Right is capable of passing judgment without Peace or Mercy and in line with Soth's positions and has done so.

This judgment, however, necessitates the departure of Peace and Mercy: "Ne Pees mot not mid hem be, / Out of londe heo mot fle, / For Pees bileueth in no londe / wher is werre, nuth, and onde, / Merci mot not among hem liue, / Ac bothe heo beth of londe idirue" [Nor peace might not be with him / out of the land she might flee / for peace lives in no land / where there is war, eminity, and spite] (439-444). Right and Soth are able to pass judgment, but that passing of judgment has consequences for the kingdom – when Right acts without Peace and Mercy, the land becomes a place in which war, spite, and malice exist and in which neither Peace nor Mercy can remain. This constitutes misrule according to the narratorial introduction to this episode – the rightness or truth of royal decisions cannot constitute proper rule without the agreement of Peace and Mercy. The Anglo-Norman is consistently more oriented toward its 'trial' sense rather than its political, English counterparts; in fact, even its Norwegian counterpart is advice for *judges* rather than rulers.

Misrule becomes clear in the actions taken once Peace and Mercy leave: "Him and al that of him sprong / He dude a theuwedam vyl and strong / And made agulten swith ilome / And Riht com after with hire dome" [He and all who sprang from him / he subjugated them vilely and strong / and did great injury often / and right came after with her doom] (433-436). Once Peace and Mercy have gone, not only is the prisoner enslaved, but his entire family – everyone who is related to him – his guilt is immediately transferred to everyone who is related to him and Right's judgment executed.[57] The very fallacy which Soth used to attempt to dissuade the king from Mercy – that once mercy is given to one, it might be to all – is no fallacy but actually

[57] There is a troubling parallel with this genetic condemnation that occurs in *Piers Plowman* B.18.108-109 in which the Jews are held responsible immediately after the death of Christ initiating an apocalypse for the 'faithless'. Bertz, Douglas. "Prophecy and Apocalypse in Langland's 'Piers Plowman', B-Text, Passūs XVI to XIX." *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 84, no. 3 (1985): 313–27.

becomes true of Soth's/Right's judgment: once one is made guilty, everyone who is related to him is condemned. The suspicion expressed, Soth's greatest fear, is the secret that she holds in her own heart: she fears the expansion of mercy because it constitutes a threat to Soth's plan and an appropriation of the schema she herself plans to apply. Amidst apocalyptic images of the flood which destroyed all but Noah and his sons (an anecdotal reminder of what a purely Soth/Right scheme looks like), Peace enters at long last.

The length of Peace's speech, that she has the final position, and that the issue is resolved after and because of Peace's speech all suggest that she is the most influential sister, or at least the sister who has unifying power. Peace, like her sisters before her, reminds her father who she is and where she comes from, but, like Mercy, her argument rests on her relationship to the king for its legitimacy: "I am thi doughter saught and some, / And of thi fulnesse am I come. / Tofore the my playnt I make: / Withouten me heo doth heore dom, / Ne Merci among hem nought ne com" [I am thy daughter peace and agreement / and have come from your fulness / to thee I make my complaint / without me, she imposes her judgment; no mercy comes among them] (459-464). Peace alone of the daughters is comfortable admitting her shortcomings, and rather than manipulating or threatening her father, she claims to come from the king's 'fulnesse', or his abundance. Rather than making a claim via shortage, she reminds him of the substantive link the two have – that she has a dole of his power – but in her account, it is not portion of a static whole but as the result of plenty. Her argument, at its base, is one of balance: Right has pronounced her judgment without Peace being able to be present and by excluding Mercy. The triple justification is as follows: Peace can make a proper claim because she has a dole of the king's essence and power, Right and Soth have both, together, prevented the possibility of Peace's proper exercise of power, have exiled Mercy, and so, Peace implies that Right and Soth have erred.

Peace's power is further limited without Mercy's presence, but she will continue to honor her commitment to the kingdom: "For no thing that I might do / Ne most Merci hem come to, / Ne for none kunnes fey / Ne moste ich hem come neygh, / Ak that dom is al heore owne. / For-thi ich am of londe iflowen / And wole with the lede my lyf, / Euer that ilke stryf / That among my sustren is awake / Thorw suhtnesse mowe sum ende take" [for nothing that I might do / may mercy come to them / not for any kind of agreement / might I come near them / but that doom is all their own / on that account I have fled the land / and will lead my life with thee / ever that same strife / that lives among my sisters / through reconciliation must come some conclusion] (465-474). Peace and Mercy have a somewhat similar relationship as that between Soth and Right – Peace is unable to execute her judgments without the presence of Mercy, but she is able to be present in the kingdom. Without her, Peace cannot join her other kin, nor even come near them (in direct contradiction to Right's claims that the four consistently presented a united front). Though the judgment remains Right's and not Peace's in any way, Peace commits to loyalty to the king, to civil service, and to her duty. She knows that for the kingdom to survive she must resolve the conflict between her sisters, so she commits to stay loyal to the king regardless of his choice. It is relatively easy to make a commitment like this, though, since she reminds the king that no decision has ever been made without Peace, and she reminds the king that "Rihtes mester [the nome Pees] is and wes / In vche dom pees to maken" (478-9) [Right master the name peace is and was to make peace in each doom] no decision can be made without some sort of final agreement via Peace.

Mercy is the oldest sister, Peace cannot act without Mercy, Soth can only act through Right, and Peace is Right's master, and Soth is able to countermand Mercy. Even though several sisters claim capacity for independent action, the four have overlapping power which always

rests under the overarching power of the king, and whose very substance is derived from his. Peace is in the position she was always in but uses her power to advance her own position (which would, apparently, have been useless anyway) but to insist on an "euene iuggement" (488) in which the sisters can unite "at on" (492). Peace furthermore does not overstep the judgment that Right and Soth have laid down – presumably because the judgment is, at least in a large sense, right – but more urgently, because without the four sisters and their decision, "ther is bale to breme" (501) – destruction comes swiftly. Peace reminds the king to take heed, "nimen yeme" because if he loves Peace without falsehood or idle speech (i.e. genuinely), "Pees withouten ende he schal habbe" (508). The choice is between Peace forever and utter chaos – and Peace does not have to threaten destruction because Right and Truth have already begun it. It is finally important that Peace urges not action for political gain nor personal expediency but asks the king to act in love toward her, whose power is from the crumbs beneath his table.

Lastly, it is Peace's suggestion of "raunsoun" (514) which is accepted both because it saves the prisoner (Mercy's ask) and accounts for the suffering required for the breach of trust. The summoning of the son (the Christ-figure in this poem, surely) is done via accidental wordplay. Peace asks that, "Vre wille, fader, thou do sone" (515), that is, do our will (to free the prisoner) soon,[58] but before the king can answer, the son "at this con heren / Hou his sustren hem to-beeren, / And seigh this strif so strong awaken / And Pees and Merci al forsaken / That withouten help of his wisdome / Ne mihten heo never togedere come" [when he hear how his sisters bore to him / and saw how strongly this strife awoke / and Peace and Mercy forsaken / that without help of his wisdom / they might never come together] (521-526). In the beginning of the poem, the son is remarkable for having one will with this father (a clear hint at the trinitarian

[58] [revise]

claims), and now that the powers of the sisters have been united, he returns to enact the unity they have reached. This son is the Son of God, the prisoner is Adam, and the poem pivots into an explanation of salvation history. Before that happens, though, the son explains his decision. The poet gives the readers a similar introduction, but rather than hearing that he has been referenced or that his power is threatened, he responds to the strife between his sisters.

In a sense, Peace's agenda is already in effect, and the threat against peace, the division between his sisters which is, at this point unresolved because each sister relies on another for her ability to execute the responsibilities assigned to her. Most concerning for the son, however, is the plight of Mercy and Peace. While the explicit threats that Soth and Right make are based on undermining the power of the King, the exile of princesses and viceroys might actually constitute a more serious threat to the stability of the kingdom, especially since the absence of Mercy and Peace has already led to the cruel and unusual punishment of the prisoner Adam. If the king acts according to Right's indication (i.e. the path he is already on, to which he has every right), two of his most powerful political ministers will be exiled, the ministers who remain will wreak havoc on the population on the thinnest justification, and if the son does not take action right now, the kingdom might be forever divided:

> And Pees . and Merci . al forsaken.
> Þat wiþouten help . of his wisdome.
> Ne mihten heo neuere . to gedere come.
> [and Peace and Mercy all-forsaken
> So that without help of his wisdom
> They might never come together]

With the kingdom on the line, the son introduces himself as his sisters have before him:

> Leoue Fader quaþ he . Ich am þi sone
> Of þi wit . and of þi wone.
> And þi wisdam . clepeþ me.
> And so muche . þou louedest me

Þat al þe world . for me þou wrouȝtest.
And so þou me . in werke bouȝtest.
For we beoþ on . in one fulnesse.
In miht . in strengþe . and in heiȝnesse.
[Beloved father, he quoth, I am your son
Of your wit and of your house
And your wisdom you call me
And you love me so much
That you made all the world for me
And so you bought me in work
For we are both one in one fulness
In might in strength and in highness]

The son's substantive identity means that his mode of persuasion is not so much changing the father's mind or attempting so to do, but rather reminding the father of the fact that they are identical, "of thy wit and thy wone" – wone here probably refers primarily to habit or a shared mode of action, as in 'of thy house', an indication of similarity through relationship. The son is named Wisdom – he is the reason for the creation of the kingdom (the allegory glitches here, and the son says "the world", which, of course, it is). Like Peace's argument from fullness, Wisdom reminds his father that they are 'of one fullness' – not derived or sourced in, as Peace is, but identical in 'might, strength, and highness'. Unlike that of the daughters, this power dynamic requires a bit of a trinitarian imagination, or at least a mode of kingship in which the king and his heir share all power exactly equally, but each, knowing exactly what the other is thinking, can act 'independently' from the other.

There is not, however, need for persuasion nor agenda: Wisdom has already planned to sacrifice himself and is now merely explaining what he will do. He was moved by Mercy's plea (and so the narrative circles back to the beginning of this politically tense trial), and apparently was able to hear the pleas made to the father at the beginning of the trial. The circle returns again to consideration of Mercy's claim. In a rather strongly worded assertion, the son reminds the king:

I . chulle al don . þat þi wille is.
For þou art kyng . Rihtwis.
So muche Fader . ich nyme ȝeme.
Of þis strif . þat is so bleme.
Þat for þe tale . þat Merci tolde þe.
Ful sore þe prisun . reweþ me
For . þi . he reweþ me wel þe more
For Merci . euere clepeþ þin ore.
Þou art Fader . so milsful kyng.
Hire we schul heren . of alle þing.
Al ȝe schulen . hire wille done
And sauhten soþ . and hire ful sone.
Nimen I chulle . þe þralles weden.
As Soþ . and Riht . hit wolden . and beoden.
[I shall do all that your will is
For you are a righteous king
I take heed so much farther
Of this strife that is so blemishing
That for the tale that Mercy told you
I rue the prison very much
For you he rued me that much more
Before mercy ever called your grace
You are such a merciful king, father
We should listen to her above all things
All you should do her will
And make peace with truth and full soon
I shall take the thrall's clothes
As Truth and Right would and bid it]

The king is able to rule wisely, insofar as he prevents strife and listens to Mercy. Though Mercy's plaints initially seemed to be the product of wild justifications of violations committed by a violated thane, Wisdom insists that those claims are the most important to consider, that Mercy is actually the cornerstone of the kingdom (and that she is the oldest sister should have indicated to us that this was in the cards). The Son also takes Peace's suggestion of a "ransom" as the solution to this initially unsolvable problem as something he should execute, ostensibly because he executes all actions of his father in the kingdom. He resolves to take the clothes and thus the place of the prisoner "As Soth and Right will it and bid it". This narration of the demands of Soth and Right, which is not completely unreasonable, makes them seem fairly

ridiculous – as if the only thing that Soth and Right have ever asked for is that the person wearing the clothing of the accused be punished. This is, of course, a reference to the incarnation, but the relative pettiness of the demand is made apparent. The complexity of the claims of Mercy far outstrip the threats of Right and Soth; Mercy's claim is not a "two wrongs" claim in the end, but an assertion that there are mitigating circumstances in every ethical decision we make, especially when the decision impacts another party.

The arguments that Soth made constitute a slippery slope universalization despite the specific complexities of circumstance entailed by any legally binding situation. Wisdom dictates that when a citizen is caught in such a bind, it is the ruler's job to wear the clothes of the prosecuted. In a practical political sense, it is not that a king ought to be killed on behalf of every citizen who is adjudged to be worthy of such a punishment, but rather that Mercy ought to be the rule insofar as the ruler is able to inhabit the clothes (the place, the pain, the circumstances, etc.) of the guilty party. If someone is due to receive severe punishment for a minor crime committed out of necessity, for instance, Grosseteste's argument is that those in authority ought not to exact punishment to the extent of the law (as one ought to do, for instance, with regards to one's own behavior) but to exact the least amount of punishment which is reasonable for the circumstances of the person committing the crime. So, the solution offered for the problem of Christian governance is suffering by putting one's self in the place of wrongdoers and listening, above all, to the counsel of mercy. Not exclusively her counsel – for Right and Soth must be consulted – but to hers first. Henry III was notably *not* doing this, in Grosseteste's time and mind. He was providing a model of governance which valorized a counsel of nobles (the four daughters) and upheld self-sacrificial leadership over authoritarian. This fictional structure points to political action which culminated

> In 1258, [when] Montfort took part in a coup that seized the reins of government from Henry III and transferred power to a baronial council. In 1264, Montfort led a victorious army against Henry at Lewes, took the king prisoner and put in place a council that aimed to wield royal powers on a long-term basis.[59]

The parallels are manifold: Henry III is the model for the king and later the prisoner, but upholds consistently a model of rule by counsel – the powers of the king distributed to five indisputably moral noble offspring. Mercy to the prisoner and mercy in judgment would undergird Grosseteste's largely royalist position – he does not want revolution, partially for his own sake. He wants balanced leadership in which the leader retains power (in fact, he thinks that it is impossible or unnatural for a leader to be overturned by subordinates:

> Grosseteste reinforced this view of kingship in letter 127 of his letter collection, in which he compared the power exercised by a ruler with that exercised by the ruler's subordinates. This treatise is probably a formal record of the case presented by Grosseteste to the papacy in 1245, in which the bishop dismantled the claims of the dean and chapter of Lincoln to powers rivalling those of the bishop. Appealing to the evidence of Scripture and the natural world, Grosseteste demonstrated how it is impossible for subordinates to obstruct, attack or alienate monarchical power.

A monarch (or a bishop), although he is not to be overthrown, should nevertheless rule through subordinates who rule, in turn, by distributing his power – a scheme echoed in the daughters of God ruling 'from his fullness'.

At the end of the son's opening speech, Wisdom confirms Peace's scheme: the sisters and the son and the father ought all to act in accord, lest the kingdom be ruled badly. 'Justice' here is either the King or is the united family acting as one.

> And al one . I . chul holde þe doom.
> As Iustise . ouhte to don.
> And maken I . chule . Pees to londe come.
> And Pees and Riht cussen . and be sauȝt and some.
> And druyuen out werre . Nuy . and Onde.
> And sauen al þe folk . in londe.

[59] Ambler, Sophie Thérèse. *The Song of Simon de Montfort: England's First Revolutionary and the Death of Chivalry*. Pan Macmillan, 2019, p. 116.

[I shall do their judgment
As Justice ought to do
And I shall make peace to come to the land
And peace and right kiss and be reconciled and accorded
And drive out war, injury, and strive
And save all the folk in the land]

The latter is more compelling -- in that instance, the lines which follow are an exposition of justice: peace and right kiss, are at peace, and together drive out war, malice, and hatred, saving all the folk of the kingdom. Notice that that which Soth feared comes true, but not in the way she imagined: redemption has a slippery slope, but it does not lead to chaos and lawlessness. Only self-interestedness, narcissistic rule, can result in the kind of dissolution that Soth fears – by attempting to control each individual instance of wrongdoing, by weaving a narrative of truth about wrongdoing to the exclusion of Mercy, she lets loose the very havoc she fears. Right's desire also comes true – instead of having to fantasize about the sisters uniting against the prisoner (which is never the case), the sisters actually united against the evils plaguing the land they rule.

The text takes a sudden turn here at the end of Wisdom's speech, as it does between the different sections of narrative, pivoting to explication of the allegory preceding:

*H*ose þis forbysene . con.
He may openliche . iseo bi þon.
Þat al þis ilke . tokenynge.
Is Godes in siht . Almihti kynge
Wiþ God þe Fader . nis maked nouht.
Þorw God þe Sone . is al þing wrouht.
And alle þing . is folfuld out riht.
Þorw God . þe holigostes miht.
And alle þreo . beþ on . þouh hit be so.
In one fulnesse . and in no mo.
He ȝiueþ his Blessynge . wiþ Mouþ and honde.
To Alle . þat þis writ vnderstonde.
[Whoever understands this exemplum
He may openly see by it
That all this ilk tokens

Is God's insight almighty king
With [only] God the father is anything made
Through God the son all things are made
And all things are fulfilled outright
Through God the Holy Ghost's might
And all three are one though it be so
In one strength and in no more
He gives his blessing with mouth and hand
To all that his writ can understand]

The story is returned to its salvific origin from its political application, likely in an effort to prevent heretical error. The battening-down of tokening here rather conspicuously does not include the four daughters in the explanation. Inclusion of the Latin scriptural text is all the resolution necessary for the tokening of the sisters. In this passage, however, we get a sense for the intended audience of the piece -- "[that all this same tokening / Is God's insight, almighty king, / With [only] God the father is anything made / Through God the Son is everything done / and all things are fulfilled completely / through God the Holy ghost's might". The poem is addressed to those who want to accomplish things, to make judgments, and in fact, Dominica Legge "proposed that the work was intended for the young men under Grosseteste's tutelage," while Sir Richard Southern proposes that it was largely intended "to provide an audience without theological training with an outline of Christian theology" (48). Additionally, Mackie suggests that "The manuscript evidence for an audience at least partly composed of scholastics is strong" (50) as well as some "Franciscan *illiterati*" who were in England to establish the order (51). Like the author of *Ypotis*, Grosseteste's "purpose was similar to Simun de Freine's: to put at the disposal of those not literate in Latin material normally accessible only to those who were" (60). Just as the poet reminds that prince of the audience that nothing can truly be accomplished without the proper balance in the trinity, so governmental rule cannot be accomplished without the balance of the four sisters. God will bless those who understand the

writ of the poem "with mouth and hand", ostensibly indicating blessing in material existence or execution of office (hand) and in insight and contemplative power (mouth).[60]

While several of the versions of the Daughters of God include only the Daughters allegory, the Vernon cluster includes the explicitly scriptural material which begins and ends the poem, but also, unlike the Ashmole 61 Version, includes the eponymous castle of the "Chasteau d'Amour". The Daughters portion of the work is attached to the Castle portion, the section that follows the Daughters of God section, and the portion most clearly attestable to Grosseteste via narratorial splicing:

> God nolde a lihte . in none Manere
> But in feir stude . and in clere.
> In feir stude and clene . siker hit wes.
> Þer god al mihti . his In ches.
> In A Castel . wel comeliche.
> Muche . and . Feir . and loueliche.
> Þat is þe Castel . of alle flour.
> Of Solas . and of Socour.
> In þe Mere he stont . bi twene two
> Ne haþ he ferlak . for no fo.
> For þe tour . is so wel wiþ outen.
> So depe I . diched . al abouten.

---

[60] 3e habbeþ iherd as ich ow tolde,
For-whl God þe world maken wolde
And hou Adam forles þorw synne
World and heuene and al monkynne,
Þat for might ne strengþe ne for no þing
No mon nedde of himself a couryng.
Ne angel miste mon helpe on none wyse,
Ne mon miste himself fro debe aryse.
Þenne moste nede beo þorw vche doom
þat God of heuene mon bicom,
[You have heard as I have told you
Why God would make the world
And how Adam forfeited through sin
The world and heaven and all mankind
Which neither for might nor strength nor for anything
A man need not make himself a covering
Nor an angel might help a man in any way
Nor is man able to raise himself from death
Then it must be though each fate
That God of heaven becomes man]

Þat none kunnes asaylyng
Ne may him deruen . for no þing
He stont on heiȝ Roche . and sound.
And is I . planed . in to þe ground.
Þat þer ne mai wone . non vuel þing.
Ne derue . no gynnes castyng.
[God would not alight in any house
Except in a fair stead and clean, safely it was
There God almighty his in strife/choice
In a very lovely castle
Large and fair and lovely
That is the best of castles
Of solace and succor
In the moat he placed it bewteen the two
Nor did he have fear for any foe
Because the tower is so sound outside
So deep it was ditched all around
That no kinds of people can assail
Nor might harm him in any way
He put it on a high and sound rock
And is cut into the ground
That there may not be be complaint nor evil thing
Nor tribulation or {siege} engines casting]

Grosseteste composed this exposition of political theory amidst massive debates between Franciscans (his own order) and the papacy over ownership of property and dominium which continued into the papacy of John XXI in the 1320s.[61] He furthermore specifically opposed any rulership that leaned tyrannous, and Henry III "had hardly stood forth as a monarch governed by reason, a guardian of 'justice and equity'. If that was the case, what could be done about it? Grosseteste had merely implied that no obedience was due to a tyrant," but suggesting strongly that his politically powerful pupils.[62] His French pupils were ready to consider their political goals a "holy… cause," which was precisely the model Grosseteste suggests. Lincolnesis was a bishop, but a bishop with noble ears attentive to his subtle and forceful suggestions. These

[61] Janet Coleman, *History of Political Thought* (Wiley, 2000) and Richard William Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (Clarendon Press, 1992).
[62] CARPENTER, D. A. "Simon de Montfort: The First Leader of a Political Movement in English History." History 76, no. 246 (1991), p 21.

English translations, likely executed in the early 14th century, betray an uneasiness about the transition from Edward II, notable for his favoritism (Bothwell), or the social devastation resulting from the plague. Certainly, the poem is composed in a time of political turmoil, and medieval compilers translated and paired with Ypotis as an authoritative response cluster.[63] The above section of *Chasteau* imagines a God who might fear a foe, assault, or harm and needs a stone castle for protection. The God of Grosseteste's poem is no immortal, invisible, but is himself a thinly disguised human monarch. So tightly intertwined are the roads to salvation and civic peace in the medieval mind that the allegories mix levels, asserting the spiritual for the earthly and the stone for the ethereal. Ypotis is 'ancient' and Castle is conspicuously authored by a famous Bishop, so the two, within the cluster, serve as a collective mirror for princes; half of it reminding rulers to sacrifice their interests and the other a warning against ignoring wise counsel.

[63] Cf. *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law* (50) – Ipotis sclaundre, and Mede ref. 'mercy' are already imbricated in the poem from the context of the Vernon MS.

CHAPTER 2: PIECES

Piers *as Mixed-Manuscript*

Merely by associating texts one with another, a compiler encouraged reading between texts, alinear reading, and a search for a theme between apparently disparate exempla.[1] Despite frequent entrances and exits of characters in *Piers Plowman*, the poem has relatively consistently internal tone, a regular schema of entrances and exits (as opposed to mere metatext), and focused powers of adaptation. Since, however, it also echoes the divided structure of a miscellany, the occasionally abrupt shifts between sections and episodes, heavy quotation, and characters effect productive motion on the involved episodes. These forces of motion can make the work rather difficult to read in the modern, linear mode: instead of looking for similarities between intentionally disparate sections, most modern readers of The Piers-poet seek a unified, linear narrative when it should be considered as a chain, or constellation, of works that reference each other in complex relationships across time and space.[2] *Piers* expands this practice of referring to the works around it by assembling elements of genre (romance, theological treatise, estates satire, and Passion narrative) and derives much of its power from narrativizing this constellation

[1] The accumulation of examples is reassuring to us but is outside of any clam to system. Relation cannot be "proved," because its totality is not approachable. But it can be imagined, conceivable in transport of thought. The accumulation of examples aims at perfecting a never complete description of the processes of relation, not circumscribing them or giving legitimacy to some impossible global truth. In this sense the most harmonious analysis is the one that poetically describes flying or diving. Description is no proof; it simply adds something to Relation insofar as the latter is a synthesis-genesis that never is complete (Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 174)

[2] "Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one." It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical that is, not archaic images." Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).
Also, Renee Trilling, (2006) "Ruins in the Realm of Thought: reading as constellation . . . something something" Thinking in Constellations (2018)---eds. Nassima Sahraoui and Caroline Sauter.

of genres. [3] Furthermore, since, as I will argue, *Piers* is a single work which gathers and loses major narrative sections and commentaries on extant sections to fit the needs of the copyist, reader, or patron. An author composed *Piers* out of works which preexisted the poem, and his readers (re)composed *Piers*(es) out of versions of itself. Increasingly, editorial cannibalization of *Piers* replaced even association with texts resembling it in structure like the *South English Legendary,* Northern Homily Cycle, or *Pricke of Consicence*.[4]

As A.S.G. Edwards does in his study of Bod. Lib. MS Arch. Selden B.24, I argue that *Piers* "...can be located in relation to several kinds of pressures" (55). That is to say, the method of compilation / composition is not so much, according to Edwards, a plan laid out, but rather a dynamic, "durable" (58), and perhaps never-ending (82) practice of *compilatio* which is responding to religious and literary pressures.[5] Borrowing from Edwards may provide a more satisfactory answer for the versions of *Piers* which was (an authored work, a unified work), composed over the course of thirty years.[6] The Piers-poet's work, considered this way, bears

[3] As Paul Zumthor has it, "à propos de divers groupes de textes, on a opéré un classement fonctionnel des variantes présentées par les manuscrits d'un même texte selon leur amplitude et leur incidence sur la signification: du simple glissement graphique au décalage lexical et à la redistribution des épisodes, l'addition ou la suppression de parties entières. Toutes ces variantes ont une valeur textuelle, plus ou moins marquée. Aux amplitudes infimes, certes, on ne peut discerner dans quelle mesure elles proviennent de l'interférence d'autres textes. Mais reste le nombre considérable des variantes dues à l'attraction, positive ou négative, de textes voisins, parfois de modèles (c'est-à-dire de textes virtuels) nouveaux" (10). The changes in a text therefore, are not just linguistic shifts, editorial changes (additions/subtractions/conflations) but also are definitively related to the texts which surround the one which primarily occupies the reader's attention. reader In *PP*, then, take any episode, lection, or passus from the others, even 19 and 20, which Warner calls 'blockbuster' passūs, remove it from the system of *PP*, and the whole changes, sometimes drastically. This is akin to the effect of customizing codices for individual houses (familial or monastic) or readers, which may be able, as I will address later, to provide a rationale for both the authorial editorial practices and for the 'public editing' (Benson) practices observed unusually often in manuscripts of *PP*.

[4] Andrew Taylor, "Manual to Miscellany: Stages in the Commercial Copying of Vernacular Literature in England," 2022, 18.

[5] Boffey, Julia, and A. S. G. Edwards, eds. *Chaucer, Works. Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden B.24: Facsimile Edition.* Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1995.

[6] Authorship is a weak organizational construct anyway. Humans are wildly complex and unpredictably conflicted beings. Even to themselves, or perhaps especially to themselves, humans are hard to predict and difficult to categorize. Because we are complex, manifold, strange, and contrary, we act and produce things for one audience which would seem wildly at odds to other audiences. One only has to think of the persona a teenager offers to her peers versus that offered to parents versus that offered to a teacher. In some cases, those may be strikingly close, but in most instances, they differ in emphasis and at times in principle. So it is with authors: Seneca the Younger, for

striking resemblance to mixed-manuscript production.[7] It features a series of episodes, laid out around a central theme, often with similar characters or versions of those characters, composed/compiled over a lifetime by means of various insertions and edits which are responding in some way to external pressures. The generic organizational principles of *Piers Plowman* are not immediately at hand. Even in a mixed-manuscript, where breaks between works are often demarcated by incipits and explicits, capitals, rubrication, quires, and paper or parchment stocks, finding a unified interpretive framework based on subject matter or theme proves strikingly difficult. Keying interpretation around 'productive surprise' is by and large a more successful method of examining such productions. In fact, in many descriptions of manuscripts, the privileging of romance becomes abundantly clear when the description lists

instance, wrote both *Hercules furens* and *De ira*, an apparent contradiction which is united only in the imperturbable state of mutual attribution. The prevalent desire when it comes to authorship attribution is one which uses genre as its rule rather than the person. In these instances, therefore, the attribution of one text to 'an author' is helpful only as an organizational principle, but not as a mode of interpretation or meaning-making. Just as our loved ones will say "he or she would have wanted this or that" after we die to justify their own desires and visions of the dead, so we do with authors, the infinite construct of 'the author,' to fit our own purposes and desires. And so, I do not concern myself with the identity of any of the authors of the pieces I examine in this work beyond an occasional passing supposition where it seems expansive rather than constricting.

[7] The problem of cataloguing is a symptom of a deeper difficulty in studies of medieval readership. To perform literary analysis on a text like *Gawain*, much less *PP*, a healthy if not precise sense of the texts which surrounded them in the codex would provide more fruitful inroads for analyzing *PP* itself. Jeanne Krochalis's and Edward Peters's *The World of Piers Plowman* argues for the importance of understanding the codicological context of *PP*. They write,

> Because *Piers Plowman*, particularly in the B and C versions, is a long poem, it often takes up a whole manuscript by itself. In many instances, however, the poem is not alone, and the texts with which it is bound may occasionally shed some light upon the audience for the poem and the minds of its readers. At least half a dozen of these manuscripts contain, besides *Piers Plowman*, either lists of, or treatises on, virtues and vices, religious poems of varying length and quality, moral or political treatises, chronicles, and one even contains Sir Mandeville's *Travels*…. The scripts, although often not the work of elegant professional scribes and elaborate *scriptoria*, are usually clear, workmanlike productions written for an enlarged, literate lay audience that could not afford to spend much money on their books but wanted books and obviously read them (xvi).

This argument suggests that not only are the codicological contexts of *PP* important, but it may be possible that *PP* served in the place of a miscellany for the masses. Schmidt confirms this when he suggests, ""it is... mainly later codices that that include Piers with other works; and apart from the Vernon A-Text, the Trinity B-Text, the Digby 102 C-Text and thr unique Bodley Z-text... the most important ABC manuscripts preserve the poem by itself" (275). If a reader wanted to read widely but could not afford the years and money required to compile a miscellany, nor had one which had been compiled and passed down by a noble relative. Jeanne Krochalis and Edward Peters, *The World of "Piers Plowman"* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

romances by titles and beginning and ending lines, but groups other entries as 'assorted devotional material' or 'medical texts'.

Piers Plowman has a consuming structure, compositional openness, and adaptability, and the inclusion of both an early *Piers A* and the Grosseteste text which contributes to B.18 instantiates my supposition that Middle-English mixed manuscripts not only preserve and organize texts but serve as sites for compositional work. The textual avant-garde landscape of *Piers* is so successful because it becomes a fictionalization of the composition process, of the mixed-manuscript itself while earlier versions (largely) are *part of* mixed-manuscripts.[8] Take, for instance, Lincoln's Inn 150 or Harley 3954, which are both 'holster-books,' i.e. books constructed to be narrow enough to fit easily in travel tack – as Simon Horobin and Allison Wiggins restate, "the dimensions of the book have encouraged the view that it was intended to fit neatly into the pocket of an itinerant minstrel" (31). Both contain A-texts, and the former four romances and *Piers Plowman*, or, possibly 'five romances'. Unlike the Vernon A, L exaggerates dialogue cues and increases the contrast in moral lessons to make verbal presentation of the poem easier to follow – "Reconsidering Lincoln's Inn 150," p. 33-4. Horobin's and Wiggins's argument demonstrates a different application of the phenomenon I describe – the manuscript environment has drastically altered the L copy of *Piers* A in a way that does not make it inclusive or spongy but adds structural rigidity to the action so that it can be performed, As Horobin and Wiggins note, "Derek Pearsall has argued that scribes often the role of committed editors, engaging with the text at a high creative intellectual level. Pearsall extends Windeatt's earlier description of literary critics, seeing their treatment of the text as providing 'a wealth into

[8] Middleton is surprised that Langland's closest contemporary in this composition method, John Gower, still relies on a formal structure and announced intentions for gathering. *Piers* has glass skin.

a contemporary or near contemporary reading of a text (and therefore the text itself), into the tastes of the age and the expectations of readers" (49). This is the exception that proves the rule – the scribe or book-maker of L tailor-made a handbook and adjusted all the texts to fit the physical volume and expected use of the book.

Later supplementation of *Piers Plowman* B and C is reflected in similar groupings of companioned texts occasionally preserved alongside *Piers* in mixed-manuscripts postdating the composition of the poem. Anne Middleton reminds her readers that "the A version appears more frequently in manuscript[s] among other works than do B or C… yet all three are associated in collections with several kinds of texts".[9] Tracing *Piers*'s companion pieces, "religious instruction and historical narration," reveals more about the general taste of its later audience than the changes to versions by inclusions of companion pieces. The inclusion of pieces (what might be called a 'textual event') from manuscripts in which a work in question was collected bespeaks the profound ontological influence, the press of being, that reading has on written works. Readers' experience must be "completed by attention to the view – similarly based in worldly experience – of others."[10] For the *Piers*-poet, diversity of view centers around interpreting documents and is informed by the inclusion of documents originally external to the poem. Reading, of course, does not merely encompass the skittering across letter shapes of an eye but includes the whole practice of annotation, memorization, recopying, correction, interpretation, application, and quotation. The mixed work has something akin to *Existenz*, an expansive self-unity which can be characterized as *Eigentlichkeit* or *Uneigentlichkeit* (authentic or inauthentic) -- an ontological 'feels like' or 'feels different', in a sense.

[9] Middleton, 104.
[10] Middleton, 98.

Piers's open structure frames episodes of allegorically linked discrete dream-episodes which are available for hybrid reading practices -- either the linear reading encouraged by a single title, the character-narrator "Will", and external references to the person of Piers Plowman, which threads the dreams into a loose whole that can be read from beginning to end. 'In a certain sense' because, as casual and professional readers of *Piers* alike can attest, the 'whole' of *Piers* is not a journey that has an identifiable end (indeed, the whole could be read repetitively in a circle). Anne Middleton, after calling *Piers* a "baggy monster" (recalling the bag of books from "Mum and Sothsegger"), she calls public poetry, in which ranks she numbers *Piers* "poetry defined by a constant relation of speaker to audience within an ideally conceived worldly community, a relation which has become the poetic subject."[11] I argues that this relation of speaker to audience is accomplished through directed attention to shared documents and a mutual concern with getting those documents right in legal, political, social, and spiritual senses. *Piers* hinges on a "common love," to borrow Middleton's term, of recognizable and a communal responsibility and sociality accomplished through recognition, preservation, and recasting of recopied textual groupings. Even moments like the tearing of the pardon, which seem like they result in permanent states of being, directly adjoin moments which suggest that the narrative is about to reset in an episodic loop. The only inter-referentiality in *Piers* occurs within individual visions, but discrete visions are just that -- there is no sign that any character in one vision remembers or has an ability to refer to a previous or future event outside of the vision in which it appears. In this sense, the 'narrative' of *Piers* is no such thing or exists only in the imagination of its reader. Any narrative links (as opposed to thematic or conceptual links) are the result of the suppositions of readers as encouraged by the explicit repeating-dream structure.

[11] Middleton, Anne. "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II." *Speculum* 53, no. 1 (1978), p. 95.

Unlike Chaucer's explicit remarks about taking up books which become part of the story he is telling, *Piers* is shot through with quotations, references to *tixts*, pardons, *Boke*, written legal codes, and the letters of the ten commandments. *Piers* is medium-text -- it is between the compilation of Vernon and the fictionalization of Chaucer and later works.[12] Take, for instance, the striking (and frustrating) absence of named citation. Besides a handful of Augustine name-checks (and others of equal ancient-authorial stance), textual authority figures are conspicuously absent. The work is instead populated by allegorical authorities -- why cite a theologian when you can hear from Conscience him(it?)self, *Piers* asks, tongue in cheek. *Piers* acts as an unusually coherent and internally consistent mixed-manuscript, a collection with the distinct interpretive advantage of poetic unity. Vernon is not the only possible site of influence but rather that it provides clear precedent for this 'reverberation' model. Vernon either preserves an earlier and lost grouping which includes both the Grosseteste text and *Piers* A or that it is this specific placement which influences later iterations of the text. *Piers* is a structure in which stories exist and interact, that one author or another composes the initial text is immaterial.[13]

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[12] Anna Baldwin, in "The Double Duel in 'Piers Plowman' B.XVIII and C XXI," argues that in addition to this, "Langland… draws upon another more chivalric tradition of allegorizing Christ's confrontation with Lucifer. The stories in this tradition were not concerned to resolve the debate between God's justice and mercy, and so did not involve the Four Daughters" (65).

[13] This quotation dynamic to function in a manner similar to sampling in hip-hop in the way The Pharcyde's "Runnin'" sampled "Saudade Vem Correndo" by Stan Getz and Luiz Bonfa, "Flying Easy" by Woody Herman, "You Follow Me" by James Moody, and "Rock Box" by Run-DMC or "Can I Kick It?" by A Tribe Called Quest famously samples "Walk on the Wild Side" by Lou Reed, "Spinning Wheel" by Lonnie Smith, and "Sunshower" by Dr. Buzzard's Original Savannah Band. Hip-hop sampling and Middle English composition have at least two things in common -- the basic structure of the song is formed by interlacing extracted portions of a work which existed independently beforehand. These samples (typically instrumental in hip-hop and textual in medieval literature) serve as compositional and inspirational nodes around which the poet or poets write rhymes to form a different, coherent whole. The final work is not a 'compilation' nor is it composed by a single hand in seclusion -- it is a collaboration across generations (or, typically, one generation). Not only that, but a sampled work begets samples -- "Can I Kick It?", for instance, was sampled at least 48 times after its release, and we see a similar pattern of imitation and quotation in "Richard the Redeless", "Mum and the Sothsegger", and "Pierce the Plowman's Crede" -- and medieval composition is changed by this influential codicological sampling.

And while the form of *Piers* is innovative and influential, that is only half the concern of this chapter. Much like hip-hop, *Piers* is aimed not just at the princes the *mirours* usually are, but at those who are ruled. Most of the allegorical characters in *Piers* are middle- or low-class, and when nobility appears (the King, for instance, in the

Vernon marks the site of an important conjunction for the revision of *Piers Plowman* – namely, it marks the only extant textual conjunction of *Piers* A[14] and Grosseteste's *Daughters of God.*[15] The date of the pairing in the manuscript (c. 1370-85?)[16] postdates the composition of the A-text (1369-70) and possibly also the B-text (1370-79)[17]; the appearance of A (as opposed to B or a collated copy) is likely due to the "time-lag in circulation of an augmented work."[18] Its association with Grosseteste's text is either an older relationship that somehow resulted in its inclusion in B, it was the process of producing Vernon or like manuscripts that cemented the relation or, one or the other texts already copied into Vernon, the working group of the manuscript were attuned to the fresh changes of the B-version and gathered the appropriate text bundle (*Ypotis* and *Castle*) to reflect the latest state of their contemporary poet's work.[19] This textual environment, regardless of what order and how direct the relationship was, was cutting-edge publication – *Piers* is in the midst of its textual evolutions as the Vernon manuscript is being produced. This hearkens back to the 'network' model of textual transmission, the three-dimensional feedback model; the producers of Vernon had undertaken a project possibly requiring half a century to create. The nature of manuscript production is slow, and while

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early books or at the end), their influence is absolute but negligible. That is to say, when they make decisions, those decisions stand unquestioned and obeyed, but the king's advisors (whether Conscience or Mercy) shape and direct that absolute decision. *Piers* is also a text which, if it was not composed for such a purpose, was certainly appropriated for resistance movements -- because the whole is open, iterative, and sedimentary rather than intricate and closed, pieces can be broken off and used as authoritative in contexts of resistance -- we need think only of the chants used by the peasants in the revolts of 1381 and the role of jazz (frequently sampled in hip-hop itself) and hip hop as providing unifying anthems for BLM and similar protests.

[14] Linda Clifton noted but did not expound upon, "Daughters" is not the only work included in Vernon which ends up, in part, quoted in *Piers* B. "'Piers Plowman B' in its contemplative context" Clifton, Linda Jane, Ph.D. University of Washington, 1989, so it is likely that there are more textual groupings present in both Vernon and later versions of *Piers.*

[15] "Castle" is collected with *Pricke* in Cotton MS VII as well.

[16] See Scase, "Editorial" p. 4 in the Vernon Facsimile.

[17] Michael Vaughn, Introduction to *The A Text*.

[18] Derek Pearsall, *Studies in the Vernon Manuscript*, "Introduction," xi.

[19] In Vernon, *Piers* does not have an author attribution, but "Daughters" is attributed both in the text itself and in the index to Grosseteste personally, suggesting that by rewriting a famous, authored text into his own poem, the *Piers*-poet consumes or transfers the fame of the older poet and translator to take it as his own as I discuss that Skelton does in "The Last Medieval Scribe".

insertions are possible, constant textual update is not possible without sacrificing legibility or beauty of the object itself. *Piers* and Vernon grow up alongside each other almost year for year, are adapt or contain (respectively) similar clusters: the former is a cutting-edge composition and part of the advent of authorship as such in the modern era. The latter partakes of an older, stable tradition in which texts are gathered and arranged for preservation and development of textual companions. The unity of *Piers* relies on building the poem through adapting and adding external texts. This affinity hinges on identifiable elements -- a lack of explanation here, a point for expansion there. Vernon records a unique association of the work of Robert Grosseteste, a 13th-century Anglo-Norman bishop, with early versions of the episodic, middle-English, anonymous *Piers*.

The introduction and expansion of the roles of Peace (first in passus B.4 and then in passus B.18) exemplifies this expanding, open, and chaining series method of composition, and how Grosseteste's poem becomes part of *Piers* -- the dream-structure fiction serves to stitch the components into a whole which imitates, as a fictional whole, the mixed-manuscripts popular around the time of the composition of *Piers*.[20] In a sense, Peace is the point of the whole book – both *Piers* and "Castle of Love". The idea is to reconcile everything and everyone in a stable unity (a mark *Piers* ultimately misses despite the appropriately-named barn), to form a "public poetry," Middleton writes, "a literary mode, simply an extension of the incipient realism in these Ricardian writers' views of what poetry is: like man himself 'a creature of a middle state,' and serving its highest function as a *peacemaker*, and as an interpreter of the common world" (113, emphasis mine). The best that poetry can hope for is to make some peace between worlds, between classes, between theological positions; the *Piers*-poet attempts his version of this

[20] Huge expansion in C.5.

through allegorically linked, common textuality. The A, B, and C versions of *Piers* feature a Peace-centric episode early in the poem: the trial of Wrong for the financial and physical abuse of a landowner named Peace and his household. Peace, in passus 4, is much abused and easily bought off via Wrong's use of Meed's generosity. The bill Peace posts gets full verbal restatement – he lists the wrongs received in full. Later versions of the poem, namely the B and C versions, also include a heavily adapted version of Grosseteste's *Chasteau d'amour* in passus 18, featuring Peace, now the daughter of God who holds the keys to resolving soteriological quandaries. I argue that the nominalist stakes of *Piers*'s allegory indicates that cross-manuscript (in the source sense) and cross-poem linking should occur on the level of the name despite remarkable differences in how one allegorization appears in comparison with another. Recall, for instance, Mary Carruthers's insistence that the Lady Meed Holy Church identifies and the one Theology remarks on *must* be different, even though those references appear in adjacent passūs. As scholarship subsequent to Carruthers showed, careful consideration of the nominally linked characters reveals a complicated unity under the name.[21]

There is widespread critical consensus for Grossetestean origins of the Daughters of God in *Piers.* Skeat, the first modern editor of *Piers Plowman*¸ was the first to remark on its connection to Grosseteste's *Chateau* as a source-text. Stephen Barney, in his commentary on B.18/C.20, writes, "L drew upon several traditions of Passion narratives widely circulated in this time… [but] because Traer's influential study disclaimed any specific resemblance of PP to the

[21] Emily Steiner identifies a similar effect, which she calls "an inventive shift… from personification allegory to personal naming… that relies on a simultaneous move from the aristocratic actors -- Mede, Fals, and Wrong -- whose transactions [Mede's] charter records, to the plebeian actors whose names are entered as witness" "Naming and Allegory in Late Medieval England" p. 263. She identifies the slippage between 'name-sounding' characters and 'allegory-sounding' characters, but even within the latter category, the *Piers*-poet associates different, often apparently contradictory instantiations under the same personification.

Chasteau, its obviously detailed and direct influence has been little examined" (2). [22] The *Piers*-poet may have read *De luce* or similar mediating texts *Le Chateau d'Amour* and perhaps *De decem mandatis* because of the way light exerts physical and spiritual power over souls and Satan in the latter lines of the Harrowing episode. Andrew Pfrenger corroborates this supposition, arguing that "Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln, in his treatise *De decem mandatis*, rejected outright the notion that some forms of revenge could be justified because evil should be requited with good and not more evil, a theme the *Piers*-poet picks up more overtly in the latter half of *Piers Plowman*" (69). This, of course, should remind the reader of the *Piers*-poet's dissatisfaction with the absolute justice of the King in passus 4: Peace returns to return good for evil. Pfrenger continues, describing a theory of incarnation which sharply resembles the motivations of Christ in passus 19: "Grosseteste includes a careful explanation of Christ's disguise, the nature of which not only keeps his identity hidden from Satan but also allows Jesus the ability to suffer the just punishment of man in his place" (79). Suzanne Conklin Akbari further remarks on the connection also of *De luce* and *The Castle of Light*: "…Robert Grosseteste uses the phenomenon of refraction in his allegorical *Chastel de amur* to depict the diffusion of divine grace in the created world" (89). Robert Adams states "The Four Daughters episode is attributable to Robert Grosseteste's *Le chateau d'amour* and specifically the Anglo-Norman version of the poem, as Jim Rhodes and Rebecca Davis argue respectively. Thus, the type 1 MSS - W, Land Hm - all *agree* (if we count the marginal guides of L) in segmenting the poem at Passus XVIII/XIX, whereas the type 2 MSS - Cr, G, Y, (B) - and C divide it at Passus

XIX/XX; but these two groups *intermingle* in their procedures for counting passus *within* the sub-structures designated by the rubrics *Dowel, Dobet* and *Dobest*.[23]

The coherence and applicability of Vernon's *Piers A* appears to be higher than other flexible subunits of *Vernon,* and 'breaks off' to continue its manuscript-orbit with pieces pulled from its *Vernon* context. In this sense, its inclusion in the Vernon manuscript permanently affects its existence as a work. At least a handful of scholars have noted this attachment and detachment -- to the best of my knowledge, this connection is first remarked upon at some length by Linda J. Clifton in her dissertation *Piers Plowman B in its contemplative context* and then most comprehensively in Nicholas Watson's "Piers Plowman Reads Robert Grosseteste". 'Most comprehensively' rather than comprehensively in large part because Watson's subject matter -- Grosseteste's influence on the *Piers*-poet (or rather the influence of "The Four Daughters of God on *Piers Plowman*") is rich material for scholarly work to be done, but Watson reserves his comments for comments about 'reminiscence' and 'Grossetestean feel' while the most obvious parallels -- namely, that the conversation between the daughters is repeated wholesale within the narrative of B.18 and that -- as Watson does point out -- it is likewise preceded by short re-telling of the passion and harrowing.[24]

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[23] Adams, "THE RELIABILITY OF THE RUBRICS IN THE B-TEXT OF 'PIERS PLOWMAN,'" *Medium Ævum* 54, no. 2 (1985): 208, https://doi.org/10.2307/43628893.

[24] Helen Lacy, in a compendious footnote, writes "The 'Four Daughters of God' allegory (based on an interpretation of Psalms 83. 11) also circulated in a number of late medieval texts: *Piers Plowman*, ed Schmidt, B-text, XVIII, lines 112–228; *Mirour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Powell, pp. 14–19; *Vices and Virtues: A Soul's Confession of its Sins with the Reason's Description of the Virtues*, ed. F. Holthausen, EETS OS 89, 159 (London, 1888, 1921), pp. 111–21; *The Life of Christ and the Virgin Mary*, in 'The Four Daughters of God: A New Version',ed. R. A. Klinefelter, *Journal of English and German Philology* 52 (1953), 90–5; *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost, Yorkshire Writers*, ed. C. Horstman (London, 1895), I, 337–62; *The Macro Plays,* ed. M. Eccles, lines 3129–3649. For kingdom allegories, see *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Herrtage, pp. 132–5; *Court of Sapience*, ed. E. R. Harvey (Toronto, 1984), lines 176–903. John Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady*, ed. J. A. Lauritis, R. A. Klinefelter and V. F. Gallagher, Philological Series 2 (Pittsburgh, 1961), lines 185–91" "*Piers Plowman*, B-text, XVIII, lines 112–228; *Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*, ed. Powell, pp. 14–19; *Vices and Virtues*, ed. Holthausen; pp. 111–21; *Life of Christ*, in 'The Four Daughters of God: A New Version', ed. Klinefelter, pp. 90–5; *Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost*, ed.

In *Piers,* allegorical engagement between the characters and documents moves the reader between textual insertions and simulates the experience of reading a mixed-manuscript. *Piers* is, radically and unsurprisingly, a text which reads itself in that it offers interpretations of the *originalia* and *auctoritates* via allegorical character's comment as it includes them. *Piers* gives a reader a sense of being a magical text; this auto-expansion is part of the reason why -- leave *Piers Plowman* alone for a while, and it will continue to read itself, by itself, having added the mind of you, its reader, to its living interpretive matrix.[25] In *Poetry Does Theology*, Jim Rhodes lays for foundation for work on Grosseteste's effect on the writing of *Piers*. Rhodes's intriguing line, "How well Langland knew Grosseteste's formal theology is difficult to say…" (63) is technically true, though he largely forgoes an attempt at solving the difficulty. His study, to my knowledge, is the most frequently cited book chapter which specifically addresses the link between Grosseteste and Langland.[26] Furthermore, Rebecca Davis's section "Kynde, *Natural Naturans*, and Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*"[27] mentions Grosseteste's theology within a summary of his larger influence and that *Chateau* appears with the A-text of *Piers* in the Vernon Manuscript. Where Grosseteste's original *Chateau* developed the allegory from a theological dialogue to a political and theological narrative, the author of *Piers* turns the episode

Horstman, I, 337–62; *Castle of Perseverence*, ed. Eccles, lines 3129–3649. For kingdom allegories, see *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. Herrtage, pp. 132–5; *Court of Sapience*, ed. Harvey, lines 176–903.". *The Royal Pardon*, p. 46, n. 9

[25] Ryan Lawrence first articulated to me that *Piers* could be thought of as a 'magical text' which seems to change as it is closed and appear strikingly unfamiliar upon re-opening. This accorded with my own sense of what it is like to read and re-read *Piers*.

[26] In a similar vein, Richard Firth Green's *A Crisis of Truth* focuses on soteriological economy in Grossesteste's Chateau and on the devil's rights (or lack thereof) to the souls of those who died before the crucifixion. He remarks that Langland has a similar theology but does not draw a direct link.

[27] In *Piers Plowman and the Books of Nature*, Davis focuses much of her reading of *Piers* around the questions of *natura naturans* and the incarnation, keeping always within sight of the character of Kynde and Grosseteste's theology of the incarnation. In keeping with the emphasis of her project, Davis limits her discussion of Grosseteste to this section and to a forceful reading of the bishop's combination of *natura naturans* (God) and *natura naturata* (Nature).[27] Various other studies have coupled Langland's B-version and Grosseteste's *Chateau* with varying attention and success, but none that I have found mention the frequency or centrality of light to that 18th passus.

into a cinematic allegory, complete with shallow breaths, notes for lighting, and costuming. [28] Demonstrably Grossetestean thought, preserved in association in Vernon, is definitely present in *Piers* B and C. [29] The portion of *Piers* which shows obvious influence of Grosseteste begins after Faith begins to upbraid the Jews who have crucified Christ.[30] After this vicious curse, the narrator retreats to "that derknesse to *descendit ad inferna*" (B.18.111), quoting the apostle's creed and initiating the theme of darkness and light which the *Piers*-poet sustains for the remainder of the passus.

[28] Grosseteste's work on light, specifically as laid out in *De luce*, shows that the debate of the daughters of God in *Piers Plowman*'s 18th passus constitutes a literary explanation and validation of *Grosseteste's* theory of the physical and spiritual nature of light. Grosseteste makes oblique gestures towards Avicebron's *Fons vitae* and includes *firmamentum*, *lux*, and *lumen* as key terms. Assuming Grosseteste's introduction of the first term, "quod dicitur firmamentum" (ln. 95) is a reference to the firmament of Genesis, *De luce* is not so much a creation narrative as it is a cosmogony driven by a theory of physics which fluxes between observable and theoretical characteristics of light. Although it is unclear how the *Piers*-poet may have encountered *De luce*, 1) the *Piers*-poet read a version of *Le chasteau d'amour*, likely the translation in Vernon, 2) his primary interest is in *reframing* the account, not overhauling it, and 3) light is a key of incarnational theology of Grosseteste and for Langland's Christ's harrowing. It is unlikely that it refers to another *firmamentum*, especially given the way Grosseteste employs the term, which is as "corpus primum in extremitate sphere" (ln. 94) in his scheme of nested spheres. Furthermore, he quotes and paraphrases *De luce* extensively in his *Hexaemeron*. It seems that borrowing terminology from Genesis allows the narrative to showcase Aristotelian physics while maintaining compatibility with Judeo-Christian creation accounts.

[29] *Chateau* was almost certainly written after *De luce*, likely within a decade, and shared Aristotelian influence (Mackie 83). Grosseteste's *De luce* and *Hexameron* are his two most influential works after *Chateau.* In *De luce*, Grosseteste presents a complex, mathematically charged account of the beginning of the cosmos, but makes no direct mention of the book of Genesis or of God. In fact, the only authority mentioned outright is Aristotle in an overt reference to *De caelo et mundo* and an indirect reference to the same text some lines later. For a longer list of potential sources (largely suggestions), see Cecilia Panti's critical apparatus in "Robert Grosseteste's *De luce*: a Critical Edition" in *Robert Grosseteste and his Intellectual Milieu*.

[30] Faith's diatribe ends in an antisemitic curse of sterility on the Jewish people through a reference to Matthew 27:24-5 and likely to Daniel 9:24. Faith quotes "Cum veniat sanctus sanctorum, cessabit unxio vestra" as the final line of that curse, which most editors of *Piers* interpret as a reference to Daniel. The antisemitic transition is likely another indication of Grosseteste's influence. The bishop was famous for his accomplishments as a scientist and a theologian in 14th-century England and beyond, but his antisemitism was widely known; he was remarkable for his vituperation and vitriol against Jewish people. Robert Stacey writes, for instance, "Grosseteste was an extremist whose anti-Jewish animus was equaled among 13th-century English bishops only by John Pecham, the Franciscan archbishop of Canterbury under Edward I. Grosseteste was certainly not the only churchmen who took the view that all lending at interest was immoral and that the 'perpetual servitude' ostensibly imposed upon Jews as punishment for the death of Jesus should be interpreted in the most literal manner possible" in his unfavorable review of Robin R. Mundill's *The King's Jews*. It is hard to overstate the antisemitism of his letter to the Countess of Winchester; he did not wish to murder Jewish people, but forced labor and exile were reasonable on his view. The extremity of his position far outstrips antisemitic codes in canon law, meaning that the position he held was personal and not institutionally encouraged or mandated. While Philippa M. Hoskin's assertion, in "Illuminating the Darkness: Grosseteste's Panoptic Vision of the Diocese" "This was not an unusual stance in the thirteenth century," may be true, it is nevertheless an extreme one. Apparently, his desire for peace and justice and self-sacrificial rulership only extended in practice to denizens who professed Christianity.

The *Piers*-poet appears to have read all three of these works and incorporated them into passus 18 of the B-text (assuming the B-text precedes the C). That the *Piers*-poet read *Chateau*, whether in translation or a version of the Anglo-Norman, is sure. It is the poet's delicate inclusion of Grosseteste's intricate light-theology that indicates that his familiarity spanned more Grossetestean texts than *Chateau*. It is important to note for this argument that the refractive Marian womb is the only overt mention of light in *Chateau*, and the image is a natural metaphor able to be theorized only in the context of Grosseteste's wider corpus.[31] The *Piers*-poet employs metaphors of light far more extensively than he may have derived from *Chateau* alone. It seems far more likely that the *Piers*-poet also had access either to *De luce* or the portions of the *Hexaemeron* in which Grosseteste quotes and summarizes portions from *De luce*.[32] Like Grosseteste's work, the daughters of God in passus 18 employ a Grossetestean metaphysical spectrum of the characteristics of light. Like Grosseteste's symbolic system, they discuss physical characteristics of light and moves toward a blending of spiritual characteristics. Light[33] reveals more intricate physical and spiritual characteristics than either *Chateau* or *Hexaemeron* show by themselves, suggesting that the original manuscript from which the *Piers*-author drew his Grossetestean material contained not only *Ypotis* but perhaps *De luce* as well. The efficacy of light has obvious traces of the physics of the rarefying light of *De luce* (i.e., drawing matter up with itself), which physics of rarefaction is omitted from the *Hexaemeron*.[34]

[31] The word *light* (in various orthographic forms) appears 17 times in passus 18, and the appearances are significantly concentrated in passus 18. Of 27 instances of the uncompounded forms of the word 'light', 17 – or nearly 63% appear in passus 18 alone.
[32] I am following Cecilia Panti's dating sequence, as do most scholars currently writing on Grosseteste.
[33] One might argue that this light is merely another name for Christ, but in *Piers*, a heavily allegorical poem, names always transfer characteristics.
[34] Helen Lacey, *The Royal Pardon: Access to Mercy in Fourteenth-Century England* (York Medieval Press, University of York, 2009).

The light of passus 18 is both spiritual and physical, connects and is incorporated in both soul and body, and finds its superior form in the person of Christ. The definition *via negativa* the sisters proffer is not the final word, however. Their denials are met with Christ's presence; when He arrives in hell, He systematically performs each of the tasks the sisters say are unbelievable, not least of which is the taking of souls up into heaven with light: "Lucifer loke ne myghte, so light hym ablente. / And tho that Oure Lord lovede, into his light he laughte…" (B.18.326-7) [Lucifer might not look, because the light blinded him / And those whom our Lord loved, he caught into his light]. This is the last we hear of the souls redeemed, so this 'catching,' or removal, both justifies and sanctifies in a single motion of light-driven ascension. The light also exacts partial judgement on Satan when it blinds him; like any act of the divine, charity and judgement, rarefaction and condensation, illumination and excecation are all results of a single action. God, who is more light than light for Grosseteste, in the person of Christ, who is the light of the world, performs the rarefaction seen in the creation of the spheres, but the mechanism is a perfection, a moving-up, of the elements of the earth. Christ, the form of man, conceived in the 'firmament' of the virgin's womb as in *Chateau*, is reflected into the hellish 'center' of the earth in *Piers*, only, like creation in *De luce,* to expand and to take with his expansion the 'matter' of those souls bound to him in love.

Like Grosseteste's cosmology, the genius of *Piers Plowman* is not only in its invention but in its organization which allows for easy expansion, insertion, and for separate components of the multiple whole to be compared quite easily. In this way, the structure's expandable matrix strongly resembles the literary structure and expandability of the allegory of which the work is composed. Each allegorical component can potentially anchor another in the same family or of the same name -- for instance, an allegorical 'Peace' informs the next reference to peace in the text and makes it

possible (but does not necessitate) to allegorize the second peace, even if it is not contextually obvious that the component is meant to be allegorical. "The Daughters of God" is doubly resonant as it is included in *Piers* -- it is included as a continuation of the Peace found in Passus 4, but not thematically or organizationally. Rather, it is a connection available to readers because of its structure and composition. The episode appears to be prompted by the inclusion of salvation history.[35]

Peace on Earth

'Pees', in the A version, is a landowner, a defeated 'plebian actor' (Steiner) who settles out of court for atrocities levied against him. In keeping with the manuscript associations preserved, for one, in Vernon, the *Piers*-author includes Grosseteste's Pees, a confident, articulate daughter of God Himself, under the same name.[36] Since the terms are the same in each instantiation, 'peace' is a form of class nominalism in the poem formed by associating

[35] The mixed-manuscript model has a peculiarity of interpretation which is nearly Wycliffite in emphasis. The inclusion of a wide variety of vernacular, didactic texts in a 'secular' miscellany offers up the possibility of democratic modes of interpretation, rather than controlled and centralized meaning. The Lollards and Wycliffites had a less centralized appreciation of scripture, and as Fiona Somerset puts it, "[Parabiblia such as the *Glossed Gospels*] show that critical apparatus and purposeful extracts of kinds already in use in the schools were being translated to new audiences, as part of the means by which the Wycliffite Bible made the authentic, unmediated words of the bible more accessible to more people" (*Feeling Like Saints*, 167-8). While Somerset is referring to the *para*biblia, she succinctly draws our attention to the Lollard project: the presentation of scripture in the vernacular, in its totality, to aid the reading and interpretation practices of the common people. This is not unlike the project of a mixed-manuscript -- to make the works it contains available for interpretation and glossing by any reader or, indeed, by anyone within earshot -- literate or illiterate

[36] Perhaps the aspiration to be a woman – also subject to editorial erasure, as Masha Raskolnikov points out in "Transgendering pride," on the subject of C's Pride, "This is where the transgendered reading of Pride comes in: where the author has potentially made an error, something the editors feel the need to explain away, a slip of the pen in transferring some words from one speaker to another" (162), but this slippage is one of the *Piers*-poet's great experimentations – when one gender does not suit a personification, the *Piers*-author seems to have no issue recognizing the same person with the same name, differently gendered. Unlike Steiner's attribution to the overlap of names, there is no attempt to distinguish between Pees and Pees. Pride, however, offers an excellent example of name distinction: Pride the female sin confesses in B.6 and 'Purnele Pride-Heart,' confesses in B.8. In C, Raskolnikov continues, Purnele speaks lines in the first person which described Hawkyn in the third person masculine in B. It is unclear if 'Pride' (f.) and 'Purnele Pride-Heart' (f.) are the same person; the possibility is available since the former, general personification is less specific and not contradictory. Although Peace's appearances seem to be initially contradictory and thus not needing overt distinction, scribal confusion in RF, an absence of 'personal naming', and *Piers*'s 'trans-logic' suggests that understanding Peace 18 is structurally consistent with other character arcs.

personifications equally under the same term – i.e. all things called ‘peace’ and only things called peace are in that class. This habit of the poet’s undergirds his proclivity for punning; he seems to take delight in the possibility of meaning-making at once constrained by identical names and released by possibilities which arise when one wanders through mixed-manuscripts with a nearly hallucinogenic willingness to freely associate. There is perhaps no better example of this than the character of Peace, who is first adapted as the plaintiff in a common-law felony case and later in the poem and its revision history from a mixed-manuscript with content similar to that which survives in Vernon. Peace’s first appearance also resembles the vernacular expansion found in the Pardon episode -- although the bill Peace posts is not explicitly read, its existence is reported, and Peace slips immediately into first-person testimony, which makes it nearly a document in its own right. The second Peace is an instance of meta-inclusion of a document -- i.e. a clear instance of an authorial inclusion of a document obviously external to the A-versions of *Piers* but also not treated as a document explicitly within the world of *Piers*. All of these taken together provide a robust model of medieval reading, which took place largely within a miscellany or mixed-manuscript context[37]

Pier’s treatment of the character and concept of Peace in passus 4 is not simple, and it becomes more troubling as one re-reads the poem and as the poem continues to read itself. On

[37] Documents are included by quotation, by report, and by meta-inclusion. A similar process, David Lawton suggests, occurs in the composition of *Awntyrs A:*

> it is as if the poet of *Awntyrs A* has returned to the context of the Vernon manuscript: for his legendary material; for his homiletic use of merveilles (Joseph); for his preoccupation with salvation, the Seven Works of Mercy, and the Last Judgment (Piers Plowman, Mirror of St. Edmund); for penitential, antifeminist, and ubi sunt lyrics; for his Marian devotion (226-29); for much of his plot (the Trental of St. Gregory, with which there are verbal parallels); and perhaps even for his meter (Susannah). Much of the alliterative Arthuriana is penitential narrative, and all is concerned with "vertous lywynge" that leads to "sowlehele”

Likewise, *Piers* repeatedly borrows text and plot from similar groupings which are preserved in Vernon later traditional associations which are Reading is done by recontextualization, glossing, and by meta-expansion. David A. Lawton, “The Unity of Middle English Alliterative Poetry,” *Speculum* 58, no. 1 (January 1983): 72–94, https://doi.org/10.2307/2846614.

first examination, what the *Piers*-poet means by 'peace' might appear simple: effort to make reparations when wrongs have been committed. An examination of the accusation of Wrong and the resulting trial reveals an uncomfortable dissatisfaction with that definition on the part of the poet and reveals the dangerous implications of such a definition of peace or, rather, any hard definition of peace at all. The poet suggests that such a definition of peace – while perhaps accurate – is functionally unjust, an injustice the King seeks to repair. The problem is not easy to solve (ever is a peaceful solution hard to come by), and the trial of Wrong is difficult to extricate from the results of Meed's trial, colored by Peace's confusion about his own nature, and impeded by Peace's eager capitulation to Meed's settlement offer. The trial of Wrong is farther complicated by questions of what peace is, and that ambiguity bespeaks the *Piers*-poet's interest in medieval semiotics.

Considering the treatment Meed receives at the end of passus 3, it would be easy to distrust her motivations in B.4.94-103.[38] Just before Meed's reappearance in the fourth passus, Wrong had been accused of heinous crimes, including theft and rape of the people who are closest to Peace. Peace has become so frustrated with Wrong's constant assaults that he "come[s]… into parlement and putte[s] up a bille" (4.47) on which Wrong's crimes are enumerated:

> How Wrong ayeins his wille hadde his wif taken,
> And how he ravysshede Rose, Reignaldes love,
> And Margrete of hir maydenhede maugree hire chekes
> 'Bothe my gees and my grys hise gadelynges feccheth;
> I dar noght for here of hym fighte ne chide.
> He borwed of my bayard and broughte hym home nevere,
> Ne no ferthyng therfore, for nought I koude plede.
> He maynteneth hise men to murthere myne hewen…." (B.4.47-55)
> [How Wrong against his will had taken his wife

[38] This paper focuses entirely on the episode as depicted in the B text. For adroit enumeration of the changes made to the C text, consult *The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman, *Volume 1* pp. 372-414 ff.

And how he ravished Rose, Reginald's love
And Margarete of her maidenhood in spite of her resistance
Both my geese and my pigs his rascals fetch
I don't dare for fear of him fight or chide
He borrowed my bay horse and never brought him home
Nor a farthing afterward however much I pleaded
He pays his men as a private army]

The list of Wrong's crimes continues beyond this passage: it includes more thefts, the seduction (or rape) of Peace's 'mayde,' and the severe beating of Peace himself. The crimes weigh so heavily on Peace that he cries "I am noght hardy for hym unnethe to loke!" (4.60) [I am not brave enough to look at him], because the very sight of his enemy is traumatic. It seems that the motivation behind his accusation of Wrong is to maintain or regain peace, to recover, in a sense, himself. This begins to reveal again the slipperiness of the project of allegory: what peace is there before Peace appears? The very personification of peace, this embodiment, does violence to the person of Peace, ostensibly to understand what he represents. There has clearly not been peace before this, but since Peace's servants were murdered, his family raped or kidnapped, and Peace himself was beaten, the lack of peace (all puns intended by the poem itself) has definite causes: Wrong has laid waste personally to Peace and his estate.

He is compelled by duty to report wrongdoing (or Wrong, doing), but in his heart is the desire to let be, to close his eyes until his problems, his scathes, go away. The King, however, is obligated by the fact that he "knew [Peace] seide sooth, for Conscience hym tolde" (61) and that Peace's head is bloodied (78) by Wrong's assault. Well he should, since peace is "moost precious of vertues" (B.1.152) despite its frustrating and contradictory nature. In fact, the immediate effect of the king's decision is to preclude mere quietude: as judge, he throws out the possibility of settlement: "Wrong wendeth noght so awey er I wite more / Lope he so lightly, laughen he wolde, / And eft the boldere be to bete myne hewen" (B.4.104-6) because of the

danger to his kingdom. Quietude for quietude's sake is politically harmful to the king and physically harmful to some of his subjects.

Not only that, but what should be Wrong's promise to cease and desist from his actions against Peace is made by Meed, in Wrong's stead: "For I wol wage for Wrong, he wol do so na moore." Regardless of how sympathetic to Meed one is, her promises about the moral conduct of someone else, especially if that someone is related to her and that someone is – lest I overstate the point – named *Wrong*, it does not seem likely that the promise will hold. Even if it were true that the promise would hold and even if the gold offered was sufficient to cover the striking wrongs committed by Wrong, the manner in which Peace's capitulation is described reveals that he may well be less willing to come to an agreement than it appears at first glance. Attempts to translate the connotations of the Middle English reveal the poet's sensitivity to the inherent contradiction: quietude and harmony. What Peace's reluctant capitulation is the desire for harmony and true, lasting peace "I fogyve hym that gilt with a good wille" (101). Even though Peace's name derives from the feminine Latin *pax*, Peace is notably male and tortured in his personified situation. He cannot husband his land or his wife effectively in the face of the power of Wrong's assaults. Wrong has undone Peace's essential relationships with his environment by denying him the fruit of his labor and the enterprise of his estate. Wrong and his lackeys have overturned the integrity of Peace's household (not least his marriage) by raping his wife, female servant, and women in his community. Wrong inflicts a wholesale violation of will in this community to exert his dominance.

Wrong's violations underscore the seriousness of exerting one's will over and against the will of another. In the context of reading, this is the position of the critic resistant to the suggestion of a manuscript's mixedness. Wrong's violations are anti-communal and set the

desire of the individual against the relationships and economy of a community.[39] Communal bonds are not, on the other hand, absolute. Properly formed, they ought to be meliorating and mediating, bringing one will intro conversation and connection with another will. To pretend absolute authority is to play god and to be inhuman. Wrong tears the fabric of Peace's relationships, cutting his victim out of his communal fabric. With his deep pockets and phalanx of litigators, Wrong undoes peaceful society itself and pays for the privilege.

Alternatively, Meed's intervention is an instance of practical peace -- albeit dissatisfactory to come readers (myself most certainly among them) -- since retributive justice cannot equalize, repair, or erase a wrong. The out-of-court settlement surely benefits Wrong most obviously and prevents his conviction on a number of felonious charges.[40] Wisdom, 'regular Jesus,' as it were, reminds everyone at the trial that an out of court settlement is better than letting Wrong go unpunished: "Lat Maynprise hym haue / And be borugh for his bale, and biggen him bote, / amende þat he mysdede, and eueremore þe betere," which Wit corroborates, "Betere is þat bote bale adoun bringe / Þanne bale be bet, and bote never þe betere" [It is better that compensation does away with evildoing / than evildoing is flogged and it doesn't help anything] (A.4.75-7, 79-80). Sometimes, in the real world, you need to take the money of evil men instead of punishing them, since punishing them never gets anything done anyway. The rich and powerful will be with you always, even to the end of the age.

Peace's attitude also reflects a certain sociopolitical quietism of a kind with that suggested in the fifth chapter of the epistle of James, as a particularly relevant example of an

[39] It might be tempting to call this the will of the author, but ascribing motivation to an author is often used to call attention to a reader's wishes and interpretations within a set of reasonable constraints.
[40] Cf. Elise Wang's forthcoming book, *Felony's Dark Imaginings*, on the late medieval English account of the 'felonious mindset' and the implications of multiple felony convictions.

attitude that permeates the New Testament.[41] That Peace's suit is settled is at once a theological and social point -- it is no accident that Peace manifests as a middle-class landowner, or a minor noble and that Wrong is wealthy enough to act outside of the bounds of the law.[42] Successfully waged war is profitable for kings and knights -- let us not forget that Meed reminds Conscience that that he too has 'gripped hir golde'. Furthermore, Wrong was likely able to justify his domestic rape and pillage via claiming a right to purveyance, as Conscience does in Passus 20.81-86: "And sente forth his forreyours, Feueres and Fluxes [...] frenesies and foule yueles; foragers of kynde". Rape and pillage is effectively a right of nobles, and to keep peace, they must only pay a nominal fee whenever lawsuits are levied by those with means enough to do so.

The king's decision to ignore the 'pitiable' words of Peace and the settlement offer of Wrong's lawyers has implications for his subject immediately (Peace receives, it seems, both the

[41] The entirety of the sequence follows the structure of James 5: "[1] Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you. [2] Your riches are corrupted: and your garments are motheaten. [3] Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days. [4] Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, which by fraud has been kept back by you, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. [5] You have feasted upon earth: and in riotousness you have nourished your hearts, in the day of slaughter. [6] You have condemned and put to death the Just One, and he resisted you not. [7] Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth: patiently bearing till he receive the early and latter rain. [8] Be you therefore also patient, and strengthen your hearts: for the coming of the Lord is at hand. [9] Grudge not, brethren, one against another, that you may not be judged. Behold the judge standeth before the door. [10] Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labour and patience, the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord. [11] Behold, we account them blessed who have endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and you have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is merciful and compassionate. [12] But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, nor by the earth, nor by any other oath. But let your speech be, yea, yea: no, no: that you fall not under judgment. [13] Is any of you sad? Let him pray. Is he cheerful in mind? Let him sing. [14] Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him. [16] Confess therefore your sins one to another: and pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much. [17] Elias was a man passible like unto us: and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. [18] And he prayed again: and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. [19] My brethren, if any of you err from the truth, and one convert him: [20] He must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

[42] The account of Sir John Molyns offers an example of similar immunity to punishment. Compare the account in "The First Fall of Sir John Molyns" in *Records of Buckinghamshire* (James Pickburn, 1971).

gold from Meed and the legal satisfaction of having Wrong locked up), for his kingdom (his subjects are in less danger of being beaten), and for the narrative (Wrong as a character disappears after this point, though the word recurs a handful of times after this episode). The *Piers*-poet's habit of making characters disappear has effects here on his reader's understanding of the nature of peace and somewhat on whether legal settlement is just recompense at any time. In this episode, the *Piers*-poet expands possible understandings of peace to delimit proper application or a manifestation of the most precious of virtues. It is indeed most precious: it costs Meed gold and Wrong his freedom, and the King must ignore the pleas of his citizen (Peace) to do what he thinks is just. Furthermore, no one thinks that this fraught decision will yield a permanent solution, for even the King's decision to lock Wrong up for (the King's) life is pitted with conditionals:

> And eft the boldere be to bete myne hewen.
> But Reson have ruthe on hym, he shal reste in my stokkes
> But As longe as [I lyve], lowenesse hym borwe (B.4.107-9)
> [And again is bolder to beat my servants
> Unless Reason have pity on him, he shall rest in my stocks
> Unless As long as I live, lowness protect him]

The harshness of [he shall remain in my stocks / As long as I live] appears within the meliorating chiasmus of qualification: [unless Reason has mercy on him] and [unless humility borrows/takes him]: the heavy hand of justice must always be ready to be restrained by reason and the wrong-doer's repentance, even if the judge knows that that repentance lasts only for a time. Peace appears briefly, weathers the drubbing of a lifetime and disappears completely from the poem until Passus 13 and as an allegorization until Passus 18 of the B version. As is often the case in sustained allegories, the longer Peace exists in the poem itself, the more it disturbs comfortable classification of Peace. In order to keep the nominalist silt from clouding the clear waters of 'peace' too much, the poet largely leaves the term alone until the end of the poem.

Peace at last, figuratively speaking

How then can the practice of common law (which may well have ended in settlement) be pruned towards a cultivation of justice? Why would poet retain characters in the narrative to allow their allegorical constitution to accrete and complexify until the personification is no longer sustainable under its sign?[43] As Conrad van Dijk remarks, "The law cannot take account of every situation, and the judge must examine the intent of the legislator (as well as the intentions of the accused) and soften the rigor of the law accordingly" (313). In the case of Peace, however, the King must prevent a solution which would be merciful to Wrong in order to show Peace not only mercy, but some form of true justice.[44] It is somewhat more difficult to pinpoint the timing of Peace putting up the bill. Why now? Is it simply that the gathering of parliament marks the occasion for civil protest? Is the accumulation of crimes so much just now that Peace, to maintain his integrity, must protest to his discomfort? When does the accumulation of Wrong's crimes necessitate the appearance of Peace in the court, or, more difficult, in the poem?[45] This is not the only problem with the crimes of Wrong, since the narrative appearance of Peace is simultaneous with the explication of Wrong's crimes. Documents are created in response to desire, personifications link documents but also produce desires which call for more documents. Peace is willing to disappear with the offer of settlement but is restrained by the King, ostensibly for the sake of justice, but also, in a manner of speaking for the poem. The

[43] It is not insignificant that Pees, or a similar concept, reappears in passus 18 as one of the daughters of God. It would be too far to say that this is not the same character, I think. The name is the same, the character is different, or at least has a different sex and (perhaps) lineage as a daughter of God.

[44] The King's active role in deciding the right course of action is not only narratively influential but historically anchored: "*Piers Plowman* and the *Confessio Amantis* thus participate actively in these larger debates about how the common law might be remedied by other forms of law, and to what extent the king should involve himself in the legal process" Conrad van Dijk, "Giving Each His Due: Langland, Gower, and the Question of Equity," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108, no. 3 (July 1, 2009): 310–35, https://doi.org/10.2307/20722745, p. 315.

[45] It is important to note the difference between personal offense and felonious crime. Cf. John Alford's Piers Plowman*: A Glossary of Legal Diction*. van Dijk notes: "Malice was only used, then, to describe a felonious offense" (327).

poet's 'authoritarian tendency' and the king's nominal attendance to equity by protesting the payment is an artistic statement as well as a political one.[46] To be handy-dandy paid into satisfaction corrupts the writer and the king both – sometimes, practical justice means settling out of court. Sometimes making art means taking the money that comes; sometimes fidelity to the real means writing sellout visions of a sold-out world.

To do good, one needs to know what it is, and although "scimus autem quoniam diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum his qui secundum propositum vocati sunt sancti," it seems to happen only though pain and embodiment. Meed's proffering of money "'to amenden [Peace's] scathe'" (B.4.96), to make amends easily, painlessly, to conjure up a new Peace, *seems* to be justice, *nominally* makes amends (or makes Amends, Meed's mother), but is rather a drive towards equity (justice before mercy) in which the defendant and his legal team consider the possibility that they can re-make or remove Peace's person from the poem itself. Much of the length of the lawsuit and the irony of the final solution has its root in what Wrong assumes motivates Peace. The nature which makes Peace seem so agreeable is the same which makes him deceptively tenacious: equity is too much for Peace, and only after justice is satisfied does the trial end and Peace vanish until (perhaps) passus 18.[47] With a new document of peace comes more possibility for error, more contention, and more pain of embodiment. Unlike easy

[46] Anna P. Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman* (D.S. Brewer, 1981). "Neither Gower nor Langland, then, appears to use equity in the first place in its Aristotelian sense as a relaxation of the law, nor as an expression of mercy" (van Dijk 314).

[47] "The king must have the power to solve the problems of legal maintenance caused by bastard feudalism (typified in Piers Plowman by the dispute between Peace and Wrong), and yet he should also be accountable to the law" (van Dijk 333). van Dijk continues: "Equity thus represents justice before it is tempered by the sweetness of mercy. Indeed, equity in Langland refers less to the application of the law to doubtful cases or to a tempering of the rigor of the law, than to a sense that before there can be pardon—both in legal and theological terms—justice must be served and amends must be made" (322).

money, text-based arguments are hard-won, doubtful rewards, and risky engagements, but they are the only way to know the good.

Documentary engagement undergirds the process of learning to do evil, too – hearkening back to Faustus's 'book of the heart -- Covetise, in A.5.117, says that he "lernide to leiȝ a lef oþer tweiȝe" [learned to lie a page or two]. Covetise turns the page – in a way Meed failed to earlier in the poem – but the context is enough for him to learn to lie, but not to learn truth, which is whole. After the confessions of the sins (confessions which result in no contrition), Robert the robber

> …on *Reddite* lokede,
> And for ther was not wherewith, he weped wel sore;
> And yit the synful shrewe sayde to himselve:
> "Crist, that on Calvery on the cros deyde,
> Tho Dismas my brother bysoughth the of grace –
> And that haddest on that man for *Momento* sake—
> Thi will wirche upon me, as I have wel deserved
> To have helle for evere yif that hope ne were (A.5.230-7)
> [looked at *pay back*
> And because there were not the means, he wept very sorrowfully
> And still the sinful rogue said to himself"
> "Christ who in Calvary died on the cross
> When Dismas my bother asked you for grace
> Then you had mercy on that man for the sake of *remember*
> You will work on me, since I have well deserved
> To have hell forever if there were no hope]

Robert is worried at his inability to pay back what he owes (double, according to Exodus 22:7), and can rely only on the hope offered by the example of the thief on the cross who, on the cross, tells Jesus to "remember me when thou shalt come into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Christian soteriology relies on pairing documents from the Old Testament – Jewish scriptures – and the New Testament to explain the fulfillment and consistency of the salvation narrative. The thief here does not have the means to accomplish Old Testament repayment, but by pairing it with the

record of Luke's gospel, he can remember and integrate the apparently contradictory: repay what you have solen // Christ will save those who truly repent. The sins in the passus 5 (A/B; C.6-7) pageant do not repent because they do not embark in a Meed-style redefinition campaign – each sin reiterates their habitual actions, promises to change from those habits, and promptly disappears or returns to their sinful activities, much to Repentance's chagrin. By this metric, the Meed/Conscience debate and the Trial of Wrong are allegorical successes – the debate between characters introduces some contextual subtlety, and they reach something akin to an adequate resolution to their documentary problems. In the pageant, only Robert and other human-leaning characters are able to near repentance – the allegorized sins can only repeat what they do "I am gluttony, I found some garlic; I am gluttony, I found some garlic" or disappear. They have no documentary redemption.

Only after the king is aware, through Conscience's counsel, that Wrong "was a wikked luft" (4.62) is Wrong afraid, and it is the attempt of Wrong to dismiss Peace from the poem which allows Peace to remain as long as he does. Fearful, Wrong seeks Wisdom "To *maken pees* with his pens, and profred hym manye" (4.64 emphasis mine) but does it only out of a sense of self-preservation. Wit and Wisdom serve as legal counsel and urge the use of Meed not to do justice, but to, in a very sinister sense, *make* Peace, or force him to settle, though there are even more insidious undertones that Wrong, Wit, and Wisdom might be reconstituting the substance of Peace through bribery. The plan works, for,

> Thanne wowede Wrong Wisdom ful yerne
> To maken his pees with his pens, handy-dandy payed.
> Wisdom and Wit thanne wenten togidres,
> And token Mede myd hem mercy to wynne (B.4.74-77).
> [Then Wrong wooed Wisdom very eagerly
> To make peace with his {pens/pence}, handy dandy paid
> Wisdom and Wit then went togetheer

And took Meed with them to win Mercy]

Not only does Wrong desire to reconstitute or refashion or change Peace with bribery, but (as is so often the case with Langland), there is a pun which makes lawyers and authors of allegory nearly as culpable for the dissolution or dismissal of Peace as wrongdoing. At least twice, the phrase 'make peace with pens' appears. Schmidt gives the obvious contextual reading, which is 'pence,' or a metonymic reference to bribery, or, perhaps more sinisterly, "to settle out of court" (115) as Alford defines it. Meed provides the coin and the unfinished argument with Conscience ended with the beginning of this passus and reappears as the personification of the motivation behind societal change. She is at the behest of Wrong, yes, but she also re-knits the torn social fabric and begins the process of making the kingdom whole again. There is no easy condemnation to make here, nor a simple validation -- Mede grows more complex with every appearance and less easily identifiable with any one moral code. All motivations have their own directions, but Mede provides the speed.

Piers Plowman's social restlessness begins in passus 4. Peace is the owner of an estate, married, has servants, and as such has been set carefully into the social and legal web necessitated by personifying Peace as an even somewhat believable landowner.7 This inclusion of Peace in what is not only a body, but a human setting, is what Howard Schless claims is prototypical for these personifications, which appear "in a setting which, though the degree of detail may vary, is realistic, actual, human" (131). Some of that very detail is achieved by the *via negativa*: Wrong's actions ironically outline Peace's character. To expand therefore on Schless, not only does the *Piers*-poet "mak[e] a person of [the human aspect]" by "placing" (131) the

personification, the *Piers*-poet constructs a context not so much with narrative detail but with the constellation of characters, each which have their own somatic gravity.[48]

Without the balance of characters (if – for instance – Wrong was constructed alone), Peace would have been eventually destroyed without saying a word: the victim of irresponsible and imbalanced personification. Without Wrong's abuses, Peace would be difficult to embody with the ethical force he possesses in the *Piers* B text. Wrong's wrongs serve not only as the justification for the King's later judgement, for Peace bursting into the court in a panic, to further define Wrong's conceptual territory, but to firmly ground the personification of Peace.8 The wrongs, which Peace enumerates in 4.47-60 simultaneously builds a solid felony case against Wrong and ekphrases the landscape of Peace's estate. From Peace's complaint, we know that he has a wife, pigs, a bay-colored horse, servants, holds fairs,[9] hosts a market, owns a barn,[10] grows enough wheat and oats for surplus, and has a maidservant.[11] This single complaint ties the freshly personified Peace to marriage, husbandry, supervision of labor, sponsorship of economic exchange, and maintenance of a household. Because of these several privileges Peace has, Kennedy argues:

> Socially, purveying for a lord other than the king would probably place him below Peace in social standing, and, indeed, the king's suggested remedy, stocking, was an ignominious punishment (A.4.95, B.4.108, C.4.103). Wrong has avoided all such punishments in the past, however, and has dearly been sheltered by his powerful lord[49]

The battle over Peace's subjectivity is especially an allegorical one, a soteriological battle, for that master is the devil. This extreme detail in this personification also tacitly comments on the process of allegorization: for an allegory to exist and to function, it must do violence to the very

[48] Howard H. Schless, *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Pilgrim Books, 1984).
[49] Kennedy, Kathleen E. "*Retaining a Court of Chancery in Piers Plowman*." The. Yearbook of Langland Studies 17 (2003), p. 182.

concept it embodies. The… personification of peace, this embodiment, does violence to the person of Peace, ostensibly for the purpose of understanding what he represents. For Langland, therefore, the best allegory is social, violent, and unsettled. Peace reappears as a female character (rather than appearing as a separate character by the same name), the *Piers*-poet has abandoned the male personification of pees, finding the image perhaps exhausted, and has added a new present (female gender) with which the past can combine to make the allegorical image.[12]

Although Peace is reconstituted (perhaps the least noticeable and most violent act) *within* the narrative by Meed's bribery: the pressure of the offer is too much for Peace, being peace, to resist. This uncomfortable internal instability is only part of the problem. The outrage of the King, "Nay… so me Crist helpe!" (B.4.104), and his tirade against Wrong is, in part, a tirade against the violence done to the character of Peace. Both the defense of the King and the violation of Peace's relatives and property contribute equally to the extratextual definition of peace, which, as the episode shows, is difficult to delimit or predict. As Quilligan writes, allegory "works horizontally, rather than vertically, so that meaning accretes serially, interconnecting and criss-crossing the verbal surface long before one can accurately speak of moving to another level 'beyond' the literal" (28). Quilligan's 'next level' is located "in the self-consciousness of the reader" (28), which, in my estimation, complicates somewhat the picture presented: the self-consciousness of the reader is not a *necessary* corollary for a discussion of constitutive semantics or of, pace Quilligan, allegory. It seems more productive rather to remember that the *Piers*-poet is aware that there *is* a reader.[50] Peace must be defined not only for the sake of learning what Dobest is, but for finetuning his/her social importance. Not only is the

[50] "This suggests that, for Augustine, the surplus of meaning is not something separate or added on, but an ordinary and to-be-expected depth of significance in language itself" John S Chamberlin, "What Makes 'Piers Plowman' So Hard to Read?" 2021, 4.

Piers-poet aware of the risk of the creation of a text, but he is acutely aware of the instability of language (particularly the instability of the vernacular).[51] The risk God took to become flesh strongly resembles the risk of allegorical personification. Quilligan notes, in an allegory consisting of "words printed of hand-painted on a page" (25). She calls them "webs of words," which functions not unlike Walter Benjamin's 'constellations':

> It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent -- only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language.[52]

In Benjamin's understanding, an image is dialectics in stasis; but it does not merely operate within the dialectics of interlocution. An image is furthermore not primarily Platonic dialectics (the interaction of speakers) but rather operates with Hegelian temporal dialectics. While entering an image is somewhat more stable than Hegel theorizes, allegory consists of a series of revolutions and redefinitions under the same sign: Peace is always 'peace,' but to what that sign refers or what characteristics may be included under its aegis are a constant question, though not one which is absolute. The image is interdependent: its existence only possible in the meeting of the present moment and the past.

While it is certainly anachronistic to say that the *Piers*-poet was operating under a post-Hegelian constellation-view of language, it is not anachronistic to say that the *Piers*-poet conceived of language as highly temporal and dependent on intra-sentential and interlineal syntactic connections. Allegory in *Piers Plowman* does not operate simply on a universal sign

[51] This argument arose from a conversation with Seth Lerer.
[52] Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Cornell University Press, 2018), p. 462.

relationship, nor something quite like Abelard's nominalism, nor merely on Roger Bacon's agent-mediated sign theory. "Bacon argues, the relation between the sign and the interpreter of that sign is more basic than the relation that that sign has to its significate, since a sign is only a sign insofar as there is some agent who interprets it as a sign. Bacon's approach to language, then, can be labelled pragmatic, since the signification of an expression depends on the communicative intentions of the speaker and the interpretative intentions of the listener.

This stress on interpretation in signification also leads Bacon to the claim that the meaningful use of an expression depends on the intentions of the speaker, so that expressions constantly acquire and change their signification. Unlike many in the medieval period, then, who held that imposition was largely a one-off affair, Bacon stresses that the signification of an expression is not fixed and permanent; rather, every language-user, at every occasion of her use of that expression, establishes what that expression signifies on that occasion of use – compare Balthius p. 9. Rather, it seems most likely that Langland, through the bodies of his personifications, is exploring sign theory along the lines of Walter Burley's responses to William of Ockham: it is impossible to refer to all specific instances of a concept, or indeed to most instances of a concept when one uses or introduces a particular sign. In Burley's mind, the necessary conclusion of this line of reasoning is that particular signs (or words) refer therefore to extra-mental universals. But Burley argues that it cannot be the case that competent use of a common name makes one think of all the particular objects in the world of which that name can be predicated.

Invoking the notion that words come to signify in the way that they do via an act of imposition, Burley argues that "he who imposed the name 'human' to signify did not know me or John who is now present. Therefore, the name 'human' does not signify my or John who is

now present."38 In other words, it is implausible that the individual who introduced the name 'human' into the English language—the individual who fixed its reference—was aware of each and every individual human. Indeed, it seems likely that he had no interaction whatsoever with most individual humans. But if he never interacted with them in any way, he would not be able to think about them—and so could not impose the name 'human' on them. In contrast, then, Burley argues that common names, such as 'human', must signify extra-mental universals, which he argues are possessed by individuals and account for the ability of 'human' to name them" (Balthius 12). Allegory's process of serial accretion serves to expand the territory in a way which is not entirely reliant on the intentions of but nevertheless requires the effort of the author or reader.

After Piers tears the pardon in the seventh passus, the formerly socially-oriented poem begins to bend towards the technically theological and from socially embroiled personifications. Quilligan's 'next level' of interpretation can be considered in the language of breeches, of violence done to the text or characters therein. One might say that the *Piers*-poet is disrupting the idea of peace by personifying it at all, because to personify it peace is, apparently, to necessarily oppose it against Wrong, and the violence done to Peace. In other words, it seems initially that trying to talk about peace is more troubling to peace than Peace's conflict itself (to ignore a wrong or to protest it), there is another side to personifying Peace. If Wrong personified (as he is in the opening passūs of *PP*) is left alone, then Peace would have been eventually destroyed without saying a word: the victim of irresponsible and imbalanced personification. The exploratory personification of one moral position (Wrong) or one abuser of social balance (the historical thugs Wrong and his men ape) therefore requires the personification of others. For Wrong to appear and the poem to progress, the *Piers*-poet had to personify peace, both despite and

because of the violence tacitly done to the concept and character. Before the decision is reached about how to preserve Peace and give him justice, summoning Peace is an act fraught with conflict, inconsistency, and dishonesty. Rather than attempting to revive Peace as a pure invention or drag the quieted farmer back into the poem, the *Piers*-poet takes a cue from Meed and Conscience's debate and adds more, layering in and beautifully integrating Grosseteste's poem and fragments of its companion pieces into the orbit of *Piers*.

The Peace of Christ be with you always…

When Peace appears in passus 18, resplendently female, "in pacience yclothed" (B.18.176); two lines later, Riȝtwisnesse "[…] preyed pees to telle hir · to what place she wolde" (178). This is the first point at which it is undeniably clear to an initial reader that Peace has returned as female. In the only passage therefore of this dialogue in which Peace refers to (her/him)self as one of the sisters, R (MS Oxford Rawlinson Poetry 38) and F (MS Oxford Corpus Christi 201) omit the reference entirely, even though that changes the alliterative scheme from AX AXX to AA XX. Peace has been in the poem before and must reappear as the same character. My suspicion that both Peaces are the same character is confirmed by the way in which Peace (18) talks about experience.[53] The question of experience in Passus 18 is raised by

[53] Sister Mary Clemente Davlin offers the following note: Truth and Righteousness are literalists, while Peace and Mercy understand figurative language and use experience in their commentary, talking of poison and its antidotes, and the experience of joy being dependent upon the experience of suffering. Peace and Mercy read biblical texts looking not just for words but also for the implications of these words. Peace, indeed, sees biblical texts as love letters from her beloved, Love, to be interpreted with love and with her best understanding of Love's character" (86). The gender switching not only offers a commentary on allegorization, but is not unheard of: in the Old English Boethius, Lady Philosophy is personified as both male and female, taking one on at a time; in the Ovidian myth of Tiresias, the male prophet becomes a woman and returns to his male body before being struck blind; in Alan of Lille's *De planctu naturae*, he complains about love making man "of double gender… he becomes likewise of two declensions" (Metre 1) et al.

Barbara Newman notes: "Allegorical poets presupposed a gendered cosmology in which feminine matter longs for the imposition of masculine form… so it may seem peculiar that not only matter but also mind and many other ordering principles such as Sapientia and Philosophia likewise receive the feminine gender. In Tesky's view, this gendering is a mystification. By means of it, allegory attempts to disguise the "violent pleasure thought," that is, the forceful and usually patriarchal imposition of meaning on a resistant material reality" Barbara Newman, *God*

Mercy, who "ful myldely" says, "'Thorugh experience,' quod he[o], 'I hope thei shul be saved'" (B.18.151), speaking of Adam, Eve, Abraham, the patriarchs and prophets (143-4) in a clear reference to James 2:21, in which James asks if Abraham was not justified by works: "Abraham pater noster nonne ex operibus iustificatus…?".[54] The implications of Mercy asking a question about justification by works are too manifold to explicate here, but nevertheless, the discussion is in the air between the newly arrived Daughters of God[55] (which is interrupted by the arrival of Rightwisnesse and then Peace). After Peace arrives, she begins to answer the hope of Mercy and says that her "wil is to wende… and welcome hem alle" (B.18.175), the righteous souls in hell whom "Jesus justede wel" and continues "joye beginneth dawe" (180), telling the sisters that God granted Peace and Mercy "To be mannes meynpernour for everemoore after" (B.18.186).[56] This particular language of bail is seen in the trial of Wrong, in which Maynprise is at least partially allegorized when the lawyer Wisdom cries "And he amendes mowe make, Iat Maynprise [Wrong] have" but the desire some had that Meed be *maynpernour* for Wrong[57] is rejected by Reason.[58] Peace's joyous willingness in 18 to serve as surety in the harrowing

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and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in The Middle Ages, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, Pa. : Bristol: University of Pennsylvania Press ; University Presses Marketing [distributor], 2005), p. 38.

[54] The passage reads, in part: "20 vis autem scire o homo inanis quoniam fides sine operibus otiosa est 21 Abraham pater noster nonne ex operibus iustificatus est offerens Isaac filium suum super altare 22 vides quoniam fides cooperabatur operibus illius et ex operibus fides consummata est."

[55] Calling them strictly *Daughters* of God may be somewhat overenthusiastic: R, F, and Cr have *he* for Mercy (B.18.151); F alone has *she* for Rightwisnesse at B.18.165; Mercy and Truth are clearly female earlier: all MSS of B.18.114 have *sche* to refer to Mercy, universally have a version of *hire sustre*, *sche*, and *hire…sche* for Truth (B.18.117, 119, 120), suggesting that the addition of Peace causes some mild pronoun interference in α which adjusts to more squarely fit with the Daughters of God paradigm (i.e. the allegorical heritage of Bernard of Clairvaux and Robert Grosseteste) in β.

[56] *meynpernour* is a legal equivalent, according to the MED, to *meynprise*, which are:

> *meynprise* -- a) The release of a prisoner on someone's undertaking to act as surety for him, mainprise; bidden to ~, to offer to be surety for (sb.); goinge to ~, being allowed mainprise; leten (putten, receiven) to ~, permit (sb.) to be released on surety; withouten baille or ~, [see baille n. (1) 2.]; (b)?bail money; (c) = mainpernour; (d) *fig.* release from sin or death; nimen under ~, to act as mainpernor.
> *meynpernour* -- One who offers himself as surety that another (esp. a prisoner to be released on bail) will fulfill his legal obligation to appear in court when required; also *fig.*

[57] "That Mede moste be maynpernour, Reson thei bisoughte" (B.4.112).

[58] "Mede shal noght maynprise yow, by the Marie of hevene!" (B.4.179).

directly echoes some of the language not seen since Wrong's lawyers attempted to corrupt the trial in Passus 4. Furthermore, the corrupt lawyer 'Wisdom' of the trial in passus 4 has been replaced, in the new Grossetestian schema, by Piers/Christ, the son of God himself.

The corruption of Passus 4, the shortcomings of both of corruption and the King's absolute justice begin to be resolved in Peace's newly self-sacrificial attitude in the Daughters of God schema, an interpersonal relationship which revives the 'withering' of "interpersonal reconciliation" in face of the King's justice (125) that Galloway laments while it provides a satisfactory answer to the demands of Reason in Passus 4 and the protests Rightwisnesse is about to raise in response. Rightwisness, who wonders if Peace is mad or drunk (187), wishes that Adam and Eve and company have "peyne… perpetual and no preiere hem helpe" (199) because God ought to "lat hem chewe as thei chosen… For it is botelees bale, the byte that thei eten" (B.18.200-1), fully willing to relinquish the lot to the fate of their fatally bad choices.

We must remember what Peace has suffered at the hands of Wrong and his men, the resulting rage of the King, and the pain of Peace's memories of loss as well as his immediate capitulation to Meed's offer and compromise in the face of such loss, and she contradicts Rightwisnesse directly: "And I shal *preie*… hir peyne moot have ende, / And wo into wele mowe wenden at the laste" (202-3), a wish that Adam and Eve and the other hell-bound souls might be transformed much in the same way Peace has been. Peace does not regret her earlier pain, for she continues, "For no wight woot what wele is, that nevere wo suffrede… If no nyght ne weere, no man, as I leve, / Sholde wite witterly what day is to meene" (205, 207-8), implying again that pain is a necessary part of knowledge. This project of allegory is obviously incarnational and quietly concerned with the suffering of bodies, and "Peace's song is a kind of autobiography, describing her own role in the reconciliation of conflict, and inscribing her identity into a

traditional proverb that previously spoke only allegorically of peace" (McDermott 202), but it is also more than that. The autobiography reaches further back than McDermott suspects, however: the scars Peace revisits she garnered in her days as a bewildered and beleaguered estate owner and husband.

For Langland, allegorical epistemology requires a denial of stable ontology as a primary explanation for actualized existence, but such epistemic allegory is not a system which accepts multiple ontologies.[59] Rather, true knowledge is only possible through a refracted ontology: appearing to have many parts, but as part of one whole as red light is part of white. The refractions of allegory, however, have bodies – one capable of bearing scars, the other capable of divine participation in salvation. The two Peaces can thus be thought of as body and soul refracted from one another: Peace (4) is like *corpus*, albeit yet bound by laws and duty, and Peace (18) like *anima*. Sacrificial experience is the purpose of the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Christ and the result of enjoining document to document. By replacing parsimonious control with lavish addition, the *Piers*-poet turns his enthusiasm for codicology and for wide-ranging sources into a soteriological model – salvation comes from 'and', not 'not.' Peace reminds the sisters and the reader that God "took Adames kynde / To wite what he hath suffred in… To wite what alle wo is, that woot of alle joye" (221-224). Like Peace, Christ had to suffer woe that he might appreciate even His own bliss as the Son of God, so dependent is knowledge on experience: to understand the glory of the Thone room, Christ *must* bear the humiliation of the incarnation at least. Because of sin, He also *must* bear the scars of the cross. This theology belies one of Langland's tacit axiomata: the fundamental system of epistemology, bar none, is allegory, so essential is incarnation to the human experience and, thus, knowledge.

[59] Thanks to Anthony G. Cirilla for helping me find exactly the right syntax here.

Without the body, there is no mind, and any explanation which does not have somatic conceptualization as its keystone is fundamentally inaccurate.[60]

Light-shot Lincolnesis poetics begin to pierce through the poem after line 110 of the B-version, using vocabulary from Grosseteste's philosophy in *De luce* to stitch *Chasteau* into the increasingly gravid *Piers*. Fearful of Faith's indictment of the crucifying Jews, the dreamer retreats into hell, signifying the extremity of his fear, while also offering his audience a spectacular vantage point for hell's immanent harrowing. Grosseteste's influence is first perceptible in the dark when – in what is one of Langland's rare cinematic moments – Mercy comes walking "Out of the west coste… [and] to helleward she looked" (B.18.114). Just as Mercy, one of the four daughters of God and the first to appear in *Chateau*, has appeared, her sister Truth converges from the east. As they greet each other in darkness, "the day rowed, / And which a light and a leme lay bifore helle" [the day dawned / and such a light and a glow lay before hell]. Mercy explains that the dawn is the coming of Christ, who has just been crucified only a few lines before and claims that the eclipse they are observing (the darkness after the crucifixion) "In meninge that man shall fro markness be drawe / The while this light and this leme shal Lucifer ablende" (B.18.136-7) [It means that man shall from darkness be drawn / Meanwhile this light and glow shall blind Lucifer]. Truth denies it, saying "Leve thow nevere that yon light hem [i.e. the patriarchs] alofte brynge, / Ne have them out of helle" (B.18.145-6) [Never believe that yonder light {will} bring them aloft, / Nor take them out of hell]. This light-lifting is the first hint that more works of Grosseteste are at play: the saints will be lifted aloft by 'the light.'

[60] Peter Crisp reminds us further: "As an expression of conceptual metaphor allegory like symbol is highly motivated, motivated by the very nature of human cognition" Peter Crisp, "Allegory and Symbol - a Fundamental Opposition?," *Language and Literature* 14, no. 4 (November 1, 2005): 323–38, https://doi.org/10.1177/0963947005051287, p. 336.

Suffering, like the crucifixion, redeems and illuminates. The Word become flesh must die and rise again. As Galloway remarks, "…in the drama of the [trial] scene [Peace] simply disappears" (125), a sort of narrative death until Peace is resurrected in Passus 18, but now a figure still bearing the marks, as it were, of the nails of Wrong. Peace's reappearance is the "active response" McDermott calls for, arguing that "We can enquire about Langland's 'ethical invention' only if we are willing to entertain the notion that invention extends beyond rhetoric to action. For Langland, rhetoric and hermeneutics are incomplete without an active response…" (174), and resurrection is the completion of Langland's initial ethical invention. This is the theme of most of the poem: the search for Do-Wel, Do-Bet, and Do-Best drives most of the latter parts of the poem. The active response takes up much of the latter portion of the poem in the epistemological denouement. She is by far the most verbose of the sisters, and one of the few characters besides Conscience or Piers who reappears in slightly different manifestations.[61]

In this speech, which is not accidentally interrupted by the harrowing of Hell, Peace argues that suffering is essential to knowledge. Peace remarks Adam had "sorwe to feele… [t]o wite what wele was, *kyndeliche* to know it" (219-20), so the knowledge is not only epistemological but ontological, which mirrors the nature of allegorization.[62] Peace, in Passus 18, corroborates an Abelardian theological notion with a treatise of her own, preparing readers for her not only to recuperate her identity from her earlier male existence but also to recuperate the bare, creedal theology of passus 4 with layers of incorporated literary theology. While *Ypotis*

[61] Barbara Newman also notes the privileged status of the Daughters of God, commenting, "In *Piers Plowman* very few of the personifications enjoy the same transcendental status as Lady Church. Perhaps Piers himself does, as a figure of Christ's universal humanity, and perhaps also the four daughters of God" *God and the* Goddesses, p. 34.

[62] Mary Clemente Davlin, O.P., suggests, "The contention among the daughters, dramatizing conflicting commentaries, demonstrates the fallibility and strengths of biblical commentary and gives the reader a lesson in how to read" (87), and so it should come as no surprise that the personification of Book comes barreling through their conversation.

and *Chasteau* are theologically and politically simple individually, layering gives them added political complexity. Here, Peace has not only her 'experience' of Grosseteste's poem and association with Ypotis, but most of *Piers* layered into her persona. Thus, when she explicates her own theory of the incarnation, she harmonizes the victim of felony, the wisdom of Christ, the panic of the pardon, fantasy of equitable and just political leadership, and her own personal pain in sympathetic lament:

> Forthi God, of his goodnesse, the firste gome Adam,
> Sette hym in solace and in sovereyn murthe;
> And siththe he suffred hym synne, sorwe to feele--
> To wite what wele was, kyndeliche to knowe it.
> And after, God auntrede hymself and took Adames kynde
> To wite what he hath suffred in thre sondry places,
> Bothe in hevene and in erthe--and now til helle he thenketh,
> To wite what alle wo is, that woot of alle joye.
> "So it shal fare by this folk: hir folie and hir synne
> Shal lere hem what langour is, and lisse withouten ende.
> Woot no wight what werre is ther that pees regneth,
> Ne what is witterly wele til "weylawey" hym teche (B.18.217-28)
> [On that account, God of his goodness set the first man, Adam,
> In Solace and sovereign mirth
> And after he allowed Adam to sin, to feel sorrow
> To know what good was, to know it naturally
> And after, God wagered himself and took Adam's nature
> To know what he had suffered in three different places
> Both in heaven and on earth – and now to hell he thinks [to go]
> To know what all woe is that knowledge of all joy.
> So it shall fare by this folk: their folly and their sin
> Shall teach them what illness is and relief without end
> No creature knows what war is unless peace reigns there
> Nor what is knowingly 'wel' until 'alas' teaches him]

In stark contrast to the exacting lawyer of passus 4, God 'ventured himself,' i.e. wagered his own being, and become man to 'know what he had suffered in three different places: heaven, earth ,and now hell.' God leans what all woe is, all joy, as it is with humans. For people to know 'well,' they must learn sickness, for joy woe, and, essentially, to learn peace, they must know

war. Peace's speech is, when it was written, the culmination of decades of textual overlapping and layering accomplished in mixed-manuscripts. Peace has argued again and again as a daughter of God, a thin abstraction, for her importance. But now she has suffered, known the 'war' of earthly victimhood and can genuinely make the case for the viability of her position.

As Rightwisnesse joins the conversation, she too is incredulous of the superefficacious light: "Levestow that yond light unlouke myghte helle / And save mannes soul?" (B.18.188-9) [Do you believe that yonder light might unlock hell / And save man's soul?]. Light does more complicated work as the passus continues, and the sisters debate. Initially, as Mercy states, light only blinds Lucifer;[63] Mercy's understanding of the role of this light breaking into hell is purely physical: it will blind Satan's physical eyes. This sensory overload is always a potential function of observable *physical* light. Truth's subsequent denial of Mercy's claim reveals further functions of light, saying that souls will *not* be lifted out of heaven by the light, which is probable since she does not yet understand that the light is the Light, the crucified Christ. Rightwisnesse's subsequent question and denial opens the possibility that light functions in the spiritual realm: she questions whether the light will unlock hell and save men's souls. It is an opening of the possibility because she asks a question, while her sisters ignore the spiritual or deny it.

This double denial of the power of the light rounds out the definition of the power of the superessential light which is descending into hell. To summarize: Mercy suggests that Lucifer will be physically overcome but seems to be unclear on what will happen afterward. Truth only denies spiritual capacities of light by denying the spiritual efficacy and tacitly affirming its mere

[63] The light appears 'before hell' and straddles the border of physical and spiritual. It is wholly possible to conceive of hell as a purely physical place, buried beneath the borders of Europe (as Dante does), and simultaneously to understand it as someplace spiritual, as in the many debates between body and soul. Often, as in the Exeter book, the body lays in dirt while the soul berates it for the spiritual torment it must undergo.

physical capacities. Rightwisnesse's skepticism, in the end, serves to reaffirm Truth's skepticism and Mercy's simplicity and opens the possibility for spiritually efficacious light. Finally, Christ's appearance as the light and his actions of harrowing suddenly actualize the potential of light which the sisters deny. The sisters are hesitant about the efficacy of the symbol: is light physically efficacious and does it only *seem* to *describe* spiritual occurrences? Or, as the poem later reveals to the daughters of God, is light both physically and spiritually efficacious? In Grosseteste's argument and Langland's poem, the answer is yes: light is physically and spiritually efficacious, and each serves as a symbol for the other efficacy.

Peace's final song to her sisters catches the Harrowing of Hell in chiasmus and reminds the audience that she is participating in a long history of divine daughter personifications:

> *Clarior est solito post maxima nebula phebus;*
> *Post inimicicias clarior est et amor.*
> After sharpest shoures... moost shene is the sonne
> Is no weder warmer than after watry cloudes;
> Ne no love levere, ne lever frendes
> Than after werre and wo, whan love and pees ben maistres.
> Was nevere werre in this world, ne wikkednesse so kene,
> That Love, and hym liste, to laughynge ne brought,
> And Pees, thorugh pacience, alle perils stoppede (411-7).
> [*the sun is usually clearer after the darkest clouds*
> *Clearer too is love after enmity*
> After sharpest showers most shines the sun
> There's no warmer weather than after watery clouds
> No love dearer nor dearer friends
> Than after war and woe when love and peace are mistresses.
> There was never war in this world nor wickedness so keen
> That love if he wanted did not bring to laughing
> And peace stopped all perils through patience]

Peace alone can say these words of reconciliation with such ethical force because her resurrected persona suffered more *wo* than most human beings ever endure.[64] As an estate-owner in Passus 4, the masculine expression Peace struggled particularly with mastery of crops; could not be a strong friend and protector to Rose, Reginald, and Margarete; failed as a husband to protect the honor of his wife; knew, bodily, the keenness of wickedness.

…even to the end of the poem

Revived as a different ontological refraction, she, loved by Love, has received "swiche lettres" (B.18.182) from him; Love's letters deliver her from torture because they allow her to deliver others from torture. Her own songs surround the harrowing of Hell, give the redemptive gouging special and experiential poignancy, envelope the letter which Christ, Love incarnate, Prince of Peace delivers to the Father: the souls of the faithful departed who have suffered untold pain and are now delivered to untold joy. Here, the poem rewrites itself again, since "the second pardon of the Vita is the letter patent which Peace presents during the debate between the Four Daughters of God in Dobet" (Baker 467). No longer the either/or of passus 7, this pardon is a letter of surety, a letter from love. Love first delivers Peace by allowing her to serve as surety.

Love delivers her again by singing the song to grant her the post at the door of the barn of unity, which delivers her (and us) from the violence of allegorization: *Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum*, but only after yet another struggle. After Peace is made the gatekeeper of the Barn of Unity, a flattering friar knocks at the gate. On learning his name is *Sir Penetrans Domo*, a reference to II Timothy 3:6, Peace cries,

[64] There seems to be some quiet irony in Langland choosing Peace to quote Alan of Lille, especially in an untranslated quotation. Langland wants his readers to be able to identify Alan's work, and perhaps, remember that Peace is a soft counter-example to his diatribe on grammatical gender which begins *De planctu*.

"Ye? Go thi gate!' quod Pees, "by God, for al thi phisik,
But thow konne any craft, thow comest nought herinne!
I knew swich oon ones, noght eighte wynter passed,
Coom in thus ycoped at a court there I dwelde,
And was my lordes leche--and my ladies bothe.
And at the laste this lymytour, tho my lord was oute,
He salvede so oure wommen til some were with childe.' (B.20.342-48)
["You? Hit the road!," said Peace "by God, for all your medicine
Unless you know any craft, you can't come in here!
I knew such a one once, not eight winters ago
Who came thus dressed into a court where I dwelt
And was my lord's physician and my lady's also
And in the end this mendicant, when my lord was out
Annointed our women so much until some were pregnant]

This passage asks us to reimagine our character Peace; gone, it seems, is the gentle, heavenly language of the daughters of God, and another complicating fact added: eight years ago (or one in F), Peace met Sir Penetrans-Domo, and the latter, as in the scriptural passage, "**6** ex his enim sunt qui penetrant domos, et captivas ducunt mulierculas oneratas peccatis, quæ ducuntur variis desideriis." Though 'mulierculas' has been translated silly or foolish women, it is properly the diminutive and often refers to working-class or servant girls.

Peace's sudden distaste for the friar is indeed experiential – the experience, I think, we saw in Passus 4. There is no evidence in Passus 4 that Wrong is not a physician, but certainly that he acts in a manner consistent with Sir Penetrans-Domo's actions, i.e. the seduction or rape of *mulierculas* – girls and servant-women, woman incapable of resisting physically or because of their relative social position. If this is the same Peace from 18, the daughter of God and from 4, beleaguered estate owner, then this is the test of the cosmic, the apocalyptic peace and, perhaps, of Langland's desire for universal salvation. If Sir Penetrans-Domo is permitted to penetrate the barn of unity, the sanctuary from the ravages of Kynde, then perhaps the unification of courteous speech [Hende Speech] and Peace must, of needs, be to the exclusion of Conscience and Peace. Perhaps, in the unusually fraught character of Peace, the peace who opposes legal wrong, who

argues for cosmic redemption through earthly scars, and who must choose to unite with either courteous speech or conscience – to be polite or to do right – perhaps in peace we see a character uniquely capable of encouraging unity. If not unity of person to person, or even ultimate unity, then perhaps at least a little more unity for the scattered contents of *Piers.*[65] While characters and the thin drifts of plot in *Piers* often encourage a local focus (usually a passus or two), when we look at allegorical unities in the poem, it encourages cross-manuscript analysis. Tracing the poem's its allegorical unity reveals links between apparently disparate sections of the poem and places where the textual companions gathered into *Piers* begin to influence related parts of the poem – as Grosseteste's *Castel* does with the Peace in passus 4.

[65] Here I would add a discussion of B.15, but I need to keep this from getting longer.

CHAPTER 3: THE CONSEQUENCES OF TURNING PAGES: MEED, CONSCIENCE, AND THE NOT-PARDON

My money's on Money

Piers is not just a book (in the way that Vernon is 'just' a book); it fictionalizes the mode of reading common to the Middle Ages by associating within mixed-manuscript groupings. Its unity under the title echoes the 'unity' of the *Castle of Love* which is also united by a title, but contains three separate events. *Piers* is unique in the way it builds on the aesthetics of assembly in that it collects without source names and the directions with how to read it are constantly contradictory, relying on the anonymity of the production, like so many earlier mixed-manuscripts, to provide a relatively unrestricted structure for readers to explore. *Piers* extends the scale to include enough material from diverse enough sources to constitute a whole book in itself, hence the frequency with which A (earlier, shorter) is included with additional material nearly always, but the B and C texts have a significantly greater possibility of existing in a codex alone, as the whole book, *Piers* was formed over a fairly long period of time around documentary nodes and with two separate modes of engagement. The first mode of engagement is that which Alford refers to in his works on quotations: Latin core lines surrounded by expansive vernacular commentary. The second is the sort which particularly marks the style of the *Piers*-poet: the insertion of other re-written narratives in their entirety which gives *Piers* its particular mixed-manuscript sense. Not only that, but there is clearly not just a single revising force in the poem, since "scribal variation clearly intervenes between the author's revisions."[1] This fact drove my initial supposition that the *Piers* author might have included the Daughters of God episode (and perhaps others) at the suggestion of scribal or compilatory action. The

[1] Andrew Galloway, "Uncharacterizable Entities: The Poetics of Middle English Scribal Culture and the Definitive 'Piers Plowman,'" *Studies in Bibliography* 52 (1999): (67).

appearance of *Piers* alongside other works, as it does in the Vernon MS., perhaps preserves a pairing that was later codified in the B version or stretches toward a completionist model by including the source material used for the construction of B.

The *Piers*-poet has two major modes of documentary engagement -- quoted Latin (usually not more than two lines), and massive vernacular expansion and glossation. The macaronic lines, objects of much academic engagement in their own right, serve as linguistically other -- i.e. obviously quoted -- inclusions, and are often differentiated by rubrication in their manuscript appearances.[2] Medieval vernacular compositions, especially *Piers*, were built on quotations, as described by Alford, in his seminal "The Role of the Quotations in *Piers Plowman*". Alford considers the basic model of composition to be the medieval vernacular sermon. I do not disagree with this model of composition, and the emphasis I wish to place is on the arrangement of the pieces so composed, the structure of the *collection* rather than the *composition* of the works in question. But, as Siegfried Wenzel points out in *Medieval 'Artes Praedicandi*,' "some say that there are as many different kinds [of medieval sermons] as there are competent preachers" (45). Likewise, there are as many kinds of medieval mixed-manuscripts as compilers.

Piers Plowman is an expansive medieval form of 'documentary poetry,' and the following chapter focuses on two pairs of documents and modes of reading surrounding them.[3] In this chapter, I focus on two episodes from the B-text: the first is the conversation between Meed and Conscience in B.3 and the second is the much-discussed episode of the 'tearing' of the

[2] "The *ordinatio* of late medieval manuscripts (i.e., layout: arrangement of text on the page, its segmentation into books, chapters and paragraphs, and its underlining and rubrication) is, ordinarily, likelier to derive from the publication process, with its aims of facilitating access to an author's work or suiting the tastes of an individual purchaser, than from the author himself." From Robert Adams, "Langland's Ordinatio: The Visio and the Vita Once More," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 08 (January 1994): 51–84, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.2.302841, p. 54.
[3] Emily Steiner first applies this term to *Piers Plowman* in *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature*. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

pardon in B.7. Unlike readings which focus on Will as the "single, holistic protagonist, the narrator and motive force of the whole text," [4] I argue that authorial energy finds its way into each created character, some more than others. The argument between Meed and Conscience hinges on moral interpretation of political action -- in short (always a dangerous prospect for *Piers*) concerned with the rectitude of reward in morally complex (read, any) political situations. Their argument concludes with a misogynist assessment of Meed's miseducation and a condemnation of her reading practices. This episode gives one of the first indications in the poem of explicit evaluation of modes of reading and an example of pro-contextual reading which occurs in-text.

The episode featuring Meed and Conscience is a fantasy of reading mixed books, if a fantasy in which both of the allegories misunderstand how interpretation ought to be conducted, but it most certainly gives the readers of the *Piers*-poet two examples of what Anne Middleton calls "free-flowing combative animus" (151).[5] Instead of Meed and Conscience being completely separate interlocutors, the two provide the discourse of which the author is a function, namely, in the contested space between amoral accretion and moral judgement. Furthermore, Ralph Hanna argues (and many have granted the possibility of the point)[6] the centerpiece of the composition of the A text began or centered around the episode of Meed. By returning, as so many scholars have, to this debate, I show how this sort of associative reading I have proposed and outlined repeatedly has its roots in concern about completion. I argue that the B-text of *Piers* was formed

[4] Nicolette Zeeman, *The Arts of Disruption: Allegory and Piers Plowman* (Oxford University Press, 2020), "Introduction".
[5] Anne Middleton, "Narration and the Invention of Experience: Episodic Form in Piers Plowman," in *Middleton, Chaucer, Langland, and Fourteenth-Century Literary History*, vol. VI, 2013, 143–73.
[6] Cf. Andrew Galloway et al., eds., *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) and Sarah Joy Wood, *Conscience and the Composition of Piers Plowman*, 1st ed, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

from extant manuscript clusters already circulating and that early copies of A have already begun to drift toward those wells of influence.

Conscience worries about heresy stemming from incomplete readings, from missing the whole text, which, in their final battle, is scriptural and thus the highest stakes possible for a textual debate. The overarching worry in medieval textuality is loss and never overinclusion; very rarely are medieval vernacular texts *reduced* in size; far more often the text is augmented, receives insertions, or has sections added. Indeed, large excisions often seem to occur only by accident – Sajavaara, in her examination of the Daughters of God manuscripts, notes that "the number of the missing lines [in manuscript H, Harley 1121] – thirty-six – suggests that the scribe skipped over one column by accident" (144). Eye-skip, degrading initial pages, and vermin posed a far greater threat to any given text than did erroneous overinclusion.

But in *Piers*, the poet is trying something new. He's offering a compendium *like* Vernon – assorted, associated texts gathered together for a less-than transparent end but with an authorial bent.[7] As Maureen Quilligan notes in *Language of Allegory*, 'the allegorical author simply does what the allegorical critic does; but he writes a commentary on his own text rather than someone else's. And his 'commentary…' is not discursive, but narrative".[8] As many have noted before me, the real talent of the *Piers* author is to do both, to combine the categories of allegorical author and allegorical critic as well as the talent of the mixed-manuscript compiler. Unlike Ralph Higden, who claimed […] that the names of his *auctores* formed his 'shield and defence' against detractors", *Piers* contains very few citations, which makes for complicated modern

[7] The *Piers*-author has attendant anxiety about authorship not attendant to compilers, since "the *compilator* has a *forma tractandi* all of his own, what Vincent called the 'mode of the excerptor' *(modus excerptoris*" which does *not* include culpability for quoted material – compare A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).
[8] Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 53.

reconstructions of Langland's library, but makes the poet culpable for positions not clearly attributed otherwise and not clearly eschewed.[9] Personifications provide *some* separation for the author from the claims they make, but not the Herculean defense Higden imagines for himself.[10]

When we look at *Piers,* it remains in another age because it was composed in a now-ancient language. But its modes of textual engagement and interpretive reading are as live and avant-garde as ever, and therefore it remains a live coal of inspiration for modern textual composers. Assemblage culture undergirds also the creation, maintenance, and literary impact of 19th and 20th century literary magazines, as outlined in *Charles Brockden Brown and the Literary Magazine* among earlier works. We might look to Lawrence Warner's and Michael Johnston's considerations of Marilynn Robinson's consistent re-reading of *Piers* in "'The pure and perfect book': Marilynne Robinson, Maureen Duffy, and the Heirs of Piers Plowman" as well as Teju Cole's *Open City* as examples of contemporary authors who recognize the associative impact of *Piers* and its relevance as a medieval champion of art rising from assemblage culture. More contemporary examples include the argument Anna Poletti makes in "Auto/Assemblage Reading the Zine" -- that "reading manuscripts, as well zines or other non-mass produced texts, throws into relief how our relationship with the book has to a large extent codified our expectations regarding materiality and presentation as readers and critics" (87), calls for new interpretive models, "we need to develop an interpretive strategy which can account for what I would somewhat clumsily call the constructedness of the zine" and "it is intersection of the narrative, the visual elements of the text, and the inclusion of the edit which maps this anxiety [of failure]"

[9] A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 193.
[10] Minnis argues that Chaucer is likewise strongly attuned to a compilatory sense, "Chaucer's sense of combining and organising diverse materials may owe something to the compilers' theory and practice of *ordinatio partium.* The major medieval compilations were compendious, containing *materiae* to cater for a wide range of demands and tastes" (200), but the evidence suggests rather that Chaucer sees himself far more as an author than a compiler or semi-compiler. Chaucer has less moral worry than the *Piers*-poet, who is anxious about overstepping at every turn.

(90). In a centralized editorial and publishing environment (whether monetary or cultural capital is at stake), a capitalist interpretative model which relies on accruing clout and/or wealth (as is the case in modern academia) developed within institutional structures designed to accrue wealth and fame should be the last model used to interpret books produced by hand by collaborating individuals.

The allegorical glue of *Piers*, a fictionalizing commentary, performs the interpretations normally accomplished by readers of mixed-manuscripts in written prose. *Piers* is more than that, but it starts by reading and accumulating; the sense of incompleteness strikes, and the process begins again.[11] Many scholars have noticed the association of *Piers* with documentary interpretation; most prominently in Emily Steiner's *Documentary Culture* and Arvind Thomas's *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law*. Steiner's initial foray in *YLS* characterizes the relationship, "Langland, by enrolling these documents in his poem, has drawn from a larger discourse about documents that includes fourteenth-century legal, diplomatic, and historiographical practices; what has not been fully appreciated is the way that he has folded these "practical" documentary features into traditions of fictive documents found in biblical exegesis, vernacular lyrics, and allegorical narratives. […] Langland, in borrowing creatively from this vast discourse, presents salvation history simultaneously as an archive and as a coherent progression of legal documents" (95). Steiner characterizes Langland's poem as a sort of documentary psychomachia, or perhaps, a grammatamachia – battling documents set against each other by authorial organization.

[11] This apparently occurred to scribes of *Piers* mss as well, perhaps most noteworthy is the scribe of Huntington Library HM 114, which "at times conflates all three versions into a single text," possessing an exceptionally enthusiastic editorial spirit in a sea of scribes conflating A and C (see Ralph Hanna III, "On the Versions of *Piers Plowman*" (205)).

Conscience's desire for control is less a power grab than fear at not excerpting well and the consequences of poor quotation because the *Piers* author is not merely arranging but, in dizzying circles, making strong suggestions about which parts of which texts should be linked. His anxiety about how the poem means stems from more than just a concern for the moral good of the kingdom – in the poem's composition history, Conscience is one of the first personifications to arise. As Sarah Wood notes, "Langland initially conceived Conscience within what may have begun as a rather limited project, a single- vision satire in the manner of alliterative precursors like Wynnere and Wastoure."[12] In the hypothetical early versions of *Piers*, Conscience plays a major and stable role, that of royally authenticated, male interlocutor who embodies being right – a fantasy of education, information control, privilege, and orthodoxy. As Wood continues, however, this was not how Conscience ended up: "Conscience 'develops' as a figure within a series of new contexts as one discourse gives way to another in the progress of the poem's developing argument and expanding design. But of course, the compositional process that effects Conscience's transformation extends beyond a single version of Piers Plowman. Conscience changes not only during the composition of the series of different episodes in various modes that makes up the single version, but also during the composition of the poem as a series of versions" (13-4). Conscience has the privilege of continuing to appear throughout the poem, but this 'eternal life' of consistent reappearance: Conscience is re-constituted more times than any other character but develops only in his use, "as a figure within a series of new contexts" rather than as a person.[13]

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[12] Sarah Joy Wood, *Conscience and the Composition of Piers Plowman*, 1st ed, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). 'Single-vision satire' is a phrase borrowed from Ralph Hanna's *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts, Figurae: Reading Medieval Culture.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, p. 232.

[13] Following Sarah Wood's argument that Conscience plays an "important position in Langland's exploration of major themes such as the relation of labour and reward, the value of academic versus more pragmatic forms of knowledge, the sacrament of penance and its contemporary abuses, and the role and responsibilities of the secular

If indeed *Piers* began its life as a Conscience-Meed dialogue, then the work transmogrified from the ordinary medieval genre of dialogue, which is how a half-dozen B manuscripts characterize it, to a sort of super-genre of a fictional mixed-manuscript more complexly interwoven and borrowing more widely than the (roughly) contemporary *Decameron* or *Canterbury Tales*.[14] Conscience is, as he sees it, the first to be handed the narrative baton and to sort meaning out of polysemous textual inclusions. In his debate with Meed, his concern with the incompleteness of her quotation reveals some of the anxiety of embarking on such an ambitious project. His originary role is correlative to his reflection of authorial anxiety, and he takes on the role of one half of a "paired extreme" with Meed. Anne Middleton argues in "Public Poetry and Richard II" that this paired-extreme mode of meaning-making fundamentally undergirds the poem's structure. She writes,

> The same form - a way between paired extremes - for thinking about poetry and the poet's role haunts Piers Plowman as well, but more in the way of a bad dream than an achieved synthesis. There the terms are largely implicit in the general account of "doing well." What the speaker is doing in and for the world is addressed as a subclass of this larger category, and though his mode of life is on occasion both a model and a test case for the adequacy of the broader moral terms, the speaker does not within his work differentiate himself from his literary offspring - his "book" or "making" - in order to ask questions about the "good" of it, as Chaucer and Gower do. He does not speak of his work as a product, a "book" to leave for posterity, a now-autonomous creature with a life of its own among humankind, but as if "making" itself were a never-ending process (a view perhaps exemplified in the author's nearly continuous tinkering with his poem), a continuous action rather than a finite production, which as a mode of life must be justified before God and man (103)

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and ecclesiastical powers. He also engages interest in terms of the poem's formal design" *Conscience and the Composition of* Piers Plowman. He appears in the Prologue, passus 3, 4, 13-14, 19-20 of the B-text. Wood follows Elton Higgs in suggesting that Conscience becomes 'spiritualized' rather than properly developing – a trajectory that resembles Peace's development in the poem, although Peace begins as a farmer and ends as a goddess – a humbler beginning and a more exalted end.

[14] Wood notes, "Langland himself adds to the material he would have found in Isidore and the *De Spiritu* the descriptions of Amor and Conscientia" (4), following Joseph Wittig writing on Walter Skeat's original identification. The first debt, on Hanna's view, the *Piers*-poet owes to *Winner and Waster*, the second to the "Song of the Husbandman" for the estate satire portion, and self-conscious narratorial remark.

This poet is bound to his *boke* inescapably. The question of 'doing well' is bound up in the making of the question asking 'am I doing well' – an anxiety that hits home particularly hard in the beginning of the B version's 12th passus when the narrator nearly gives up poetry-making for his Psalter, having lost sight of any 'middle weie' (Middleton). The poet here is as much a reader as a poet, and his readers learn with him, in a sense, the ways he engages with making, the moments he feels more medler than maker, and traces with him the allegorical resonances he finds.

This structure mirrors allegorical composition: in a textual system like that in a mixed-manuscript in which each element has imaginative gravity of its own which pulls on the surrounding elements; the pull results from verbal composition when it is allied with reader attention, and so the relative weight of each piece shifts from reader to reader and need not differentiate between 'authoritative' texts and texts included primarily out of interest and similarity to the authoritative texts. Vernon captures a snapshot of this process when it includes both pieces which will become *Piers* B (or, by that time, have already) alongside *Piers* A. By matching fresh compositions with established pieces, mixed-manuscripts attached established literary reputation of authoritative pieces to generically or otherwise innovative new compositions. [15]This relationship forms a dynamic reader-author exchange system in which authority both structures the composition and is constantly undercut or consumed by the surrounding 'minor' elements. Conscience thinks that he has the responsibility of controlling documentary flow in this portion of the poem, but Meed pays the price with her arrest.

Before this point, Meed's inclusion of counterexamples frustrates Conscience's attempts at delimiting definition. He realizes in this moment like the author did before him that the best

[15] Middleton outlines *Piers*'s companions on pp. 105-8 of "The Audience and Public of 'Piers Plowman'".

hope at controlling documentary flow is to *add*, not to excise. 'If you had turned the leaf' becomes an editorial principle in a mixed-manuscript environment. If you want to change people's held perceptions of a given text, instead of controlling it by cutting or redefining, simply add more context to shift the pull on the piece in question. Likewise, the addition of elements via allegorical composition directs conceptual understanding more effectively than narrowing. For instance, the *Piers*-poet first makes Mede a woman, then gives her clothing, a family, then tries to wed her to Conscience, the two have this long definitional debate, and finally makes her a key player in the Trial of Peace – each element contributes to the Mede-system with its own specific gravity. An allegorical system has similar gravitational dynamism -- the weight of authority is established by the name of the personification, the amount of talking time it gets, and, if applicable, its social position; so, here, 'Conscience' has huge amounts of talking time, has the longest sustained existence except for the narrator, and his name implies that he has innate moral authority.

Scared to mean

Discussions of the debate between the allegorical characters Meed and Conscience often focus on the economics of the poem or the gender of personifications.[16] The importance of this section to the poem at large cannot be overstated, since as Galloway notes, "six B manuscripts present the poem whole as a 'dialogus'", and this is the first, long, directly oppositional dialogue or debate in the poem.[17] Much of the tone before this point is explanatory and definitional, think, "that is Meed the mayde" or "that is the castel of care". Now, for the first time in the poem, the

[16] Compare, for instance, this passage's starring role in Arvind Thomas's "Dreams of Avarice" chapter, Galloway's "Gender and *Piers Plowman*," Raskolnikov's "Promising the Female, Delivering the Male," Rhodes's "Personification, Action, and Economic Power in Piers Plowman". The list goes on – it is difficult to understate the importance of this passage for *Piers* scholarship.
[17] Andrew Galloway. *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 285ff.

narrator releases two of his allegorical constructions into the limited arena of court debate by attempting to reconcile free-wheeling reward with a strong moral guidance, or, to put it in terms of moral philosophy, setting *iudicium conscientiae* against *iudicium electionis*.

Conscience represents the theoretical moral good which he must know can be easily overwritten in favor of a convincing presentation of a practical good. [18] I want to emphasize three functions of this passage: first, that it is a prime example for the conflict between compositional control (represented by Conscience) and unregulated interpretive mixing (Meed). Secondly, the debate demonstrates the moral hazards of reading and mis-reading by pitting associative excerption against careful inclusion. Thirdly, this debate and the episode which follows in passus 4 serve as initial testing grounds for the limits of allegorization, especially concerning the interaction of moral and natural principles. This passage is the first major crux for this poem, and the principles which win the debate (control, moral judgment, agentic personification) go on to dominate the latter parts of the poem with varying success but little serious disruption until the total disintegration of order and the poem itself in the final passus.

The novelty of a fictionalized mixed-manuscript is new compositional territory, and the Meed and Conscience debate reveals that anxiety of extraction, especially around constructing a book as unified as *Piers* from as many sources as it contains. Conscience, at least in this passus, embodies the "the genuine medieval *fear* of the sloppy extract" which "puts a different perspective on the miscellany, one of medieval suspicion of miscellany contents."[19] Extract

[18] As Thomas Aquinas suggests, one can choose against the theoretical moral good in favor of the practical best, but once convinced of what the 'best' course of action is, the will cannot, on Thomas's view, choose the less good. Compare Hoffmann, Tobias. "Intellectualism and Voluntarism." In *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, by Robert Pasnau, 414-27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521762168.032.
[19] Kerby-Fulton, *The Medieval Manuscript Book*, p. 250.

badly and you risk neither producing a *compilatio* in which the choicest intonations of authority are highlighted nor *originalia* because you have not collected the whole.

Unity – which returns as a major theme at the end of the B and C versions of the poem – is the novel concept in this creative endeavor. Rather than compiling disparate texts around an individual's interest or around a central theme, *Piers* embarks on a guided tour of excerpted passages like a secular sermon but on the scale of a book-length manuscript.[20] The author skirts the border of secular sermon in a number of passages, and the author is well aware -- if not at the beginning of the project, surely in the middle of it – that the composition has an added danger.[21] As Minnis notes, "an *auctor* 'asserts' while a *compilator* 'repeats' or 'reports' what others have said or done, not adding anything 'of his own' (*de suo*)" (102). Precisely because it is *not* a sermon or philosophical *tractatus*, but an allegorical poem, the *Piers*-author has responsibility to his embodied creations as well as to the texts he quotes, all on a scale that stretches from hell to paradise. Once he starts the textual planets spinning, as it were, the only control he has is to add more – more texts, more of the excerpt, more dialogue. His audience, like audiences today, seemed to want the whole thing, the longest version, the most complete edition. In the way that erudite readers today disdain abridgment and cinephiles crave director's cuts, the longest, 'most

[20] Emily Steiner spends two full chapters of *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* arguing for *Piers Plowman* as a documentary poem; in "*Piers Plowman* and the archive of salvation," she argues that "Langland's documents are key texts both because they are the foundational texts for salvation history… and because they are the material and legal instantiations of the history within the life of the penitential reader," suggesting that the poem is largely chirographic in Meed's charter and Peace's letter. In "Writing Public: Documents in the *Piers Plowman* tradition," she argues that "the literary parodies the literate, it directs it to toher purposes, or is transcends it by eschewing its materiality or institutional affiliations" (144), that is, it creates a public sphere by having the experience of reading the poem consume the documents-as-documents in order to support "documentary literacy not only as a commendable, even spiritual practice" (145).

[21] In his discussion of Fitzralph, Minnis makes a similar point, writing "The first is that, in opposition to the legalistic connotation of *auctor* which suggested responsibility for an act or a piece of writing, has emerged a term, *compilator,* which connotes absence or indeed denial of responsibility for such things. The responsibility lacked or denied by the *compilator* is both literary and moral, as FitzRalph's discussion shows. A writer who plays this role cannot take the credit for the value of a piece of writing; neither can he be blamed for any harm it might cause" Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), (101).

complete' version of a work is always valued highest.[22] Barring eradication of a text, which is frankly very difficult, the primary mode of textual control an author can exert is to lengthen, to add, to enhance, to iterate.[23] By imitating a mixed-manuscript and including larger passages of vernacular literature, the *Piers*-poet takes the lesson of bounty-as-grace from Meed and finds safety in including *more* text, more texts, trusting that Truth will appear amidst the bounty.

There is a strong correlation between references to text and references to truth, which reveals the *Piers*-author's anxiety about textual completion – a problem of trying to balance 'whole text' with 'whole intellectual problem across many texts. This relationship between truth and textuality is not merely relegated to the term 'text', though -- the entirety of *Piers* moves from working much like a mixed-manuscript at the beginning (Prologue through Passus 3) to intentionally using documents within the text (Passus 4-8) to becoming a work which is a book about the use of books (9-14).[24] The wild mass of bookish references in 15, the intentional engagement with the subject of study itself, makes the poem a work which consciously constructs itself as a book so intensely that a personification of Book appears in passus 12. This personification speaks both to Peace (the daughter of God) and Truth in a veritable who's who of the most meta-textually involved personifications.[25] Thus, the book which is itself about reading not only reads itself but writes itself reading itself in a miniature iteration of what the poem has

[22] Robert Adams argues, "For obvious reasons, owners of MS books tended to assume (when the opportunity arose to make such comparisons) that copies with fuller apparatus and text were more complete and authoritative than their own," Adams, "THE RELIABILITY OF THE RUBRICS IN THE B-TEXT OF 'PIERS PLOWMAN,'" *Medium Ævum* 54, no. 2 (1985): 208, https://doi.org/10.2307/43628893, p. 212.
[23] Compare the effectiveness of 'retractions,' which Scott MacDonald reminded me derives from 're' and 'tractatus' – i.e. to re-treat, to discuss again, to revise (re – vision!), and not, in its contemporary sense, to remove back to one's self. As all children know well, there are no take-backsies when it comes to words – once a verbal composition is in the hands of the reader or an audience, it is there for as long as they wish to keep it.
[24] Steiner's *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* and Morton Bloomfield's *Piers Plowman As A Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* mark similar paths through *Piers*'s text-building.
[25] One might consider Richard Firth Green's argument in *A Crisis of Truth* that 14th century 'truth' is highly dependent on its *documentary context* and that a medieval sense of something's truth has more shades of significance than modern readers might be tempted to ascribe to it.

been doing all along. But here, there are no whole texts, but rather recontextualized excerption, which is how *Piers* differs from an actual mixed-manuscript.

An excellent example of the overestimation of authorial singularity is Sarah Wood's confounding attitude toward 'authoredness' in "Monologic Langland: Contentiousness and the 'Z-Version of *Piers Plowman*'. She writes, for instance, "Though Kane's demolition of Z's authorial status seems to me definitive, I maintain, unlike Kane, Z's interest as an intriguing scribal repression or misunderstanding of Langland's characteristic mode of composition."[26] She disguises distaste for the scribe's (?) selections as 'error' and 'misunderstanding,' with the bold implication that she and George Kane have a better understanding of what constitutes 'Langland's characteristic mode of composition' than a 14th-century scribe did. To put it more plainly, Kane and Wood assume that best understand Langland's style even though the Z-scribe had two or three *Piers* texts to hand, at a minimum, none of which survive today. Wood's incensed disdain for this activity, which I quote at length, is precisely the license to invent that modern editors, Wood among them, give themselves:

> All three 'maverick' scribes, Z, Ht, and F, seem at times, in short, to have been inspired in their own compositions by the work of versional comparison. Sometimes, it seems, the presence of multiple competing versions of the same line or passage undermined, in their eyes, the authority of their exemplar(s). They were inspired, apparently, to 'go rogue' and substitute what they presumably imagined to be a form of the text superior to any actually at hand. The multiple forms in which Piers Plowman had been released by its author seem to have given it a particular openness to scribal creative activity. Redactors like Z were inspired to imitate the author's own repeated efforts at producing 'improved' versions of the text.[27]

[26] It is an editorial and curatorial adage that artists are not the best judges of their own work. Rosser's citation of Larkin's ephemeral productions, "As we know, writers are not always the best judges of their own work. We have a lot of work by Philip Larkin, for example, that he put in journals but he did not deem worthy of his books, and I might have differed with him on that. I think that we do provide a valuable service to the literary community of present and future for archiving this sort of thing" (540).

[27] Sarah Joy Wood, *Conscience and the Composition of Piers Plowman*, 1st ed, Oxford English Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

The sentence 'the presence of multiple competing versions of the same line or passage undermined, in their eyes, the authority of the exemplar(s)' exemplifies the arrogance of this position because it is also the principle on which modern editions (in the absence of a clear holograph or autograph) are founded.[28] So what if Z is not authorial? To ascribe error to scribes in favor of a hypothesized authorial intention is to fundamentally misunderstand the role of a work's immediate reception by enthusiastic and/or expert audiences. The *Piers*-author apparently distributed his poem widely at many different stages of its composition, it was copied widely in turn, and modified by early editors, and imitated in *Mum and Sothsegger* and the *Ploughman's Crede* among others. Artistic works are made in and for communities; to undermine that principle is to fetishize a sense of precision instead of appreciating the work of *Piers*'s earliest artistic community.

The anxiety Conscience feels is that of the author of *Piers Plowman*, the worry that by quoting part, he might not ever quote enough.[29] His dread is existential: it stems from his own textual creation: "As Joseph Wittig points out, [to create Meed and Conscience], Langland himself adds to the material he would have found in Isidore and the *De Spiritu* the descriptions of Amor and Conscientia"[30] The two have a long history competing for space in manuscripts. The Meed episode warns of the dangers of selection out from the context of a passage and the consequences of mishandling Latin texts, and Conscience embodies that authorial anxiety. But what constitutes 'mishandling' a Latin text in a composition that is co-creative? As John Alford stated long ago:

> Because Conscience's speech is largely an exegesis of Psalm 14, it is difficult to say which is the "text"-the Latin being glossed or the English that glosses it. Each exists for

[28] Thomas C. Sawyer's current research on the Z-text strongly informed my own opinion in this paragraph; the most meritorious sections of the argument I derived from his suggestions.
[29] Wood 6
[30] Wood 4.

> the sake of the other. Insofar as the English expands upon the quotations, it is in the service of the Latin; insofar as the choice of quotations was determined by the need to explicate *Meed*, the Latin is in the service of the English [31]

So begins the circle: glossing mutually creates in the way associated texts do, but at a finer scale and with more pointedness. The circle continues as follows: Meed appears in the poem, summoned, in a manner of speaking, by Holy Church in passus 2: "That is Meed the mayde, hath noyed me ful ofte" (A.2.16 / B.2.20 / C.2.19).[32] Meed is more than Holy Church bargained for – once she's been introduced, she begins to grow in influence and becomes less and less definable. Conscience, in the A and B versions, first appears a mere 30 lines after Meed's introduction, "And lat no conscience acombre thee for couetise of Meed" (51) but does not seem to be a volitional summons until line 138, "For Conscience is of his counseil and knoweth yow echone." [33] The addition of a personal possessive pronoun, 'his' (referring to Truth, another clear personification) and specific rational action 'knoweth yow' indicates that Conscience has been conjured as an allegory interacting with other persons in the poem. 'Conscience acombre thee,' while slightly metaphorical, does not yet seem to have the weight of a fully personified concept. Early in the poem's life and in its pages, Holy Church "establishes here her job is to personify authority," but this attempt at dampening Meed's affect reveals another face of the author.[34] This

[31] John A. Alford, *Piers Plowman: A Guide to the Quotations*, Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, v. 77 (Binghamton, N.Y: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), p 6.
[32] Raskolnikov suggests that this summoning is Holy Church's mode of providing a poor example: "Meed is not brought in by Holy Church as an interlocutor for Will—she is, instead, a negative example or object lesson intended to teach Will to "know the false" Masha Raskolnikov, *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory* (Ohio State University Press, n.d.).
[33] Remarkably, Conscience appears *before* Meed in C. Cf. Schmidt writes of this initial appearance: "an abstract idea, not inevitably to be regarded as personified at this point in AB but in C more convincingly so, since he has already appeared at Pr. 95" (499). Conscience storms on to the scene in the wake of the bishop's bull, again policing documentary error but, in what is widely held to be the final version of the poem, doing so from its very outset, trying to control the swirling allegorical interpretation only a hundred lines in to a poem thousands long. No wonder he tires of his task and leaves in BC.
[34] Raskolnikov 173.

expands Ralph Hanna's now-famous assessment of apparently autobiographical details into a sense of a "represented life" along the lines of Schmidt's portrait metaphor.[35] Schmidt writes,

> The Langland whose 'represented life' has been recently re-told by Ralph Hanna may have deliberately chosen to depict himself (the greatest of portraitists, Rembrandt, sometimes painted himself in *many kynne gyse*... And even if this 'brilliant portrait of the personality of a man who knew himself well' is no more 'truthful' than Rembrandt's self-depictions, then it has a great deal of value to tell us about the author[36]

Rather than merely including the nods to the garments and education of Will, many personifications are, in part, portraits of an author. Among the many roles she plays and appearances she makes, Meed also represents a vision of authorial impulse sans responsibility – 'omnia probate,' she quotes. Try everything. That model of experience, however, is dangerous if one's goal is truth-telling or staying alive. Authorial guilt and sense of responsibility returns in Conscience's introduction: "And if he fynde yow in defaute * and with the fals holde / It shal bisitte yowre soules * ful soure atte last" [and if he finds you in default and with the false holding / it shall sour beset your soul at last] (139-40). The acute sense of salvific debt, the same haunting debt that pervades the pardon scene, sours the already dour picture of Meed. Lest, like Meed, Will hold to Fals – forgetting, as we will learn in the next passus, 'bonum tenere', to hold to what is good, true, tested, verified. Failure to quote carefully and interpret well, the gamble goes, might lose a writer his soul, the life that matters. Compilation has high stakes for accuracy – one mustn't miss important parts of the exemplar – but the author's life is on the line when glossing, quoting, connecting, and shaping interpretation of these texts. Portraits of authorship disseminate throughout the text – joy at the promise that writing holds, fear at the possibility of getting it all wrong.

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[35] *Authors of the Middle Ages Vol. 1 Nos 1-4*, "William Langland" (149 [17]).
[36] William Langland, *Piers Plowman: Introduction, Textual Notes, Commentary, Bibliography, and Indexical Glossary* (Longman, 1995), p. 277.

This machine reads itself

The following chapters rest on two basic tenets. The first, widely acknowledged by scholars of the poem, is that *Piers Plowman* was written by someone who had encountered many authoritative texts, consulted those for the composition of sermons or commentaries, and whose skills of expansion and arrangement had been honed long before he began to make. The second, suggested by Emily Steiner, Traugott Lawler, and many others is *Piers Plowman* is structured as a mixed-manuscript and was further revised and expanded with this structure of composition in mind.[37] The poem operates as a simulation of reading a mixed manuscript, a fictionalized account of textual events. It itself acts like a mixed-manuscript and is modeled after one in a form of elegant metafiction, a suggestion upheld by the very strange fact that *Piers* appears by itself as a manuscript with unusual frequency.[38] *Piers*, as a poetical whole, besides having a

[37] Alistair Minnis notes a similar debt that Chaucer owes to "several of the great medieval compilations" A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 191.

[38] Schmidt writes, "it is... mainly later codices that that include Piers with other works; and apart from the Vernon A-Text, the Trinity B-Text, the Digby 102 C-Text and the unique Bodley Z-text... the most important ABC manuscripts preserve the poem by itself." (275) Schmidt asserts that the B is "the only one that can be confidently regarded as 'published' by the poet," we might say "must have been completed no later than about 1380" (123), but this assumes that the A-version was 'unreleased' which is a supposition Schmidt, for one, draws because of the paradox of its publication: "The A-Text is the earliest version of *Piers Plowman* to survive in multiple copies; but most of the manuscript date from 1420-50, and its tradition was probably the last of the three to be generated" (Schmidt 91). Furthermore, "it is unknown when and why Langland began his final re-writing…" (165). Schmidt identifies the traditional *terminus ad quem* of those edits as the death of the poet, which he supposes is referenced in A.XII's conclusion written by John But. This, however, assumes that But considers 'Wille' the author of the poem, rather than a figure within the narrative, confirmed by his lines, "worked out what is written here and other works both", which points to a wider associated authorship than the work these lines append.[38] Nevertheless, "the lines need not be pressed too hard, as little of substance hands on establishing the date of the author's death. For exactly how 'unfinished' the C Version is, and whether the last two passūs were deliberately left untouched, underwent minor revision, or were posthumously annexed as an ending because the author's working papers were too 'foul' to be copied, remain matters of literary judgment, about which major disagreement is possible" (166). Only a few pages earlier, Schmidt dismisses the possibility of a 'rolling revision' thesis, which "confuses authorial composition with the quite distinct process of scribal transmission" (151), the latter perhaps another term "deliberate scribal intervention" which Schmidt thinks finds a middle way between "copyist's inattention" and "author's revision" (149). This is something of an either-or fallacy that relies on a hermetically sealed sense of authorship that does not include scribal activity. As I demonstrate elsewhere in this project, however, in the works that survive in mixed-manuscripts (as distinct from whatever a medieval author might have initially jotted down, if it was not first dictated. William Langland, *Piers Plowman: Introduction, Textual Notes, Commentary, Bibliography, and Indexical Glossary* (Longman, 1995).

‘religious’ function has a dedicated fandom and a consuming presence in manuscripts. Only a few versions appear with other material, which is quite unusual until later compositions.

The *Piers*-poet thinks of himself as writing between ‘poetic composition’ which is rife with authorial intent and copying or commentary, which is preservative and expository. Beyond that, I think he was cognizant of that and wrote *Piers* as a sort of allegorized reading process -- i.e., the book that reads itself, the book come to life, a living, speaking medieval mixed-manuscript. There is clear evidence of this in Galloway’s “Uncharacterizable Entities.” He writes, “The repetition [of passages in B.3] occurs just at a point where B made an insertion into A; to be sure, it is cleaned up in C. But whatever the poet's ultimate or belated efforts to remove repetitions, their presence in B and C suggests a proneness to casualness about allowing repetition, perhaps in order to keep later expansions firmly attached to the original point, perhaps because-of a taste for homiletic repetition, perhaps because of a specific technique of making or ordering insertions” (76). These repetitions serve as sort of textual guy ropes to stabilize the quotation’s insertion. Notably, a large number of repetitions also occur in B.18, where the poet inserts the Daughters of God section and other Grossetestean passages, suggesting that the repetitions Galloway and Hanna remark on are detritus left over from construction of a new edition. Better to have too much text than too little, as is ever the case for medieval compilers. The Meed and Conscience debate represents tension between a compiler’s desire for completion and an author’s desire to retool and excerpt, and the *Piers*-poet’s role as an uncomfortable average between compiler and author; “*Piers* manuscripts lack those signs of authorial supervision,” letting the poem range with a little less definition and a little more freedom to be altered, collated, and augmented – anything but shortened. The Pardon episode provides a solution to that anxiety by suggesting that quotations work like seeds: they should be sown

plenteously, split open, and allowed to grow into allegorical tangles. Truth is hard to come by, but it lives in plenty.

Just before Meed's appearance, Holy Church appears to upbraid the dreamer, and "seide, 'Sone, slepestow? Sestow this peple -- / How bisie they ben aboute the maze?'" (B.1.5-6). She calls attention to his sleeping (signaling a transition), and initially appears to chastise him 'Sestow this peple', but in the end has a chilling warning for others, "'Of oother hevene than here hold thei no tale'" (B.1.9), pointing out the characters a field over in estate allegory. Holy Church points the dreamer back to a similar scene, but the 'fairi' in this case is the author who manipulates the poem's time across scenes in his book. She reveals the extradiegetic scaffolding of books -- since pages are finite and static, the action of parts which are not actively being read continue in uncanny perpetuity, made uncanny by the fact that Holy Church points it out. The reader is made aware of the physical structure of the book and the quires copied and laid out earlier than the present moment of the text. Holy Church, at the end of the first passus, in the midst of narrative, encourages the dreamer (and, by extension, the reader) to read extra-narratively, skipping around mentally to draw on previous episodes. This is nothing new: any reader, given a *leit-motif,* will recall earlier episodes which conform to the pattern, and a re-reader will read 'in the future,' or rely on memories of future instances in the book from past experience with the book. What is essential in Holy Church's injunction (like Conscience's to Meed to 'turn the leaf', which does disservice to the original text but serves to expand the poem) is that a *character* in the book is looking back over the landscape of the book to provide reading strategies to the dreamer who, in a manner of speaking, is creating the book in the same moment in which he is looking back over the book/dream/landscape. She only wishes to add sayings she

likes without concern for their completeness and then interprets them as they stand. Once she extracts the text she likes, Unlike Chaucer's injunction to the *reader* to skip a tale, like that of Vincent of Beauvais, "If a reader does not want a tale like the Miller's Tale, there are many other types of 'mateere' on offer: '. . . whoso list it [the Miller's Tale] nat yheere, / Turne over the leef and chese another tale;'",[39] Holy Church narrates moving through selections *of* the book *within* the book itself, cinematically pointing across pages and fictionalizing the whole experience, not just pointing out that readers can skip passages or move on.[40] Like a living manicule, Holy Church is a fictionalized textual feature like the sleeping which separates many textual insertions.[41]

The ignorance of Meed's name, the mysterious castle owned by villains a few lines earlier, the elegant lady/guide, and Meed's sumptuous appearance are designed, through the response of the dreamer encourages the reader to mirror his response like a penitent and his confessor. Having done so, the author mentions sleep, reminds the reader of the diegetic layer, and immediately afterward, deconstructs the genre in which he had been operating and substitutes the genre for a new one, while talking about the same characters. The allegorical characters are thus reappropriated by the generic change, and it is the slight difference which startles the reader, ideally into analysis or contemplation, and layers signification upon itself. Like a hard drive written and re-written or a manuscript inscribed and scraped, the story continues altogether changed, but retaining fragments of the former episodes. The reader, to put it somewhat violently, is emotionally manipulated, constantly confused, and has to follow

[39] A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p 201.
[40] 'Skipping' in *Piers* is difficult because the selection process itself has been fictionalized.
[41] A return to non-authorial passus markers?

conversations between personified signifiers which change their signification slightly at every narrative turn.

Piers is quite frequently occupied with problems of abutting or severed textual objects -- e.g. the character of Book's appearance in passus 18, which contains the harrowing of hell and the four daughters episode or passus 7, in which the tearing of the pardon episode appears. The 'tearing' as it is frequently described, is actually something else entirely: a disassociation of verbal events from each other. There are two halves of the pardon -- But "-Do wel and have wel. and God shal have thi soule,' / And " Do yvel and have yvel, and hope thow noon oother / That after thi deeth day the devel shal have thi soule!'", which Piers does not exactly "tear" or "rend" but "pulls it atwain". There is not, per se, a natural whole to be torn or rent, but 'do well' and 'do evil', which binary pushes Piers to step between and to find the middle way: "Si ambulavero in medio umbre mortis / Non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es. / "I shal cessen of my sowyng,' quod Piers, "and swynke noght so harde" [if I walk in the midst of the shadow of death / I will fear no evil for you are with me / I will stop sowing, Piers said, and not work as hard]. His solution can be understood either as paralysis because knowing good action from evil action in the world is occasionally murky and extremely high stakes; or, his solution can be understood as a peaceful cessation of the busyness (or business) of moral behaviour.

The tearing of the pardon might not be an affront or sacrilege but rather the opening of a 'third way', a blank space between the absolutes of "do well" and "do evil" -- a tripart system of 'do well, do better, and do best' introduced in B.8.78. The tearing of the pardon is the split and revision of an absolute binary with a positive tripartite system -- action is reimagined here as something on a positive scale, not either good or evil. This episode, which I return to at the end of the chapter, is preceded by the unresolved binary between Conscience's revisions-as-control

and Meed's social-associative generation. The excerpted works are often a mere two lines of Latin, a sermonic reference to a longer, hidden text. Meed's selection from Thessalonians, the Pardon from the Athanasian creed (itself drawn from the gospels of Matthew and John, as Lawlor reminds us), and lastly the adaption of the Daughters of God passage which is a vernacular expansion of two lines from Psalm 85.[42] Piers's engagement with the pardon exemplifies a second mode of reading engagement -- not expansion to surrounding or attached context, but insertion of context into the midst of a previously tightly restricted document.

Conscience argues for full contextualization, starting with his debate with Meed, and against the errors that accompany reading with excision. Only through the conversation, the interplay of the two does a robust reading practice emerge. Spanning much of passus three, Conscience's argument against Meed is twofold, each of which critiques a type of Meed. Conscience, thinking that he is about to be forced to marry the Lady, wishes to avoid this union at any cost, for "She is frele of hir faith, fykel of here speche" (B.3.122). Conscience deems her an unworthy match because she is *frele* in her ability to believe and *fykel* in her mode of speaking -- he complains about the apparent link between the fickleness of her speech and the frailty of her faith. Their disagreement comes down to a difference in interpretive principles; on the one hand, Meed's generosity, which allows by virtue of its applicability a huge number of interpretations. Consider that when she is introduced, by Conscience's account of a friar's speech,

> Thanne Meed for hire mysdedes to that man kneled,
> And shrof hire of hire shrewednesse--shamelees, I trowe;
> Tolde hym a tale and took hym a noble
> For to ben hire bedeman and hire brocour als (B.3.43-6)
> [Then Meed for her misdeeds kneeled before that man

[42] Traugott Lawler, "The Pardon Formula in Piers Plowman: Its Ubiquity, Its Binary Shape, Its Silent Middle Term," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (January 2000): 117–52, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.2.302677.

And shrove herself of her wickedness
{with flavor of 'overbearingness' perhaps} -- shameless, I trust,
Told him a tale and have him a coin
To be her petitioner and also her broker]

The confessor approaches Meed with something like a predatory aspect, disguised and whispering, hungry for profit, but making promises to interpret knowledgeably (33-4). This entire argument is wrapped up in, literally, the question of just reward, but what determines its justness, its rightness, and its moral expediency, is determined by external interpretation. Meed attempts to cover herself by hiring a self-proclaimed expert as her petitioner (i.e. someone who prays on her behalf) and her broker (someone who invests or buys and sells on her behalf), but she establishes the relationship with the things in question -- her word and her coin. But is this not the very problem we face with any sort of explanation -- the sincerity or intention is always covered in the words which convey the intention. Conscience, ever suspicious, suggests that her motivation is suspect and so all her actions are indefensibly suspect, regardless of what she might say. Money and speech are linked over and over, and even the confessor's relationship to Meed is twofold -- investor and interpreter.

The confessor suggests that Meed might gain salvation by glazing the gable of a window under construction and "grave therinne thy name / Sykir shoulde thi soule be hevene to have" [engraved your name in there / your soul should be safe to have heaven] (49-50). Meed's expenditure is literal - pay for the glazing, and you'll get a commemorative plaque -- and also allegorically constitutive -- by applying money, she leaves a trace of herself between the ground and the light of heaven, through which that light is filtered. The confessor's imagination is stuck in the physical carriage of the Platonic metaphor -- if you pay for a window, what better way to gain a glimpse of the salvific light of heaven? This arrangement becomes more obviously simonaic in C – she says that she can "purchace yow prouendres while your panes lasteth"

[purchase your provenders while your {pains/panes} last] (C.3.32). Galloway notes that "prouendres are stipends from membership in cathedral or collegiate churches, whose purchase was commonly complained of as simony".[43] Meed, in return for confession and absolution, will provide clerical income to her confessor (cf. Alford) – technically a practical arrangement afforded by nobility to their local confessor. The direct link between income and being shriven is suspicious but not automatically out of line. The terms of this arrangement are 'while your pains / panes last' – that is to say, while your financial difficulties, windows and walls, or your punishments last. This addition (not present in ZAB) puns on a promise which has not yet been made in C – the purchase of windows, which Meed will offer in a handful of lines. She'll pay the provender while the windows she is glazing last – a span of hundreds of years and longer than the confessor will live. It's possible that Meed understands that her confessor's behavior is simoniac and will garner canonical or eternal condemnation, and Meed's promise in C thus might be characterized as a gentle reminder to her confessor of the stakes of his error – that meet reward accompanies all action – the good and the simonaic alike.

Meed's great power is that of the improvisational comic or the absurdist – even in her defense against Conscience, she responds with 'yes and' – the joyfully accretive attitude so fundamental to the composition of *Piers* which Conscience seems to suspect. Meed rewards in the way the fay grant wishes: painfully literally. The confessor has conveniently collapsed his dual role of bedeman and brocour into the single action of investment in the church, and Meed is delighted to have so quickly found a means of cementing their friendship:

> " Wiste I that,' quod the womman, - I wolde noght spare
> For to be youre frend, frere, and faile yow nevere
> While ye love lordes that lecherie haunten

[43] Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman, Volume 1: C Prologue-Passus 4; B Prologue-Passus 4; A Prologue-Passus 4* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 293.

And lakketh noght ladies that loven wel the same.
lt is a freletee of flessh--ye fynden it in bokes--
And a cours of kynde. wherof we comen alle.
Who may scape the sclaundre, the scathe is soone amended;
It is synne of the sevene sonnest relessed.
Have mercy,' quod Meed, of men that it haunteth
And I shal covere youre kirk, youre cloistre do maken,
Wowes do whiten and wyndowes glazen,
Do peynten and portraye [who paied] for the makynge.
That every segge shall see I am suster of youre house.'
And thi cost and thi coveitise and who the catel oughte. (B.3.51-64)
"If I knew that," the woman said, "I would not ask
To be your friend, friar, and never fail you
While you love lords who hang around lechery
And don't criticize ladies who also love that
It is a frailty of flesh (you find it in books)
And a natural practice whence we all come.
Whoever might escape the slander, the harm is soon amended
It's the sin soonest released of the seven
"Have mercy," Meed said, "on the men it who indulge in it
And I will cover your church, make your cloister
Whiten your walls and glaze your windows
Paint and portray who paid for the making
So that every man will see I'm a sister of your house.
And your cost and covetousness and to whom the wealth belongs]

Her sincerity is heartbreaking; she will 'never fail' the confessor, though he has already failed her. She interprets a book explicitly here for the first time -- although the confessors "[loves lords that frequent lechery / And lack not ladies that well love the same / it is a frailty of flesh -- you find it in books -- and a shirt of kind, of which we all originate]". As with so many of the things that Meed says, we can take this statement any number of ways. It might be that she will never fail the confessor so long as he keeps lecherous company, or even though he once kept such company. The confessor might be in the company of lords who shun lechery, though they are in the company of women who love it, or those lords might frequent lechery and the priest keeps company with them and with women who do the same. Regardless of which it is, Meed has charity for the confessor since it is the nature in which all humans enter the world -- the shirt

of nature -- which is a frailty easily absolved. Her reference to books is intriguing -- it is as if she herself does not know about lechery first-hand, but had to read about it, a fact she mentions with the casualness I might say, 'I read an article last week that says…'.

This interpretation, rather than revealing or making clear, rather adds layers upon layers to the problem at hand. At this point in the text, Meed is interpreting the confessor's actions, his social position and habits, and using all of this to account for her financial actions. Her agreement to pay for the window rests on her new knowledge that if she 'glazes the gable,' she will "sikir should thi soule be heuene to haue" [more certainly would [her] soul go to heaven]. She agrees to the confessor's suggestion with a counteroffer: "[I will cover your church, make your cloister / Whiten the walls and glaze the windows / Paint and portray who ever paid for the making / So that everyone will see I am a sister of your house]". Meed covers the church -- creates an integumentum under which she builds the entirety of the cloister and church (or has done so already?) and within writes the names of those who paid for it and 'portrays' them -- likely puts them into pictorial scenes as ardent worshipers in biblical scenes. This will ensure, in Meed's mind, that she is known as a lay sister of the cloister she has built.

There appears to be a narratorial interjection here:

> Ac God to alle good folk swich gravynge defendeth--
> To writen in wyndowes of hir wel dedes--
> An aventure pride be peynted there, and pomp of the world;
> For God knoweth thi conscience and thi kynde wille,
> And thi cost and thi coveitise and who the catel oughte.
> Forthi I lere yow lordes, leveth swiche w[rityng]es--
> To writen in wyndowes of youre wel dedes
> Or to greden after Goddes men whan ye [gyve] doles,
> On aventure ye have youre hire here and youre hevene als.
> *Nesciat sinsitra quid faciat dextra*
> Lat noght thi left half, late ne rathe,
> Wite what thow werchest with thi right syde--
> For thus bit the Gospel goode men doon hir almesse. (B.3.64-75)
> [But God prohibits all good folk from engraving

To write of their good deeds in windows
Lest Pride be painted there and the world's pomp
For God knows your conscience and your natural will
And your cost and your covetousness and who should have the money
From there I teach you lords, leave such writings
To write in windows your good deeds
Or shout after God's men when you give gifts
Lest you have your hire here and also your heaven
Let not the left know what the right does
Let not your left half, let not the right
Know what you work with your right side
For thus the Gospel bids good men give alms]

The narrator interjects to interpret Meed's blithe gift -- God, the narrator says, will reveal such engraving for what it really is, for the pride of place, the pomp it reveals, for God knows your conscience -- yours, reader -- the nature of your will, your course of action, and any covetise which remains within. The reader (the confessor?) is thus encouraged to "leven [such writings]", that is, to cease from public acts of sanctimony.

Here we see an early echo of the pardon which will appear in passus 7 -- whatever you do, God will sort it by your motivation, and this injunction initiates a similar cessation of action: when someone records that they have taken an action for the glory of God or for friendship or because they have been asked, believe it, allow it, and do not do the same. This is a restatement of the perilous paradox of Matthew 7:

> Judge not, that you may not be judged, For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged: and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam in thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

Meed's integumental gift is tainted because the priest encouraged her to undertake certain actions movtivated by his own greed. Does she secretly desire renown (to be known as a sister of a house)? Or is interpretation whatsoever precluded? Does the act of interpretation or judgement

or criticism only reveal the shortcomings of the critic or the judge rather than shed light on the action in question? It is the fate of those who do such to receive their "hire… and youre heaven als[o]", which is only as condemning as the state of your motivations. If sinfully motivated, death is the wage.[44] The acts of writing and interpretation, especially when offering judgment, are equally dangerous and require intimate knowledge of one's own will.

Meed, anxious to remain in the king's favor, defends herself by embracing her fickleness. In fact, she points out that her fickleness (or multivalence) is precisely the reason Conscience and the king are as powerful as they are, that shifting subjectivity and multivalence form the *foundation* of truth. The knight answers Meed's argument and levies moral influence by telling the king, "'There aren two manere of Meeds'" (B.3.231), recasting his earlier description of her unfaithfulness and vacillating nature. This allegorical confusion, which Conscience brings up in an attempt to win the argument, only serves to underscore the kind of multiplicity native to a mixed-manuscript linked by allegorical ties. Conscience's attempt to split Meed into moral and immoral senses of her term-name anticipates the layering of divine goddess Peace onto the fraught conceptual space begun by Peace in passus 4. Conscience grants that he has received rewards (i.e. Meed) just as the king has doled them out, but the knight says that there is a Meed that "God of his grace granteth in his blisse" (B.3.232), which, judging by Conscience's argument and assertion that she makes men do wrong, is not the sort of Meed who is present before the king and knight. She may, at times, embody that sort of Meed, but Conscience is concerned that her agency acts as a corrupting force, i.e. the bottomless Meed that "maistres desireth" (B.3.246). Conscience grants her correction but does not accept her influence as constantly positive. Because Meed as a constructive force depends on the constructive will of the

[44] Romans 6.

company she keeps, Conscience is concerned that a permanent alliance with her might result in corruption of the kingdom. Not all servants of the king are as morally bound as Conscience, and so her influence might ultimately be more destructive than constructive. Wildly shifting modes of reading stem from an assumption of actual miscellaneity rather than a work as interlacing, co-informative sections of text. Inherent, substantive division yields dialogue at best, but no unity; Conscience or Meed has to go, Conscience thinks. Because further discussion only complicates terminology, Meed must be disappeared to quiet his anxiety, and after the next passus, she does.

Conscience is also anxious to show the king that a ruler may dispense *Meed* and not be himself corrupted by her shifting, amoral nature. Conscience cites King David: "*Domine, quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?*[...] | *Qui ingreditur sine macula et operatur justiciam*" (Lord, who will live in your temple?[...] | Who walks without blemish and works justice) (B.3.234*a*, 238*a*). God's reward, the knight implies, can only be had by pursuing justice, but ought not (and indeed cannot) be sought for its own sake. Seeking reward for its own sake, or for a sake which is other than the one God has defined for Himself, is precisely the sort of *Meed*/Meed which Conscience wishes to avoid as the guardian of the kingdom. In citing this verse to draw the distinction between the *Meeds*, he, as he understands, has defined the terms, delineated appropriately, and offered an authoritative solution. Meed cannot be always welcome because she is always some sort of *Meed* but cannot be one sort of *Meed*.

Meed avoids categorical distinctions and relies on experience to counter Conscience, remarking on past instances of people 'helped' by her services, paid soldiers, and "lafte with my lorde his lyf for to save" (B.3.197). She argues, it might be better said, from experienc*es* -- instances or situations in which reward has indeed been just. She offers instances when her service was aligned with the current desires of the king and knight as examples by implication

that her services, should she be allied to Conscience, would constantly be so aligned. Conscience's confusion (and concern) comes from a different categorical overlap than Conscience thinks. His position – 'there is good Mede and bad Mede' – appears initially to be right, especially given the examples he offers. What he misunderstands (and what Mede herself may not know) is that her actions are not morally motivated, but only the very technical sense that *mede* is not a moral concept in the way that 'wage' or 'fee' or 'gift' are not inherently right or wrong in the way that 'murder' and 'charity' have necessary moral components definitionally inherent. This particular component plays on Anselm of Canterbury's *De Veritate*'s distinction between rational actions and non-rational actions.[45] Anselm's examples of rational and non-rational action are alms-giving and fire, respectively, making it a complicated source for Mede distinction. Fire, Anselm's interlocutors agree, heats, which is what is right for it to do since it is an action necessary to fire. It is also non-rational, which makes ascribing morality beyond 'it is good that it is as it is' impossible. When Meed fulfills the desires of those who ask her, it is a necessary and natural action, in the way that fire heats food and burns down houses, not out of good or evil motivation, but because its nature is to be hot.

Personification complicates this comparison by adding a body and apparent volition to natural concepts. If *mede* is a natural concept, i.e. a natural action speciated into different modes of moral action via rational choice. The addition of a human body, personality, and social context makes Meed appear rational and thus moves the 'natural' action into the realm of the rational. Engagement with Meed, the natural concept, is dangerous in that playing with fire (a tired cliché, but, here, apropos) will get Conscience or the king burned if they misunderstand how she works.

[45] *Complete Philosophical and Theological Treatises of Anselm of Canterbury.* Translated by J. Hopkins and Herbert Richardson. Minneapolis: Banning Press, 2000.

But it is by arguing with Meed that the *Piers*-poet 'fireproofs' his poem, embedding her properties of reward into his composition while avoiding her dangers (usury, simony) by addressing them. In applying Hegel's *Philosophy of History* to Middle English literature, Christopher Cannon writes,

> As the very process of that embedding deploys the properties of that material in the service of a thought (as the pressing 'downward' of gravity becomes the movement 'up' that house-building requires) the material itself gains 'subjective' qualities to the extent that it is redirected by thinking. The resulting combination is 'fireproof', not simply because a potentially destructive fire has been used to forge iron, or a potentially destructive wind has been used to generate power, but because it is the character of 'building' to bend matter to some will—converting those aspects of matter which resist thought into the capacity to preserve thought by means of the form that matter is made to assume. It is inherent in any such fireproofing that it may prove temporary (the house may be blown down or burnt at some point), but, so long as it is fireproof, it is a monument to the thinking that caused it—a thing in the unique form of the subjective thought that made it (49)

Adding thought – in Meed's case, the subjectivity of personification, makes her at once more dangerous because she has volition, at least of a sort, while dampening her danger in a disadvantaged personification of a woman. As Hunger or Wrong prove, personifying dangerous concepts in masculine bodies threatens to tear the world of the poem to tatters. Meed is too dangerous to personify as masculine, and the (failed) attempts to marry her off are attempts to legally and personally subject her will to that of a masculine personification less dangerous.[46] Because Meed's volition consistently aligns with the will of the asker (she only differentiates on the issue of definition with Conscience), it is impossible to know if the *Piers*-poet thinks she is even theoretically capable of exerting (male) human levels of volition. Furthermore, Meed is a female personification surrounded by male allegories in superior positions. Her embodiment is in no way incidental to her actions, and it positions her socially as well. She cannot exercise her

[46] Old English *med* is also feminine, meaning that if normal allegorization rules apply, she should always have been feminine.

will because she is a natural concept, but being a 'natural concept' aligns suspiciously with misogynist narratives that characterize women as emotional or irrational.[47] Mede is either therefore a person whose representation of her concept is so faithful that she consistently subjects her will to that of anyone around her or she is a sort of conceptual automaton: a personification that looks and acts like a human being but, limited by the natural state of the concept in question, has no real autonomy.[48] This, however, serves the poem perfectly well – the dangerous woman/concept has been 'embedded' into the structure of the poem, using her property of expansion against her inclinations for expansion to *any* end while retaining her habitus of accumulation and association.

Meed's impaired will, her likely derivation from Amor, and her name and consequential natural nature make her a complicated character to judge morally. As in the case of any agent interacting with a natural concept, Meed's earlier 'bad confession' proves more about her confessor than her culpability. As Arvind Thomas notes, "Mede's fraternal confessor commits not only simony but also fails to exemplify Raymond's ideal of the confessor as [a] diligent and

[47] Holly Crocker notes that Meed is a 'problem' in that her characterization draws relatively little feminist scholarship, in part because she, although she operates in the world of men, "adnumbrates a number of sexist assumptions" (93), especially that she "enacts the infinite compliance — the pliancy and tractability — that men claimed to desire from women" (94). Although "Langland's poem uses women's vulnerability to structure the ethics of his poem," it also "allows for represtation of an interventionist, feminist version of the human that is not defined by domination and governance, but by forbearance and endurance" (93). Crocker, Holly A. 2019. "Feminism without Gender: Piers Plowman, 'Mede the Mayde,' and Late Medieval Literary Studies." *Exemplaria* 31 (2): 93–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2019.1581565.

[48] The debate here might also take the form of 13th-century speciation debate – i.e. whether Meed and Mercrede, the two 'maners' of Meed are really distinct species or just nominally distinct. The former is Conscience's claim – that the two species of Meed Conscience identifies are actually distinct but contained within the same individual, making Meed equivocal about her identity. Thus, on Conscience's view, when Meed claims her own conceptual existence in reference to an ethically defensible action, she is making a distinction between real existences of different kinds of meed that exist under the same terminological heading. This is a storied definitional problem, reaching at least back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (IV.4.1006), *Categories* 1, or *On Interpretation* 5. The disjunct between mental representation (Consc.) and real distinctions arises with fury again in the 12th century and continues with little abatement until today. From Thomas Aquinas's formal sameness, Peter Olivi's response, Henry of Ghent and Duns Scotus, and then to Ockham and Buridan. Gottlob Frege's "Sense and Reference," Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (cf. rigid designators). Conscience's sense of superiority and Meed's insistence on experiential knowledge as superior conjures a medieval version of standpoint epistemology.

subtle inquisitor" and "underscores the ubiquity of sin[ ] and negotiates absolution for a monetary fee."[49] In the sense that fire is not culpable for an arsonist's fire, Meed's natural response makes her not culpable or only partially culpable in these sins. Like the window-glazing, Meed believes what her confessors tell her, and her shamelessness and laugher not so much "indicative of the inversion of the sign of contrition on account of her gender" as a lighthearted engagement with sin which she constantly enables but is incapable of committing. With this in mind, I differ from Thomas's suggestion Meed's laughter in C is not the "irrisor" Thomas finds in *Memorale presbiterorum* but joy at a successful confession, given that it follows the narratorial statement that she is "assoiled" [absolved of sin] and that she is "loueliche" [lovely, friendly] (C.3.55).[50]

Conscience sees and fears the effects the ever-shifting Meed has on the weak-willed of the court (like Peace in passus 4), and his solution is to control her. Conscience cannot abide the presence of a woman who will, depending on her company, change completely – he cannot trust a 'loose text' or a 'loose woman' to behave properly, so he must control them with his sense of his own erudition. These circumstances preclude Meed's potential autonomy because she "must answer Conscience under a cloud of suspicion about how her bodily and spiritual practices inform one another, which is a direct challenge to an elite, enabled, and performatively-closed subjectivity, a story of the self that is spurred by Conscience and supported, if not patrolled, by Reason."[51] Meed's essential sense of self is under suspicion for the duration of the debate, and

[49] Thomas, Arvind. *Piers Plowman and the Reinvention of Church Law*. University of Toronto Press, 2019, p. 43.

[50] Thomas's reading relies in part on reading C's laughter in the context of the earlier "shameless," but it is not clear syntactically if the shameless refers to her confessor or to her; furthermore her shamelessness would accord with her mode of personification – she would be "free from disgrace," as the MED has it, if she has been shriven.

[51] Crocker, Holly A. 2019. "Feminism without Gender: Piers Plowman, 'Mede the Mayde' and Late Medieval Literary Studies." *Exemplaria* 31 (2): 93–104. https://doi.org/10.1080/10412573.2019.1581565, p. 99

Conscience summons a host of ostensibly rational allies to undermine Meed's unification of body and mind. Conscience insists like Holy Church in passus 2, that "The text telleth thee noght so, Truthe woot the sothe" (B.2.122), that whatever the text may say, that truth is external to it. Meed, who had been betrothed to Truth, would argue precisely the opposite: in the text and only what text is before you is truth. Truth is available as a personal connection for Conscience, a privilege of his position – Meed must rely on texts and her own constricted and controlled education.

Conscience ends his first argument and begins his next by quoting the Proverb, "*melius est bonum nomen quam divicie multe*" (better is the good name than much wealth) (B.3.330*a*) and "Also wroth as the wynde wex Meed in a while" [Meed got mad as the wind after a while] (B.3.331), i.e. a saying which is in untranslated Latin and directly opposes her argument. This dual attack reveals his abstract nature because he has appealed, in a case of moral judgment, to the authority of Scripture. It reveals his personal nature in that his education is (while not unrelated to his abstract nature) something of an accident of his social position as a knight. In his quotation of Latin, he synthesizes his natures and brings them powerfully to bear against Meed's experiential arguments. As their argument draws to a close, Meed waxes "wroth as the wynd" (B.3.331), and says, "'I kan no Latyn?... Clerkes wite the sothe!'" (B.3.332) and changes tactics to argue textually rather than her previous arguments from experience. She essentially exonerates every gift-giving action she takes, which is every action she takes. She translates "*Honorem adquiret qui dat munera….*" (He who gives gifts obtains honor) (B.3.336) as "'That yiveth yiftes, taketh yeme, the victorie wynneth, | And moche worschip hath therwith…'" (B.3.334-335). Lady Meed has taken *honorem* to mean 'victory' as well as 'much worship,' turning a verse usually interpreted to underscore the good of charitable giving into a competition. She translates

the verse well enough, but embeds too much of her own agenda into the translation. Meed expands the poem (here, by double-translating) when it advantages her, but Conscience does so out of fear, in an attempt to control meaning. Irony of ironies, it is Conscience who expands the poem most drastically and recklessly in the C-version, culminating with his long grammatical insertion which dominates passus 3 of the C version. Meed is comfortable with interpreting, with excerpting aggressively, and with translating Latin. Conscience criticizes her self-interestedly associative reading in which she generously associates quotations or excerpts via puns and taking, often, assertions on face value. Conscience worries more that she is not properly controlling the texts she quotes than whether her points might have some validity.

Conscience presents a personal correction in an attempt to remedy her mistranslation. He says, "'Ac thow art like a lady that redde a lessoun ones'" (B.3.338) and offers a biblical verse as an elucidation. This correction is less offensive than it might first appear in that Conscience may speak this line intending to keep to an instructive simile. Conscience has carefully crafted this line: if she is *like* a lady who reads a lesson once, he implies that she may have read this passage many times, but she has not progressed, as if she had read it only once. If she knew Latin, as she has pretended that she does, or did not allow her advantage to color her translation, she would be capable of re-reading the passage and better understanding it. If she *is* a lady who did only read the lesson once, the criticism falls on the brevity of her study, not because it was brief, but because it was incomplete and concerned only with what was in front of her.

Meed stumbles over her 'textual' habits when she fails to remember that the end of a page rarely coincides with the end of a work.But Meed is reading a single line here -- this is an extreme example of selective reading. I think nevertheless that the lesson applies -- Conscience is advocating for contextual reading of passages. To separate a portion out and ignore the surrounding text is to misunderstand the passage itself -- there is no text separable from its context. To interpret, especially scripture, is always a fraught process, but it is impossible without its neighboring lines. Piers, a few passūs later, will suffer greatly when he reads only the lines of the pardon which have been excerpted from the Athanasian creed.

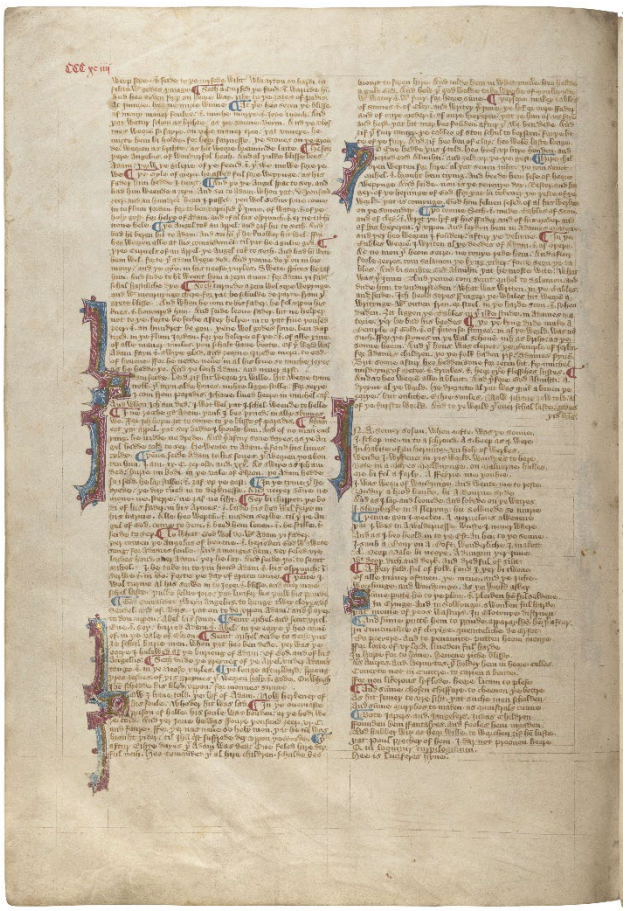

Figure 1: the border between the "Life of Adam and Eve" and "Piers Plowman A" in the Vernon manuscript. Piers's shorter line length is the only obvious indicator of a new work.

It is equally faulty to read once and to be satisfied with the initial appearance of the text upon reading it once. Like Macheray's critic who, "...powerless to examine the work on its own terms, unable to exert an influence on it, [...] resorts to a corroding resentment. In this sense, all criticism can be summed up as a value judgment in the margin of the book: 'could do better'. Glimpsing but never attaining this 'better', it looks beyond the real work to its dream image".[52] But rather than the set jaw of resentment,

[52] Pierre Macherey and Geoffrey Wall, *Theory of Literary Production*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 16.

Conscience decries a giddy naivete with the same effect -- unable to make the text mean what she wants, the lady-who-reads-once alights on a fragment which fits what she would like 1 Thessalonians to say and "corrects and effectively modifies [the work] by continuous comparison with the model which has an independent, a priori existence".[53] The open-minded reader, the reader open to the mutual influence of associated texts, reads what surrounds a work or phrase and reads iteratively. Associative, circular reading is how actual readers engage with mixed material, i.e. a modern anthology or chapbook. Reading beginning-to-end, which developed with the romance, and purely referential reading are fantasies of literary critics practiced only by lawyers and Evangelical Christians.

The reader's iterative journeys to the same passage again and again through its companion set-pieces erodes the reader's model and initial 'dream' of the work's meaning and offer itself more and more as itself, whatever that might be, however manifold, in a diachronic fan of possibilities. Conscience then provides a lesson and a text for application: "'It was *omnia probate* [...] *Quod bonum est tenete*'" (test all things […] hold to what is good) (B.3.339*a*, 343*a*). Meed has shown alacrity in her ability to assess and attend to the possibilities of a social or moral situation but makes no effort to hold to what Conscience might deem 'good'. Meed has a 'problem' opposite to that which Piers has in the Pardon episode -- she can act without examination or worry. This provides a sort of parenthesis around action which will close at the end of the Visio, the Pardon, and the shriving of the seven deadly sins. The undoing of allegorical action in the pageant provides an example of the sort of reflexivity Piers develops in response to the pardon and which Conscience is trying to teach Meed or insist that she has.[54]

[53] Pierre Macherey and Geoffrey Wall, *Theory of Literary Production*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 19.
[54] By 'undoing allegorical action' I mean that the sins confessing in A make promises to repent but never do anything penitential. In B/C, the sins' confessions are much longer, and they pay lip service to repentance, but in

Conscience follows that with an injunction 'hold to what is good' which is what Meed cannot do with consistency and, not coincidentally, what he must always do. He gives her this verse, again, in unmediated and untranslated Latin. Not only are their argumentative modalities incompatible, but their personal hermeneutics cannot coexist.

Meed's imperfect will is natural to her status as natural principle. In "Feminism without Gender", Holly Crocker writes that "Mede enacts the infinite compliance—the pliancy and tractability—that men claimed to desire from women. Almost to a man, everyone who sees her wants her. Almost without exception, Mede gratifies each petition for reward. She is so free, in fact, that she tumbles together distinctions of value" (96). Meed flattens moral scales by submitting her will and power completely to that of others – she does not make distinction between good and bad, much less well, better, and best. She has none of Conscience's hierarchy, only "yes and" without capacity for concern about the morality of the volition she affirms and manifests. Because she always interprets in accordance with the will of someone else, it is impossible to know if she is capable of independent volition. Augustine, in his *Sermo 350*, writes,

> Si ergo non vacat omnes paginas sanctas perscrutari, omnia involucra sermonum evolvere, omnia Scripturarum secreta penetrare; tene caritatem, ubi pendent omnia: ita tenebis quod ibi didicisti; tenebis etiam quod nondum didicisti. Si enim nosti caritatem, aliquid nosti unde et illud pendet quod forte non nosti: et in eo quod in Scripturis intellegis, caritas patet; in eo quod non intellegis, caritas latet. Ille itaque tenet et quod patet et quod latet in divinis sermonibus, qui caritatem tenet in moribus.
>
> So if there's no time or leisure to pore over all the sacred pages, to leaf through all the volumes of the words they contain [also: to unroll the covering of words], to penetrate all the secrets of the scriptures, hold onto charity, on which they all depend. In this way you will hold onto what you have learned there; you will also get hold of what you haven't yet learned. I mean, if you know charity, you know something from which that also depends

each instance, Robert the Robber appears and begins the repentance the sins only promise. In each case, the allegory must perform the sin to stay personified – they cannot both repent and exist, just as Repentance cannot remain in the poem and cease from asking the sins to repent, which is a futile desire.

> which perhaps you don't yet know; and in whatever you do understand in the scriptures, charity is revealed; while in the parts you don't understand, charity is concealed. And so it is that those who keep a grip on charity in their behavior, have a grasp both of what is revealed and of what is concealed in the divine writings.[55]

Meed, being "reward", does not hold onto charity, but neither does Conscience, if we remember her earlier condemnatory "thou hast hanged on my half eveluevene tymes / And also grypen my gold and gyue hit there the liked. / Why thow wrathest the now wonder me thynketh" (C.226-8). Anselm's example of a constitutively human action, one natural and good to human beings is "for each person to reciprocate another's love" (De. V. 5) in the manner befitting humans like heat befits fire. Conscience is attempting to repair his straying grip by holding on to the good. He, after all, is culpable because he is a rational and thus morally contingent abstraction; Meed, despite Conscience's concern, is not. Her consistency and amoral position indicates that the fault is not, in the end, with her education: she is an automaton-personification, a body without a will, which confirms some of Raskolnikov's concerns that the poem erases female-gendered characters. Furthermore, Goodman's note that Meed is the "most fully developed allegorical figure in the poem" (X pp.), referring to her dress and socialization, are actually an impressive disguising feature rather than an indication of the fullness of her agentic status. This "cultural fantasy about female will and desire" (45) isn't even really about control in the end – it's the fantasy that in earthly political and cultural spheres, this woman never had agency at all and was, in fact, never really a woman.[56] She is a counterfeit woman, pure gift, a personification at the limits of the person.

Conscience continues his extended simile, "[...] and that plesed here herte | for that lyne was no longer atte leves ende" [and that pleased her heart for that line was no longer at the leaf's

[55] Saint Augustine, *Sermons (341-400) on Various Subjects* (New City Press, 1995), p. 108.
[56] Emily Steiner, *Reading Piers Plowman* (Cambridge University Press, 2013).

end] (B.3.339a-40), that the woman whom Meed resembles is pleased that testing or trying is all that is required of her. This straw lady fails to contextualize or to take consideration of any possibility other than what gives her the advantage. She stops reading, satisfied. If Meed had wanted (or could want) *omnia probare*, she might have learned the context of that verse for the good of her soul. As Conscience (though not Meed's conscience), continues, "Had [she] loked that other half and the lef torned" (B.3.341), "She shulde have founden felle wordis folwyng therafter" (B.3.342). Conscience tempers the amoral action of testing or trying with the moral corollary. There is nothing else for him to do and nothing that he, the person, would want to do more, and Meed, to his mind, is exactly like the lady he has presented; perhaps she *is* the lady, and Conscience has developed a new, thinly-veiled allegory to teach a literary lesson which is apropos. Whichever way one understands this process models the method of composition at play: if this is a genuine tale, then Conscience is modeling what I suspect is how *Piers* was composed -- as a point of contact or conflict appears, the author re-tells and interprets a story which resembles some aspect of the situation.

To create a story ad-hoc gives it the sense that it has likewise come from a tradition and has the same ancient sense of repetition, but it is made in the moment for application to the person who, in this case, is less educated and more vulnerable to being overwritten by authority. The *Piers*-poet has presented his readers now with two major issues of authority: the first is that this poem is a personification allegory and the second is that this is a book largely composed of external (read also: traditional, authoritative) texts. This is the recursive loop of *Piers*'s documentary anxiety – personifications have, in the world of the composition, volitional existence, and, once created, continue to act in a manner befitting their character but not necessarily benefitting the *Piers*-poet's anxious responsibility to his source material. Once an

allegory is introduced, even if it was intended to reign in the poem's far-flung referentiality, it acts in accordance with its source-text and abstract name, rebelling against easy application through the resistance of its history and complexity. A personification allegory is impossible to question on the literal level, but it draws attention to itself through its names. If Peace, for instance, does something that is not particularly Peace-like, readers have only the recourse of asking *how* Peace might have done such a thing, but not *whether* s(he) should have or if that works well with their conception of the term.[57] Acting personifications push readers to accord instances and expand frameworks in a way that definitional prose cannot. At the same time, *Piers* presents itself as a book which is derived as composed of quoted and extant texts with original material woven in to link them in a fictionalization of a reading experience. How many of the sections are influenced by or derived from previously extant texts was probably difficult even for the learned contemporaries of the poet, impossible for modern readers, and a task that mounts in difficulty as time passes.

Conscience overwrites Meed's existence with his interpretations by telling Meed that she is *like* a conveniently hypothetical woman, who apparently in the 'fable' itself never actually turned the page and so did not learn what she 'should have'. Because there is a gap in the hypothetical literal level, Conscience has already begun to insert an interpretive continuation in the 'incomplete' literal level. This supposed authority relies on gaps -- gaps in memory, in confidence, and in the textual tradition. If an authority can reference a tradition to a subordinate, the onus is on the subordinate to keep up appearances of understanding. Thus whether the source is absent in itself, the subordinate's education did not account for that particular source, or the

[57] This provides a possible counter to Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique*: however much a critic might imagine an alternative text or a secret motivation, the text stands as itself, saying what it says. The editorial corollary of this counter leaps immediately to mind: if we can edit texts to fit a critique, we are permitted to re-write the very substance of the thing itself, an act which is largely invisible and thus difficult to question.

source has been fabricated either in part or in whole all function effectually the same way. In the case of a lost source, the reference to the lost source becomes constitutive of its existence; each reference is a node for an authority-network which can exist with or without the source-piece. Because they are themselves selected from authoritative sources like Scripture or Augustine's writings, each quoted piece has a piercing relevance: it is at once as real and authoritative within the fictional world of *Piers* and outside, in the world of mixed-manuscripts and archives. Likewise, the actions of allegorical characters are measured against real-world implications of the terminology.[58] Meed's alleged role in simony, for instance, parallels her tempting Holy Church's lover to infidelity as well as a reader siding with Conscience in their debate. This blurs the level of allegorical guidance and authoritative text – if Conscience is saying something as the personification of moral judgement,

Conscience applies the 'hypothetical' lesson to Meed with brutal swiftness: "'And so mysferde ye, madame; ye couthe namore fynde'" (B.3.344), making a moral for his fable -- "[and so you stumbled, lady; you could find no more {than *omnia probate*}]". Her reading practice lacks context, and the second half of the verse is, fatally, "*Quod bonum est tenete*; truthe that text made" (343) -- text here likely referring to the fact that this is scripture. Like the pardon which appears a few passūs later, this is another text from truth with a familiar moral injunction and difficulty of interpretation. This is not the last time Truth and textuality are linked -- like Lawlor's "aim[ ]to show that the pardon formula -- do well and go to heaven, do evil and go to hell -- is stated so many times throughout *Piers Plowman* that it is not only unquestionably meant to be a pardon, but is the most fundamental idea in the poem; and to suggest incidentally

[58] Cf. Arvind Thomas, "The Subject of Canon Law: Confessing Covetise in *Piers Plowman* B and C and the *Memoriale Presbiterorum*," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 24 (January 2010): 139–68, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.1.102112.

that its binary form is a deeply characteristic mode of thought and expression for Langland[.....]" (117).[59] Lawlor may be right in suggesting that the pardon formula is "the most fundamental idea in the poem", but this claim is fairly uncompelling without its twin argument, that the formula constitutes a pardon. I find it more clearly compelling to suggest that the the repeated Pardon formula -- I should say, I do not disagree with Lawlor's individual arguments -- is just one of many repeated textual nodes which repeat many times throughout *Piers* in concatenations of resonance, each of which correct and learn from the previous iteration, most clearly starting in this disagreement between Meed and Conscience about what constitutes proper reading.

Donaldson translates, "Tho [she] soughte Sapience, sittynge in [her] studie" (B.3.345) as "When you searched Sapience", but the translation can quite easily read "Though you sought Wisdom". Since "Sapience" can act as both the concrete book of Scripture or as the abstract concept of wisdom or both -- combined with *quod bonum tenete* --, Conscience makes a real attempt to reconcile *Meed* to his own moral imperative. We ought to remember that he has warned the *maide*: if her misreading were an accident, she will certainly suffer misfortune, but woe to Meed should she be wandering from the truth for the sake of *plesing here herte*. The injunction extends to Meed immediately but also, by extension, to her educators. Support for Conscience's argument as a critique is aimed inter- or metatextually at corrupt clergy can be found in his next comment, "A ful teneful tixte to hem that taketh Meed:" [A fully menacing text to those who take meed] (B.3.349). His vocabulary echoes the 'felle' he used in 342, but he has broadened the scope of this interpretive criticism by moving from Meed's loose interpretation to broader blame: "Ac yow failled a cunnyng clerke that couthe the lef have torned" [but you

[59] Lawler, Traugott. "The Pardon Formula in Piers Plowman: Its Ubiquity, Its Binary Shape, Its Silent Middle Term." *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 14 (January 2000): 117–52. https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.2.302677.

lacked a cunning clerk who could have turned the leaf] (B.3.347). Conscience has already made it clear that both receiving and giving gifts is dangerous: "Ac God… defendeth | To writen in wyndowes of here wel-dedes" (B.3.64). Anyone's soul may be endangered by giving a gift pridefully or offering a bribe and may be likewise bound in the taking of either. Rather than condemning Meed wholesale, Conscience troubles the assumption that every remuneration to some member of the church is necessarily good. Meed cannot argue against this because she, personally and abstractly, takes situations as they are: she tests a situation and ascertains the path to advantage but will never desire or be able to determine a morally correct path because she remains essentially impervious to moral input.

Conscience will never control Meed, but his deconstruction of interpretation provides a path to correction, so long as both concepts are in play. Best compilation practice relies both on an increase of material and restraint in selection. If clerks, reading *Piers Plowman*, follow their Conscience, they will likely re-read the passages that he has so recently presented. They will then find on either side of the quoted verse that Conscience gives them as the lesson they misinterpreted: "*Prophetias nolite spernere*" [do not spurn prophecies] and "*Ab omni specie mala abstinete vos*" [from every sort of evil, withhold yourselves] and on either side of the verse that Meed half-quoted: "*qui seminat iniquitatem metet mala et virga irae suae consummabitur*" [he who sows iniquity reaps evil things, and the sprout of his own wrath will be brought to perfection] and "*eice derisorem et exibit cum eo iurgium cessabuntque causae et contumeliae*" [cast out the mocker and the dispute will leave with him, and the causes and abuses will cease] Conscience has given Meed a verse whose context will encourage clerks to listen to him as their teacher. In conjunction, he provides the *via negativa* of *quod bonum est tenete* – refrain from that which is evil. Furthermore, in the second set of verses, Conscience has again reinforced his

prediction of judgment, the fruits of the clerk's evil labors, his instruction to get sound explanation and doctrine from a clerk who is willing to turn the page and not the meaning.

Through the figure of the King, The Piers-poet unifies, at least in the reader's mind, the two reading practices. Aware that their argument may continue indefinitely, the King cries at the beginning of passus 4, "'Cesseth!... I suffre yow no lenger. / Ye shul saughtne, forsothe, and serve me bothe. / Kis hire… Conscience, I hote!'" [Stop! I can't stand you anymore / You shall make peace and both serve me / Kiss her, Conscience, I command!] (B.4.1-3).[60] Though his command is not enough to unite the two, and they drift apart for the remainder of the book, the reading education remains. It would be impossible for The Piers-poet to keep consistent allegorical characters and for the two to marry, so Conscience and Meed are doomed to separate (or rather never to unite) because of the constraints imposed by the method of composition The Piers-poet has chosen. As with Meed's entrance into romance or the mutual undercutting of the two parts of the prologue, The Piers-poet 's allegorical reading practice unravels as it reveals itself. It is impossible for the two practices to unite in the book, for they must unite in the reader. Undone before it begins, the marriage of Meed and Conscience never takes place, and the two recoil from this forced union: Meed, as a character, disappears after the end of the fourth passus, and it is Conscience's decision to go on pilgrimage which ostensibly brings the poem to an end.

The king cries for more than cessation – he continues, "Ye shal sauhten, for soth, and serue me both. / Kusse here, quod the Kyng, 'Conscience I hote!" (A.4.23). This command should have resonance for readers of Vernon and scripture – the King tells the warring allegories to 'sauhten,' make peace 'for soth' for truth, and 'both serve me.' Then he commands them to

[60] Note for continuation: this resembles the language of *Castle of Love* with remarkable fidelity, but this is a failed attempt at the reconciliation in *Castle* because wisdom is a lawyer, and this is an attempted marriage as opposed to sibling reunification.

kiss, confusing them for Psalm 85's righteousness and peace who kiss. In fact, Wisdom, who plays the King's son in Grosseteste's poem, is about to appear as Wrong's lawyer later in this passus, and Conscience summons Reason at the King's behest to play the part of Righteousness. To resolve the trial, "gan Mede to meke hire, and mercy besought / And profride Pees a presaunt al of pur golde" (A.4.106-7). Mercy appears at Meed's request, completing the Daughters of God set, but in a squabbling, ineffective, litigious way. Peace is a farmer, Meed, in all her amorality, is Mercy, Wrong personified is the everyman on trial, and Right is split between Conscience and Reason, neither of whom want to have anything to do with reconciliation. The son of God is a sleazy lawyer who, to be fair, does resolve the case without Wrong being killed or jailed as the King desires, but with a dissatisfying, practical out-of-court settlement – the rich man's justice.

The reading method persists. Conscience and Meed demonstrate the mutual influence on each other which Conscience sought so studiously to avoid. Where initially Meed argues for her own multivalence and Conscience for the importance of the teachings of scripture, by the end of their argument, Meed values what she can see before her, and Conscience argues for the importance of context. The distance between their positions, while it can never be nothing, closes as their arguments begin to rely each other and the method of reading a mixed-manuscript more and more. Conscience must add to the poem to restrict his meaning, and Meed is "holly at youre heste" (A.3.102), referring to the King, willing to marry Conscience from the start. He disavows his need of her, but he has relied on her cash, her principle of increase "half elleuene tymes / And also griped my gold, and gyue it where þee liked" (A.3.168-9). Like a version of *Castel*'s Soth, she reminds the men that "Þe King haþ mede of his men to make pes in londe" (A.3.208), a precursor to the Trial of Wrong just a step away. She has also reminded the men that it is her increase, her uncritical principle of addition that enables them to maintain men, to rule, to pay for

anything at all, and Conscience, especially in the C version (lines 314-406), must add and add and add to make his points clear. Meed is just reminding him of that.

Meed and Conscience are two sides of the compiler's conundrum (among many other things) – on the one hand, to add without critical thought and to add whatever amount of a piece seems right (the latter worry is more properly an author's than a compiler's). The other, Conscience's part, reveals a worry about precision – 'how *exactly* can I define this term?' – which requires *more* gathering, which in turn puts him at risk of using Meed. Despite their disdain for each other, the warring allegories let loose at the beginning of the passus begin to circle in a relatively gentle orbit around each other. They will not marry, in the end, but the Trial of Wrong gives an example of them working together relatively well, even if the circumstances are imperfect. The poem cannot both espouse and enact with perfect simultaneity, and the reader's experience continues the education. Just as the dreamer, at the end of the poem, has probably come to a fuller understanding of what the life of perfection entails, it is impossible to tell. In the last line, the dreamer 'awakes,' and the poem ends there. Has the dreamer learned what he wanted to or should have? He does not inform the reader because it is no longer important. What matters is whether the reader has learned to read not only the linear narrative, which ends uncertainly, but to read linearly *and* contextually (as one reads a miscellany), read the poem through the poem, recognize generic constraints, watch the poem deconstruct itself, and contemplate how best to live. The answer to the question 'how does one live best' is impossible to know, but it is impossible to know how to live well or better without constantly asking the impossible. The 'cesseth' of the king ends the debate but does not resolve it – the debate between is permanently open-ended. Conscience's desire for control in the B version is

foiled by his late arrival. Until his rewritten early entrance in C, Meed and Conscience have opened up a deep vulnerability about this experimental composition mode.

The poet's first attempt to remedy this vulnerability takes the form of the addition of the pardon episode to the Z to form the A version. AVC Schmidt suggests that documentary addition is the initial form of version expansion, writing, "[The Z version] Langland turned into A by adding the extraordinary Tearing of the Pardon after is closing 'beatitude' words on the poor. Our sole manuscript copy of Z, it may be surmised, is most probably the posthumous product of a time when interest in *any* form of *Piers Plowman* was strongest, and when Langland's literary remains were being preserved for and distributed to those who had supported him during life".[61] Whether Schmidt's suggestion about *why* Z exists is true is immaterial, but the addition of the Pardon scene is the poet's first attempt to tamp down the insoluble authorial problem of passus 3. Once the pardon has served its purpose, it fades from the versions in the C-text, where the poet's authorial and explanatory voice is both most consistent and most clear.

Pardon me?

If Conscience's retention in the poem is an indicator of his success, the Tearing of the Pardon episode revives paranoia about interpretation. By stacking accusations and argumentation against Meed, Conscience effectively controls her interpretation by constant redefinition and reorientation – a 're-tractatus' of Meed. In keeping with read documents being in Latin and reported, or 'verbally living' documents appearing in English, the pardon appears as a Latin text which is only afterward translated (unlike, say, Meed's marriage charter or Peace's accusation list but like Meed's engagement with scripture). Passus 7 operates as a document which lays out

[61] Langland, William. *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*. Medieval Institute Publications, 2011, p. 287.

the binary dangers of imagining action as merely good or bad, and it is paired with Passus 8, which introduces the engagement with the tripartite system of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. These terms serve, as sowlehele does for Vernon, as thematically organizing for the work as a whole. One might suppose that having repeated characters or terminology cuts against the mixed-manuscript model, but I think it actually serves to underscore the innovative changes *Piers* is implementing. There are often (in Vernon, for instance), many versions of the same saint's life in a single manuscript, or repeated versions of the creation story or soteriological narratives. *Piers* is a mixed-manuscript in a new way: it merges a collection of real and imagined archives -- actual documentary material found in other mixed-manuscripts and new, imagined material like Meed's conversation, Piers-as-Christ, and the belling of the cat, among others. We see this interpretive philosophy fantasized in *Pier*'s Passus 7 pardon scene. *Piers*'s pardon episode begins with Truth purchasing a document for Piers. What it is changes in the narration. It is first a pardon:

> Treuthe herde telle herof, and to Peres sente
> To taken his teme and tilion þe erthe,
> And purchasede hym a pardoun *a pena et a culpa*
> For hym and for his ayres for euere to hen assoiled;
> And bad hym holden hym at home and eryen his leyes,
> And alle þat holpe hym to erye, to sette or to sowe,
> Or eny manere mester þat myhte Peres auayle -
> Pardoun with Peres þe Plouhman perpetuelly he grauntet (B.7.1-8)
>
> [Truth heard tell of that and sent to Piers
> To take his plow-team / theme and till the earth
> And purchased him a pardon *from pain and guilt*
> To absolved him and his heirs forever
> And bade him hold him at home and plow his lays
> And all who helped him to plow, to set, or to sow
> Or any manner master who might help Piers
> Pardon with Piers the Plowman he granted perpetually]

The promise of the pardon is that it will release Piers and his heirs in perpetuity from the pains of hell and enjoins him to work. Anyone who helps Piers plow or sow will be pardoned. But then, later, it is a bull, even though the word 'pardon' appears as something not received by those who plead for Meed:

> Thanne were marchaunts murie - manye wepten for ioye
> And preiseden Piers þe Plowman, þat purchaced þis bulle.
> Men of lawe leest pardon hadde þat pleteden for mede,
> For þe Sauter saueþ hem not, swiche as take iftes,
> And nameliche of innocent þat noon yuel ne konnep:
> *Super innocentem munera non accipies.* (B.7.37-42)
> [Then the merchants were merry – many wept for joy
> And praised Piers the Plowman who purchased this bull
> Men of law who plead for money had the least pardon
> For the psalter does not save those who take gifts
> And namely of innocents that know no evil
> *Do not accept gifts from the innocent*][62]

It's the disappearing bull, an object that is singular in actual existence and multiple in its titles. Bull refers to its physical instantiation and 'pardon' to its expected content, like 'book' and 'romance'. Those who have taken Meed, who have received gifts, the associative interpreters, have forfeited salvation.

The priest insists that that he 'must' 'rede' Piers's pardon, in a move that I think is supposed to feel like a usurpation and controlling behaviour. Piers is not able to read the bull he has purchased or understand it.

> " Piers,' quod a preest thoo, " thi pardon moste I rede;
> For I shal construe ech clause and kenne it thee on Englissh.'
> And Piers at his preiere the pardon unfoldeth--
> And I bihynde hem bothe biheld al the bull
> In two lynes it lay, and noght a le[ttre] moore,
> And was writen right thus in witnesse of truthe:
> *Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam.*

[62] The sense of the Middle English lines which precede the Latin suggests that no gifts should be taken *from* the innocent, although the sense of Psalm 14:5 is that no bribes should be taken *against* the innocent.

Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.
"Peter! ' quod the preest thoo, " I kan no pardon fynde
But "-Do wel and have wel. and God shal have thi soule,'
And " Do yvel and have yvel, and hope thow noon oother
That after thi deeth day the devel shal have thi soule!'
["Piers," a priest said, "I must read your pardon
For I will construe each clause and teach it to you in English
And Piers at his prayer unfolded the pardon
And I behind them both beheld the whole bull
It lay in two lines and not a letter more
And was written thus in witness of truth:
And who does good will go into eternal life
But who does evil, to the eternal fire
"Peter!" the priest said, "I can find no pardon
But "Do well and have well and God will have your soul"
And "Do evil and have evil and you will have no hope
That after your deathday the devil will have your soul"]

If Conscience embodied an author's fear that he was not including enough in his excerptions, the priest in this passage is a nightmare of reception, looking over the document everyone has referred to as a pardon and musing, "I can no pardon find!". Since a pardon is, "Remission of part or all of the temporal penalty in purgatory for sins already forgiven," this episode ought to be referred to as the tearing of the not-pardon, the tearing of an unknown official document. The narrator sees the material of the document – the "bull," which refers to a document sealed by lead and bishop's rings, but not its contents.[63] The priest's exclamation, "Peter!" is at once direct address to Piers and a mild expletive – another instance of a sort of absurdist punning like exclaiming 'Jesus Christ' in a retelling of the gospel. Via the direct witness of the narrator – 'I beheld them both' – we learn the material shape of the document but not its content or genre. The poem has set a certain horizon of generic expectation and then explicitly dashed that by saying 'open the pardon' 'this isn't a pardon' without giving any explanation for what the thing

[63] Alford, John A. *Piers Plowman: A Glossary of Legal Diction*. D.S. Brewer, 1988, p. 20.

actually *is*.[64] Nevertheless, the priest *does* translate the pardon well, we assume, since suspicion is assuaged by the narrator's unusual insertion of himself -- "and behind them both I beheld the whole bull" -- and by his insistence on reproducing the Latin 'in witness of truth'. The 'translation' of the lines formulates at once the structure of the poem and its author's anxiety: do wel, the first of the set of comparative moral goods (do wel, do bet, do best) which structure the poem following is here compared to the consequences of 'do evil'.[65] The irony of this is, of course, that these lines are out of context -- extracted, as has been widely asserted, from the Athanasian creed. But these lines come at the end -- after a long re-statement of the essential doctrines of the faith. But here, it is a bare two lines of judgement and a less-than-enthusiastic expositor.[66] The priest reads the lines, but there is no forgiveness – only, do well or do evil and get the same. The poem splits shortly after this episode into the tripartite *Vita*, split into Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest.[67] Like Vernon's *sowlehele*, *dowel*, this title introduced by the material of the poem, gives the collected pieces a title that suggests the theme of the gathering. [68]

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[64] Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Theory and History of Literature, v. 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

[65] Hanna, R. "The 'Absent' Pardon-Tearing of Piers Plowman C." *The Review of English Studies* 66, no. 275 (June 1, 2015): 449–64. https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgu111.

[66] Denise Baker remarks on how unusual it is that the 'pardon' would have such a title: "the Dreamer agrees with the priest that it is not an indulgence (VII.173- 200). Nor does Truth's document conform to the general notion of a release or remission from a just penalty, for although its text, taken Athanasian Creed, expresses an orthodox tenet of the faith, it promises punishment, not forgiveness, to those who have transgressed the law" (463) Baker, Denise N. "Pre-Empting Piers's Tearing of the Pardon: Langland's Revisions of the C *Visio*." *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 31 (January 2017): 43–72. https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.5.114170.

[67] The whole poem is called "Piers Plowman" only by a certain latitude of phrase, and the Passus have been in this volume numbered from I. to XI. merely as a matter of convenience. Strictly speaking, this is incorrect. There are really two poems, each perfectly distinct from the other, with different titles, and separate prologues. .... Each poem is complete in itself, and the concluding passages of each are wrought with peculiar care with a view to giving them such completeness, by stating, at the end of each' the result which in each case the author wished to bring out strongly" Skeat, Walter William. *The Vision of William Concerning Piers Plowman, Together with Vita de Dowel, Dobet, Et Dobest, Secundum Wit Et Resoun, by William Langland, Edited by Walter W. Skeat: The Vernon Text, or Text A.* Early English Text Society, 1968.

[68] Adams resisted this push for a "A more candid and disciplined approach would begin by acknowledging that a considerable number of the paradigmatic textual situations in Piers B are so fraught with ambiguity as to preclude isolating any single variant with recognizably superior claims to originality" Adams, Robert. "Editing 'Piers Plowman B': The Imperative of an Intermittently Critical Edition." *Studies in Bibliography* 45 (1992): 34.

The tearing of the not-pardon is a fracture that mends or like the breaking open of a seed casing. The tearing separates halves of binary: do / do not to make moral action a scale of relative good – well, better, best. Piers learns that by splitting open quotations, making them even smaller, he can avoid the perils of binary interpretation and by doing so steps from being more compiler to an authorial role. [69] The poet has a new tool for composition: allegorical interpretation, or, breaking open and speaking other. Quite appropriately to the context, manuscript management resembles scarcity management; given condition of scarcity, there are three possible responses: increase supply, decrease demand, or make usage more efficient via internal redistribution.[70] Merely to increase supply has been deemed morally unsafe and politically unstable.[71] The 'pardon' episode is the *Piers*-poet's introduction of a third method of reading: Piers must separate lines of the quotation and insert a third 'text':

> And Piers for pure tene pulled it atweyne
> And seide, - *Si ambulavero in medio umbre mortis*
> *Non timebo mala, quoniam tu mecum es.*

In this eucharistic 'breaking' of the material text, Piers quotes Psalm 23, "For though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for thou art with me" (Douay-

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[69] "I believe that Langland constructed a quadripartite poem in which he designated the first part of his poem the *Visio* and the second part the *Vita,* but he further subdivided the *Vita* into sections that he marked *Dowel, Dobet,* and *Dobest"* Clopper, Lawrence M. "Langland's Markings for the Structure of 'Piers Plowman.'" *Modern Philology* 85, no. 3 (1988), p. 245, which he continues, "When Skeat published his editions, he numbered the passus consecutively in each of the three versions of the poem without indicating the absence of the system in most of the manuscripts; however, he included the other passus markers as they appeared in his base texts. Kane and Donaldson number the passus consecutively in their editions of the A and B versions, not on the basis of the manuscripts but editorially, and eliminate all other markings in their edition" Langland, William. *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*. Medieval Institute Publications, 2011, p. (246).

[70] Sharp, Buchanan. *Famine and Scarcity in Late Medieval and Early Modern England: The Regulation of Grain Marketing, 1256–1631*. 1st ed. Cambridge University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316401200, "Introduction" 7-8.

[71] While we cannot know the poet's thought on excising text, most arguments in favor of compositional trimming or shortening have resoundingly failed, while those supporting additive schemes find lasting support. Jill Mann has probably the most famous A-abridgment argument, suggesting that it postceded BC as AVC Schmidt suggests, "for a particular, less sophisticated audience of, perhaps, young people and women" (280) but notes that besides failures of her other arguments about macaronic lines, such an abridgment would "see[m] counter-intuitive and unparalleled in the major writers of the time."

Rheims), that is, he adds the person of God back into the formulation of bare action, the grace of God amidst the rite of a material meal.[72] After Conscience's failure to control Meed in passus 3, Piers's response suggests another interpretive methodology – interpretation by trust. Piers trusts that, because he intends to work in accordance with the will of God, that he will receive protection. The stakes of quotation are not 'do and die' but rather unsuspicious interpretation and composition. Either one cannot act for fear of condemnation or act under the umbrella of grace – this is the moment we see Piers choose the latter.

> "I shal cessen of my sowyng,' quod Piers, "and swynke noght so harde,
> Ne aboute my bely joye so bisy be na moore;
> Of preieres and of penaunce my plough shal ben herafter,
> And wepen whan I sholde slepe, though whete breed me faille.
> "The prophete his payn eet in penaunce and in sorwe (B.7.118-22)
> ["I shall cease from sowing," said Piers, "and work not so hard
> Nor about my belly-joy be so busy anymore
> Of prayers and penance my plow will be hereafter
> And weep when I should sleep even when I don't have bread
> 'The prophet eats his pain in penance and in sorrow]

Piers is quite content to cease from plowing for food. I cannot help but wonder, however, if this renewed dedication is threaded through with sarcasm -- in a text which has placed such strong evidence on work and its virtues, this call to cease from plowing -- to not *swynke*, or "work" seems to be an example of his spiritual paralysis rather than of a monastic call or sudden spiritual awakening. But the question is complicated by the gospel texts Piers cites, because those texts are both complicated in their own rights and by their citation as a justification to cease from work. All this is laced with another irony – Piers might want to cease work, the pardon might be torn, but the narrator must work all the while or the poem will cease. Despite protests of anxiety

[72] Emily Steiner notes this eucharistic resonance, writing, "Piers, hearing the contents of the Pardon, as explained by the priest, mysteriously rips it in two, an act that recalls Moses's breaking of the Tablets or the ceremonial fracture of the Host in the Mass" Emily Steiner and Alastair Minnis, *Documentary Culture and the Making of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 67.

and Piers's decisions to cease from work, the poem continues growing, changing, wrapping back on itself, driven only perhaps by fear of death and archive fever.

Because the pardon has declared that all action is either good or evil, Piers must consider each action as ethically static and existentially binding. The actions he has been used to taking (plowing, eating, sleeping) have become ethically questionable and potentially condemning. Piers then offers passages from Psalm 41, Luke 12, and Matthew 6 to contextualize the decision, inserting more and more material into the split he has formed.

> By that the Sauter seith--so dide othere manye.
> That loveth God lelly, his lifiode is ful esy:
> *Fuerunt michi lacrime mee panes die ac nocte.*
> "And but if Luc lye, he lereth us by foweles
> We sholde noght be to bisy aboute the worldes blisse:
> *Ne soliciti sitis,* he seith in the Gospel
> And sheweth us by ensamples us selve to wisse.
> The foweles in the feld, who fynt hem mete at wynter?
> Have thei no gerner to go to, but God fynt hem alle.' (B.7.123-30)
> [By that the Psalter says, so did many others
> Who love God faithfully, their life is quite easy
> *My tears have been bread for me day and night*
> And unless if Luke lie, he teaches us with birds
> We should not be too busy with the prosperity of the world
> *Do not be concerned* he says in the Gospel
> And shows us by examples to know ourselves
> The fowls in the field, who finds them food in the winter?
> They have no granary to go to, but God supplies for them all]

Piers interprets the Psalm here and the Gospels following, rather than the translations which often follow Latin scriptures. He asserts that whoever loves God faithfully, his livelihood / sustenance is very easy [to obtain] is the meaning of the scripture, "[4] My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?". Piers seems to imply that the tears he now plans on weeping in lieu of sleep will feed him where the "wheat bread" has "failed" him. For, Piers goes on to sermonize, what did we learn from Luke other than that we should not busy ourselves with the happiness of the world (from context, working for food?) but

rather learn from ravens to " sow not, neither [...] reap, neither have [...] storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them". And lest he or his hearers fear death, Piers quotes Matthew's 'ne soliciti sitis' [be anxious not for your {life}] as the rejoinder for the potential worries that might accompany a plowman neither sowing nor reaping.

These passages are most often interpreted as enjoining against anxiety -- i.e. one cannot accomplish much by *worry* -- apprehension is not prevention. That one might interpret these passages as an injunction against *work* is unsurprising -- so closely are anxiety and provision related for all but those born wealthy that a passage saying 'do not worry about food' implies the corollary 'work is useless'. When one is hungry, or fears hunger, there is no allegory of hunger -- it is always literal and immediate, and the question 'is not the life not more than the food: and the body more than the raiment?' relies on a separation not available to the starving or the cold. Piers's class and occupation make the question of motivation into an existential concern in the wake of Hunger's appearance the passus before. The collapse produces the following argument: action of any kind is morally hazardous.[73]. Do more, write more, live more: as Doyle writes in the introduction to the digitized Vernon, there is only a single instance of noted selection: Simeon's note to excerpt the very long *Speculum Vitae*. In the end, that excerption is not to excise but to complete. The Pardon scene suggests that the intimacy with the text itself and a reluctance to interpret will serve far better than even the most accurate interpretation. As with farming, so with textual production: food and insight, will be provided to those who seek after

[73] For whoso hath to buggen hym breed - the Book bereth witnesse
He hath ynough that hath breed ynough, though he have noght ellis:
Satis dives est qui non indiget pane.
Lat usage be your solas of seintes lyves redyng;
The Book banneth beggerie, and blameth hem in this manere:
Iunior fui etenim senui, et non vidi iustum derelictum nec
semen eius querens panem.
For [thei] lyve in no love, ne no lawe holde: (B.7.83-7)

God and do not concern themselves with eating or interpreting. Even so, the tone of the passage and the suddenness of Piers's disavowals that the panic of poverty and the hypocritical literalism of the mendicants are equally foolhardy. Piers's class and occupation make the question of motivation into an existential concern. Food will be provided to those who seek after God and do not concern themselves with eating or clothing themselves. Working for food is far too risky an enterprise, and lacrimal penance is all that remains. As Piers trusts in the grace of God to return good for well-intended action, Conscience (and the author of *Piers*) can release his own anxiety, trusting in generous readers not to condemn incomplete quotation.

Imaginative solutions

The scale of the particular codex is limited at its borders but even then allows for effectively infinite association between books and within each codex. -- in Imaginatif's sermon in Passus 12 – no accident that a sermon serves as a metamanuscript, since sermons take scripture as their text. produces a miniature book surpassed only by the meta-book in Passus 15. Imaginatif says that he has followed the narrator for forty-five years and reminded him often of his telos (or of his death) (B.12.4); the central theme of the 'book' Imaginatif begins to create is amending -- penance in middle age for the rashness and wantonness of youth. Fifty lines after Imaginatif appears, he begins to critique riches of all sorts -- intellectual and material both.

> "And riche renkes right so gaderen and sparen,
> And tho men that thei moost haten mynistren it at the laste;
> And for thei suffren and see so manye nedy folkes
> And love hem noght as Oure Lord bit, lesen hir soules:
> *Date et dabitur vobis.*
> So catel and kynde wit acombreth ful manye;
> Wo is hym that hem weldeth but he hem wel despende:
> *Scient[es] et non facient[es] variis flagellis vapulab[un]t.*
> Sapience, seith the Bok, swelleth a mannes soule:
> Sapiencia inflat &c.
> And richesse right so, but if the roote be trewe. (B.12.52-8)

[And rich men right so gather and collect
And though men whom they hate most minister it in the end
And therefore suffer and see so many need folk
And love them not as our lord bid, lose their souls:
give and it shall be given to you
so wealth and natural intelligence encumber very many
woe is him that they rule unless he spends well
those who know and do not do will be thrashed with various lashings
Sapience, the book says, swells a man's soul
Sapience swells &c
And richness as well, unless the root is true]

Imaginatif has returned to the great disagreement between Meed and Conscience, which is itself a version of the Pardon problem. An excess of knowledge or Wisdom -- Sapience -- is as weighty as retained wealth, and an attempt to use up all one's resources -- whether physical or intellectual -- only at the end of one's life, does not count in the same way as habitual and lifelong giving does. Those who know what the right thing to do is and do not do it until too late are to blame and at risk to suffer under 'sundry scourges' -- the soul cancerously tumesces if ostensible goods are retained in it. Imaginatif proposes a risk-based engagement with goods and knowledge; better to give money and distribute learning than to retain or control it. Imaginatif -- at least in RF -- quotes 1 Corinthians 8 (the passage about idol meat), substituting the Vulgate's *scientia* with *sapientia*, suggesting that claims of 'wisdom' can be just as detrimental as mere knowledge if either is habitually retained. Imaginatif here suggests a solution to both the Meed/Conscience problem and the Pardon problem -- nothing should be retained -- therein lies the evil -- but ought to be distributed and shared. Habitual and joyful sharing serves as a touchstone for the genuineness of the motivation, which is the problem of the Pardon. In short, to retain or restrain Meed is to flirt with wrongdoing; anything but habitual distribution of knowledge or wealth suggests a potential problem with the motivation behind the action.

In the wake of the debate of passus 3, trial of 4, and tearing of 7, Ymaginatif suggests a metaphor of verdurous grace to replace the monetary model of expansion that Meed offers. Rather than engage in another series of twisting arguments between personifications, Imagynatif's solution to these knotty problems is a florilegia, not gemstones. He preaches:

> Ac grace is a gras therefor, tho grevaunces to abate.
> Ac grace ne groweth noght but amonges [gomes] lowe:
> Pacience and poverte the place is ther groweth,
> And in lele lyvynge men and in lif holy,
> And thorugh the gifte of the Holy Goost, as the Gospel telleth:
> *Spiritus ubi vult spirat.* (B.12.59-64)
> [But grace is a grass therefore, to abate grievances
> But grace does not grow except amidst humble humans
> Patience and poverty grows in their place
> And in faithful living and holy life
> And through the gift of the Holy Ghost as the Gospel says
> *The spirit breathes where it will*]

Grace, longed for in the Pardon episode, is a grass, a common herb, an ordinary plant, but one which "needs a place and the means to grow" and "that proper human intention and action are what enable it to survive and flourish"[74]. The ground in this metaphor is patience and poverty – an environmental factor and a response to it, twinned to make the ground. The effort comes in the form of "lele lyvving," which is most sensibly understood to mean 'loyally living', 'faithful', but because of its line position begins to draw out an image of a more lovely garden: 'there grow living men in lilies and holy life'. Furthermore, grasses and lilies are both images of divine provision in a gospel. In Matthew's gospel, for instance, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And if the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew

[74] Jennifer Sisk, "'Grace Is a Gras': Theological Uses of Metaphor in *Piers Plowman*," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies* 34 (January 2020): 203–10, https://doi.org/10.1484/J.YLS.5.121092.

6:28-30). The effort is not so much on the part of human beings cultivating a garden for grace but that grace grows up in the unlikeliest of places. As GM Hopkins has it, "the just man justices; / Keeps grace: that keeps all his goings graces: / Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is".[75] Grace *is*, like grass, a thing that crops up unlooked-for, not a treasure but an ordinary event. The profound treasure of the world, the key to contentment, the salve of an aching soul grows amidst green leaves.[76]

This garden metaphor, if the sermon ended here, would make an unlikely candidate for an image of book-construction if it were not for the lines which follow it. Imaginatyf continues to link 'sight' and 'teaching' to the two.

> Clergie and kynde wit cometh of sighte and techyng,
> As the Book bereth witnesse to burnes that kan rede:
> *Quod scimus loquimur, quod vidimus testamur.*
> Of *quod scimus* cometh clergie, a konnynge of hevene,
> And of *quod vidimus* cometh kynde wit, of sighte of diverse peple. (B.12.64-7)
> [Clergy and Kind Wit come out of sight and teaching
> As the Book bears witness to those who can read:
> *What we know we say, what we see we testify*
> And of *what we know* comes clergy, a knowing of heaven,
> And of *what we see* comes kind wit, from the sight of diverse people]

Clergy and Kind Wit have their root in sight and teaching – paired personifications that rely on visual activity to exist. Like so many passages in *Piers*, this section is an allegorical expansion in English of the Latin text: from 'what we know' comes clergy, a 'knowing of heaven,' and from

[75] Hopkins, Gerard Manley. *Poems.* London: Humphrey Milford, 1918; Bartleby.com, 1999. www.bartleby.com/122/. [2022].

[76] Biodiversity is a metaphor ripe for book culture -- ideally, books will be diverse, distributed, and humble, not the monocrop of authorized anthologies. As the popularity and acceptability of the different pieces waxes and wanes, the whole has a better chance of enduring. Likewise, content diversity benefits readers – some will be drawn to a manuscript for a piece of Arthuriana or a chronicle and find themselves soon tangled up in a lyric they never would have read before. The meaning unlooked-for, the 'grace' of manuscripts, is the seemingly incidental inclusion that grabs a reader's attention to form a thought. Gardens are central images of healing and give the title to many mixed-manuscripts. Florilegia -- a gathering of flowers (from *flos* and *legere*) -- is the healing vision which provides the solution for the poem's rifts, but one which comes unexpected – is less made than identified, like the resonances between passages in mixed-manuscripts or in *Piers*. Some humility – ground-laying – is involved certainly, but great abundance of meaning springs up between the intended meanings. As the wind blows and as one lives well, so grass springs up.

'what we see' comes Kind Wit, 'from the sight of diverse people'. Aggregated sight renders a certain sort of intuitive understanding, and Clergy, institutional understanding, comes from received knowledge, *quod scimus*.[77]

Imaginatyf allegorizes the process of bookmaking as the process of salvation. Passus 12, we find an expansive engagement with the possibility of books.[78] He says,

> For as a man may noght see that mysseth hise eighen.
> Na moore kan no clerk but if he caughte it first thorugh bokes.
> Although men made bokes, God was the maister,
> And Seint Spirit the samplarie, and seide what men sholde write.
> And right as sight serveth a man to se the heighe strete,
> Right so lereth lettrure lewed men to reson. (B.12.99-104)
> [As a man may not see that lacks his eyes
> No more can a clerk unless he understood it first through books
> Although men made books, God was the master
> And Saint Spirit the samplarie and said what men should write
> And just as sight serves a man to see the high street
> So reading letters taught unlearned men to reason]

Books become the eyes of the clerk -- not only the reading or consumption of books, but via their construction as well, a fantasy of reshaping the world to conform to proper order.[79] These practices of thought are collective and communal -- books are not objects without origins which appear packaged for consumption and are discarded after. The books here are living objects which probably only die when their compilers do or when the living book ages into a relic rather than something which readers feel comfortable modifying. The process of creating a book was a means for the clerk to establish a specific personal perspective and to archive it in an expandable

[77] Since clergie (how we know) is a branch of theoretical knowledge, it is sensible that a concern for doctrine (*clergie*) is wrapped up in issues of reading and book production. For one's debts to be amended, clergy and kind wit must be used as mirrors, a comparison which stems from a play on 'rede' above.
[78] Kittel's forthcoming book.
[79] Minnis "A human *auctor* cannot reorganize the present world in accordance with those principles of order which the *divine auctor,* God, followed in His creation, but he can impose an appropriate order on his own creation, his treatise on love." (181)

interpretive matrix. This practice was structured and driven by yet another series of relationships. In this example, "[humans made the books, God was the master, and the Holy Spirit the *samplarie* and said what humans should write]".

> Ac grace is a gifte of God, and of greet love spryngeth;
> Knew nevere clerk how it cometh forth, ne kynde wit the weyes:
> Nescit aliquis unde venit aut quo vadit &c.
> "Ac yet is clergie to comende, and kynde wit bothe,
> And namely clergie for Cristes love, that of clergie is roote. (B.12.68-71)
> [But grace is a gift of God, and springs of great love
> No clerk ever know how it came forth, nor nature know the ways
> No one knows where it comes or where it goes &c
> And yet clergy commends, and kind wit as well
> And especially clergy for the love of Christ, which is the root of Clergy][80]

The witness of the Book (12.65) -- i.e. scripture -- is available to those who can read, specifically those who can read Latin. Imaginatif here gives an origin story for two personifications which combines the horticultural metaphor and the literary: Christ's love is the root of Clergy and also the root of grace. Clergy is raised up or comes from somehow of 'what we know' and Kynde Wit from the 'sight of diverse people' -- this, I think, is one of the initial keys for understanding the poem's take on reading: love of Christ is the root of all knowledge, clergy (aka 'doctrine' here) comes from that knowledge, and 'natural reason / skill' comes from the sight of diverse people; reading with charity (using both love and diversified sight) is the way in which one can develop more full knowledge. Since clergie (how we know) is a branch of theoretical knowledge, it is sensible that a concern for doctrine (*clergie*) is wrapped up in issues of reading and book production. For one's debts to be amended, the two (clergy and kind wit) must be used as mirrors, a comparison which stems from a play on 'rede' above. All humanity must be accounted

[80] Where might the Piers-poet have found this sampling metaphor? It linked to *exemplum* – a robust, textual example, and that is probably at least partially right. But the strange word, 'samplarie', is unique to this section of *Piers* and to *Book to a Mother* (found in Bodleian 416 and MS Laud Misc. 210). In *Piers,* this word appears amidst Imaginatyf's sermon; he weaves a close connection between reading and salvation -- the overarching worry is the condemnation to death which would befall those who did not take Christ's body *worthili*.

for in this educational schema, and Imaginatyf's inclusive binary is "lewed" and "lettered" -- all human beings, both learned and unlearned.

The inclusion of the Daughters of God begins to make sense beyond their traditional association with the redemption narrative; the poem has begun to disintegrate at the hands of Civil Law, Simony, and, two passūs later, the king himself. Labor is unrewarded, Truth is nowhere to be found, and fear of condemnation for any action at all pervades the poem and paralyzes Will. The Pardon is yet another attempt at documentary recouperation of a corrupt and dissatisfying world. Piers's response to the pardon scene fulfills one of Theology's cryptic statements about Meed. Amidst a litany of complaints, Theology links Meed and Truth thus:

> For Mede is molere, of Mendis engendrit;
> God grauntide to gyue Mede to treuþe,
> And þou hast gyuen hire to a gilour - now God 3iue þe sorewe !
> Þe texte telliþ þe not so, Treuþe wot þe soþe:
> *Dignus est operarius* his hire to haue – (A.2.83-7)
> [For Meed is a legitimate woman engendered of Mendis
> God granted to give Meed to Truth
> And you have given her to a beguiler – now God give you sorrow!
> The text tells you not so, Truth knew the soth
> *The worker is worthy* his hire to have]

Mary Carruthers, in *The Search for St Truth* expresses the surprise at this sudden reversal regarding the character of Meed. She flatly asserts "Obviously, Theology and Lady Holy Church are not talking about the same woman at all […] Theology has… failed to recognize a pun."[81] This reading takes Conscience's statement that there are 'two manners of Meed' further than he himself does, suggesting that there are not just two manners but two Meeds. Galloway, in his Penn Commentary Volume, writes that Theology's assertion of legitimacy is "as stark and unsupported" as Sothness's of illegitimacy and that the lineage which includes False as a father

[81] Mary Jean Carruthers and Remarque Professor of Literature (Emeritus) Mary Carruthers, *The Search for St. Truth: A Study of Meaning in Piers Plowman* (Northwestern University Press, 1973), 46.

does not occlude Amends (A, *mendis*) as a mother. Indeed, "Amends' powers of reconciliation are part of Meed's nature"[82] as the later episode at Peace's trial demonstrates. Galloway further argues that "Theology's use of a *tixt*… establishes the pattern of one document answering or clarifying another […and] anticipates the Pardon". Theology quotes Luke in a manner consistent with the use of the verse "to justify wages for teachers, doctors, and lawyers,"[83] i.e. those who produce the 'product' of knowledge.[84] Theology's suggestion that Meed marry Truth is far more sensible and Augustinian than the king's attempt at controlling Meed through Conscience. The suggestion of an alliance between plenty, labor, and truth is one of the most hopeful moments in the poem before fear of error and attempts to control the allegory only increases bad-faith action and eventually requires divine intervention via a counsel of goddesses and Christ's self-sacrifice. Theology's theoretical solution imagines a world in which documentary battles need not happen, where Meed has not been married to False for a fee, where Simony has not corrupted the church and state at once. Marriage to False would "corrupt[t]… the principle of reward" and the marriage to Conscience, an attempt to control bounty, ends in disaster because the proposed union is, as are all bureaucratic nightmares, inherently contradictory. Even though *Piers* is a guided tour of a mixed-manuscript reading experience, characters often desperately wish it was anything but.[85]

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[82] Andrew Galloway et al., eds., *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 266-7.
[83] Andrew Galloway et al., eds., *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 270.
[84] Andrew Galloway et al., eds., *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 270.
[85] Alternatively, this could represent a conservative ecclesiology and this represents a concern with the interference of civil law in ecclesiological jurisprudence. Alexandra Barratt in "The Characters 'Civil' and 'Theology' in 'Piers Plowman' (*Traditio* 1982) remarks that Roger Bacon et al. noted the growing chasm between civil and canon law by the 14th century. Splitting legal expertise and responsibility merely doubles the ranks of sharkish legal practitioners. Now justice and wise rule are beset both by greedy priests and civil lawyers, carrying with it a disdain of clerical corruption and the inferiority of human law reminiscent of Wycliffite positions (Barratt 361), a reading which

Piers A has a book-within-a-book from line 125 to 168 of A.11, which receives significant expansion in C and B. Appropriately, Dame Studie educates and relies on book-knowledge; after this, the poem grows more bookish from A to C to B. Andrew Galloway remarks in "*Piers Plowman* and the Schools" (1992) that "Dame Study herself notes the treachery of such technical learning" like the subjects she lists. Galloway's link to Ll.4.14, which is itself a mixed-manuscript that includes *Piers* B as well as "the first part of *Mum and the Sothsegger*- the part known as *Richard the Redeless;* a translation of a treatise by John of Holywood (Sacrobosco) on mathematics; a treatise on astrology; and a treatise on physiognomy" (100). This reader of *Piers* B, at least, treats the poem as a kernel for an educational mixed-manuscript. Just like the *Piers*-poet identifies a book in the pages of the Vernon manuscript – his own A and Grosseteste's *Daughters of God*, the compiler of Ll.4.14 has created a material version of the literary and educational materials inspired by the book proposed verbally by Dame Study. As the Z and A versions accrue more documentary fragments, *Piers Plowman* becomes increasingly more bookish in the instances gathered under the 'B-version' heading. Once the large form of the poem becomes relatively stable, references to books and like vocabulary fades with documentary insertions despite an overall increase in total lines. The C-version, in its later instances, has become self-sufficient, a book needing more to explain itself than to gather further material. In fact, the C-version, ossified into relative stability, served as an addendum to Z and some A versions which were felt to be incomplete,[86] providing identifiable completion for the

unifies the Theology of passus 2 with that of 15 (364) in a pattern resembling the cyclical pattern of Peace's recharacterization.

[86] Although Schmidt argues "that A was early recognized as an 'incomplete' representation of *Piers Plowman* is implied by its having been supplemented from another version of the next two decades in at least six of the surviving copies," William Langland, *Piers Plowman: Introduction, Textual Notes, Commentary, Bibliography, and Indexical Glossary* (Longman, 1995), p. 279. A-collation in F suggests instead that any difference between one copy of *Piers* and another trigger a sense of loss in a scribe or compiler, and that any instance of 'more' *Piers* is added without a strong sense of 'earlier' or 'later' versions.

project as a whole.[87] *Piers Plowman*'s A-version, included in Vernon Manuscript in its earliest surviving copy, has a mere 10 instances of the word *boke*. Counting *bokes* is a crude measure of 'bookishness', but it elucidates a fact of revision and the development of a consciousness about *what* project the *Piers*-poet was embarking on as he continued revisions. The language in *Piers* grows more bookish as the poem is revised into B and indicates a growing awareness (or obsession) with the fact that *Piers* is a book made of books.[88]

Some readers apparently considered *Piers* an educational text – a university-oriented one like the compiler of Ll.4.14; others like Dd.1.17 find it inspires historical associations.[89] But the value of *Piers* is not just as a component in a mixed-manuscript *Piers* fictionalizes a reader's connections between the quoted and adapted texts, specifying a path of connection, bridging the interpretive gaps inherent, Wolfgang Iser would suggest, in all narrative texts. Of course, there are still gaps: most notably, they are the explicit references to sleep. These serve as intratexual

[87] Schmidt argues, "[The Z version] Langland turned into A by adding the extraordinary Tearing of the Pardon after is closing 'beatitude' words on the poor. Our sole manuscript copy of Z, it may be surmised, is most probably the posthumous product of a time when interest in *any* form of *Piers Plowman* was strongest, and when Langland's literary remains were being preserved for and distributed to those who had supported him during life" (287). This 'collection attitude' accounts also for Corpus Christi College MS 201, which is edited strongly to reflect A, "But a significant number of whole lines, phrases, and even omissions in CCC 201 appear to reflect A-version influence and may result from the use of an A-version manuscript (probably related textually to M and the VH family) at some point to correct the scribe's primary exemplar. Such inter-versional correcting, if it occurred, is not unparalleled and might have been regarded by the scribe as mere prudence since he is unlikely to have shared our acute sense of the distinctive identities of Piers A, B, and C." *PPEA* Introduction, 4) The F-Redactor.

[88] From the initial ten instances of *boke*, the B-version explodes into a staggering 58, a figure that reduces in C to 49; from .4% (A) to .8% (B) and then down to .6% (C), assuming that an instance of 'boke' occurs once per line.[88] This pattern continues: *lef* appears three times in A (two of them unrelated to books), ten times in C, and 16 times in B. *Bible* comes in at seven, eight, and 16 times. *Auctour*, quite tellingly, zero, three, and one. *Quier* does not appear in reference to books ("*quoer*" appears in C, referencing singers). *Penne*: 0, 3, 2.[88] Scryveyns get one each: "I nel night score," quod scripture, "but scryueynes lie" in A and B, but "And over scripture the skilfole and scryuenes were trewe" in C. Scribes appear only as proper nouns, i.e "scribes and pharasees". Clerk is the juggernaut of book-related works in *Piers*, with 25 in A, 84 in C, and 98 in B. Without exception, words related to or describing the creation or use of books is always greater in B. Already by the C-version, *Piers* becomes more itself; less amalgam and less mixed. Even the tearing of the Pardon scene – one of the central documentary insertions after the zygomatic Z, has faded by the time the poem is revised to C. The once eagerly self-aware, experimental piece still marks its own bookishness but with less density. Decreasing counts in 'bookish' words from B to C made me wonder if the version order might be A-C-B, but the tradition and evidence of A-B-C has since dissuaded me of this view.

[89] At the time of writing, Sarah Wood's book, *Piers Plowman and its Manuscript Tradition* is not yet out. By all appearances, this monograph will elucidate the relationship of *Piers* with its widely varied context.

demarcations which do not rely on meta-textual data (passus numbers, rubrication, etc.) to divide the text into sections. Unlike the regular system of meta-delineation, one which this paper, for one, relies for reference, "in most of the manuscripts [of *Piers*]," the consecutive passus system is absent.[90] This absence of metadata is actually quite typical of early and amateur mixed-manuscripts, in which internal divisions are discernable primarily by line length or subject matter, not title.[91] There are twenty-eight waking/sleeping divisions, which number of references to sleep by the dreamer are unusually high, even for a poem as long as *Piers*.[92]

Making sleep the border between sections, as F does in its rubrication, suggests that the *Piers*-poet is bringing to mind an aural experience of mixed-manuscripts. As Katharine W. Jager reminds her readers in many places,[93] "Medieval "reading" is in fact an aural practice of

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[90] Lawrence M. Clopper, "Langland's Markings for the Structure of 'Piers Plowman,'" *Modern Philology* 85, no. 3 (1988): 245–55, p. 246.
Compare Adams, "To be sure, the rubrics could obviously not have arisen without the references to this terminology in Langland's poem; but in so far as they function to subdivide his poem they appear to undermine his message and to have been produced by someone who comprehended the poet's letter better than his spirit" Adams, "THE RELIABILITY OF THE RUBRICS IN THE B-TEXT OF 'PIERS PLOWMAN,'" *Medium Ævum* 54, no. 2 (1985): 208, https://doi.org/10.2307/43628893, p. 209.

[91] [91] "If we go back to the Laud scribe's direction to his rubricator, we see a similar attempt, and failure, to deal with an unfamiliar marking system ideas. The division of the work into a Visio (Passus i-vii), a Vita de Dowel (Passus viii-xv), a Vita de Dobet (Passus xvi-xviii), and a Vita de Dobest (Passus xix-xx), which is indicated in the manuscripts, does not represent quite accurately the structural organization which Langland adopted. As a matter of fact, the dreamer, who designates himself as Will when he uses a name at all, is conducted through nine different dreams in his long quest for a solution of the problem by which he is confronted in the Prologue" from G. H. Gerould, "Piers the Plowman: A Critical Edition to the A-Version. David C. Fowler, Thomas A. Knott," *Speculum* 28, no. 1 (1953): 180–81, https://doi.org/10.2307/2847207, p. 61.

[91] Most particularly in Katharine W. Jager, "'Stonde Manlyche Togedyr in Trewthe': Lyric and Rebellion Among Late Medieval Men," in *Vernacular Aesthetics in the Later Middle Ages: Politics, Performativity, and Reception from Literature to Music*, ed. Katharine W. Jager, The New Middle Ages (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 47–86, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18334-9_3.

[92] The dreamer wakes once on line 1171, and the vision ends. There are only two dreamer-related mentions of sleep then, which gives the poem a 2/1213 references/line ratio, or .001648…. *PP* on the other hand has a 28/7277 ratio, or .00384…, which means that for a dream-vision, *PP* is slightly more than twice as likely to mention sleeping or waking than, for instance, *Pearl* is, despite the importance of sleep to the genre of dream-vision. These hard fictional divisions, not incidentally, arrive at the points which are the most book-heavy or feature the longest inclusions of exterior texts: passus 1, 5, 11, and 18. When the narrator falls asleep, the book divides, tracing the compiler-author's attention as it waxes and wanes in the mixture of manuscript material he encountered. *Pearl*, for instance, contains only two direct mentions of sleep: when the dreamer falls asleep on the bank (59) and a simile on line 115.

[93] Katharine W. Jager, "'Stonde Manlyche Togedyr in Trewthe': Lyric and Rebellion Among Late Medieval Men," in *Vernacular Aesthetics in the Later Middle Ages: Politics, Performativity, and Reception from Literature to Music*,

recitation, memorization and listening as well as textual examination, a hybrid practice dating to the beginning of the medieval."[94] Even though the beginnings and ends of texts might not be clearly delineated by rubrication in mixed-manuscripts, poems start, more often than not, with words that indicate a beginning. Consider *Pricke of Love*, which begins, "Her beginneþ þe Prikke of loue. / Þat profitable is . to soule be houe" (IMEV 974) or *Ypotis*,

> Her bi ginneþ a tretys
> Þat me clepeþ Ypotys.
> *A*lle þat wolleþ of wisdom lere
> Lustneþ nou . and ȝe may here
> Of a tale . of holy writ (IMEV 220)
> [here begins a treatise
> That I'm calling Ypotis
> All that you wish to learn of wisdom
> Desire now and you may hear
> Of a tale of holy writ]

Or *Chasteau*,

> Her byginnet a tretys
> Þat is yclept Castel off loue
> Þat bisschop Grosteyȝt made ywis
> For lewede mennes by houe
> *Þ*at good þenkeþ . good may do.
> [Here begins a treatise
> That is called Castle of Love
> Which bishop Grosseteste made certainly
> For unlearned mens' benefit
> So that they think good and do good]

But Vernon's *Piers* begins,

> *I*N . A . somer sesun . whon softe was þe sonne.
> I . schop me . in to a schroud . A scheep as I . were.
> In habite of an hermite . vn holy of werkes.
> Wende I . wydene in þis world . wondres to here.
> [In a summer season when the sun was soft

ed. Katharine W. Jager, The New Middle Ages (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 47–86, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18334-9_3.

[94] Initially formulated in "'A Clateryng of Knokkes': Multimodality and Performativity in 'The Blacksmith's Lament,'" *Sounding Out!* (blog), May 2, 2016, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2016/05/02/a-clateryng-of-knokkes-multimodality-and-performativity-in-the-blacksmiths-lament/.

I slipped myself into an outfit like I was a sheep
In the habit of a hermit unholy of works
I wandered widely in this world to hear wonders]

Most of the longer pieces in *Vernon* have such a beginning, and summer is never mentioned (nor are any seasons) except medially in Vernon's works. Even if Middleton's argument that a seasonal start resembles a 'chanson d'adventure' holds, it is still exceptional for what it becomes and in the context of Vernon.[95] *Piers* nestles in the manuscript neither obviously beginning nor ending and incorporating the pieces around it over the long course of its composition.[96] Combined with this jump-start of an introduction, the unnamed series of concorporated insertions makes the poem "indistinguishable from the experiencing of it by the audience… the truths of the faith are simply presented in speech and scene to an indeterminately fictive person, the 'I' of the poem, whose adventures enact them for us".[97] Rather than an extension to a "lyric history, purporting to record a lifetime," the *Piers*-poet treats this beginning as a breach of fiction into the substance of lived experience, opening a rift in time in which dark thought swirls infinitely, each anxiety manifesting itself and its own enemies. The poet doesn't 'record' though – he makes the poem thought itself, uncontrolled, savage, anxious, conflicting, spinning thought. If we imagine the *Piers*-poet at a summer reading, listening to someone reading out of a book much like Vernon in the wet heat of an English summer. Dozing off becomes a natural, weather-induced, embodied break between disparate pieces. Falling asleep during a dialogue between Bernard and the Virgin Mary and waking up in the middle of the castle section of *Chasteau* would produce an uncannily unified work between the two, and the dozing audience might not

[95] One of the only places that this would not be odd is in the L manuscript, as Middleton gestures.
[96] *Piers* breaks most of the obvious and traditional rules for prologues, which include "declaring its intent, its author's name, or even its occasion, patron, sources and its superiority to other 'tales' and kinds of narration" (Middleton, "Audience and Public", p. 113).
[97] Middleton, "Audience and Public, p. 113.

even notice that the reader was finishing a different piece entirely. Attention fades in and out, and the navigation tools of an allegory (abstract = character, character = consistent personhood) make associative linking second nature.

Multimodal reading means that as Augustine writes in *De trin.* 11.8, "For it happens even when reading –it has happened to me very often – that I have read through a page or a letter and did not know what I was reading, and so had to read it again. For when the attention of the will is centered on something else, then the memory is not so applied to the sense of the body as the sense itself is applied to the letters."[98] When one is reading silently, that is, almost entirely with one's eyes, it is difficult to skip more than a page without finding the skip bewildering. Hearing, on the other hand, can continue partially while someone is partially or almost entirely asleep, making the aural experience far more continuous than the visually verbal. The divisions in waking and sleeping are not merely a convenient trope – the author has paid sharp attention to the experience of multimodal reading and picked transitions that work like mental crossfades rather than the stop and start of a merely visual experience.[99]

As the poem continues, the narrator/reader fades in and out in time to the poetic insertions – large documents slip into the poem whenever he nods off. In passus 5, he walks less than an eighth of a mile before he feels faint and "seide my bileve, / And so I bablede on my bedes, thei brought me aslepe" [said my creed / And so I babbled on my beads; they brought me to sleep] (B.5.7-8) and "And thanne saugh I muche moore than I bifre told / For I seigh the feld ful of folk that I before of seide" [And then I saw much more than I said before / For I saw the

[98] Augustine, Saint Augustine (of Hippo), and Saint Augustine of Hippo, *Augustine: On the Trinity Books 8-15* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 77.
[99] Brett W. Smith, "Aspectus, Affectus, and the Metaphysics of the Soul According to Robert Grosseteste," accessed June 29, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/35347810/Aspectus_Affectus_and_the_Metaphysics_of_the_Soul_According_to_Robert_Grosseteste.

field full of folk that I spoke of before] (9-10) and Reason preaching to them. The poem has begun to insert its earlier passages, the groggy dreamer mixing pieces of the prologue back into the poem as it goes jumbling along. Not until passus 11, thousands of lines later, does the dreamer falls asleep again, again at a point of instruction, proving the difficulty of the labor of stitching textual encounters together.

> Thanne Scripture scorned me and a skile tolde,
> And lakked me in Latyn and light by me sette,
> And seide, '*Multi multa sciunt et seipsos nesciunt*.'
> Tho wepte I for wo and wrathe of hir speche
> And in a wynkung w[o]rth til I [weex] aslepe
> A merveillous metels mette me thanne,
> For I was ravysshed right there....
> [Then Scripture upbraided me and taught me a skill
> And educated me in Latin and sat lightly by me
> And said, *Many know many things and do not know themselves*
> Though I wept for woe and wrath because of her speech
> And in a blink raged until I fell asleep
> A marvelous dream met me then
> For I was snatched up right there….] (B.11.1-5).

The moments of waking and sleeping which occur in the remainder of the poem succession and show how the dreamer's reactions transition from initial boredom. At the beginning of passus 13, the dreamer wakes "witlees nerhande" (1), or almost out of his mind, but sleeps only after he has been "longe in this thoght" [long in thought] (21), so waking in the "shocked surprise bordering on terror" (Ngai 269) state and falling asleep in "the serene, self-ennobling admiration for the colossal object" (269). The dreamer wakes in passus 16, having watched the crucifixion of Christ, and the tears he begins to cry in the dream he wipes after he wakes (B.16.167). The dreamer wakes in passus 18 "Wolleward and weetshoed wente I forth after / As a recchelees renk that [reccheth of no wo]" [shirtless and shoeless I went forth after / As a careless man who neglects all woe] (B.18.1-2), somehow physically stripped of his clothing and shoes, made physically destitute by the experience of the dream.

Waking and sleeping occur on either side of the passus 18 transition: B.17.353 (the last line) and B.18.4. This also marks the shift from the fifth to the sixth vision.[100] Passus 17 contains a number of genres itself, but I will concentrate most of this analysis on the transition to 18. The largest portion of 17 is a retelling of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), and as with most of *PP*, has been altered in its retelling and participates more strongly in allegory than does the parable in the gospel text. In *PP*, the dreamer and Spes "seighe… a Samaritan sittynge on a mule, / Ridynge ful rapely the right wey [they] yeden, / Comynge from a contree that men called Jerico -- / to a justes in Jerusalem he [j]aced awey faste" (B.17.50-3). Unlike the passage in Luke, where "Samaritanus autem quidam iter faciens venit secus eum et videns eum misericordia motus est" (10:33), this Samaritan's destination is specified because it is important for two reasons. The first is that the Samaritan, as a non-Christian and non-Jew, is going to see a joust with knights *at Jerusalem*, since *PP* was associated by a medieval compiler at least once with *Siege of Jerusalem*.[101] The second, and more important to the narrative is that in Christ's parable, where the Samaritan is going before he meets the man beaten by robbers. That he gives

[100] Lawrence M. Clopper, "Langland's Markings for the Structure of 'Piers Plowman,'" *Modern Philology* 85, no. 3 (1988): 245–55.

I believe the markings in the B version originally were as follows:

[*Prologus*][15]	*Prologus*[16]
Passus primus de visione to *Passus septimus de visione*	1–7
Explicit hic visio willielmi de Petro de Ploȝman Eciam Incipit [*hic*] *Vita de dowel dobet & dobest* [*secundum wyt & resoun*]	Between 7 and 8
Passus secundus de dowel to *Passus septimus de dowel*	9–14
Explicit Dowel & incipit [*hic*] *Do bet*	Between 14 and 15
Passus secundus de dobet to *Passus quartus de dobet*	16–18
Explicit dobet et incipit [*hic*] *Dobest*	Between 18 and 19
Passus secundus et vltimus de do best	20

[101] Which MS / compiler

the man aid when he sees him is far more important in Christ's analysis than where the Samaritan happened to be going before he came across the man.

The *Piers* Samaritan is going to see the joust -- specifically the joust which takes place in the beginning of B.18, i.e. the Crucifixion, and this episode most notably contains the shift from parable to sermon to romance – a hermeneutic of story, analysis, and action. Christ's tale is an invention for a purpose. Langland's imitates that purpose, but also historicizes and narrativizes it: this Samaritan is going to see the Crucifixion take place. This recontextualizes the original parable because Christ would then be telling a story about someone who was coming to see something which was a surprise even to his closest companions who are listening to the story. The fact that the Samaritan is going to see a 'juste' means that he is going to see the historical event *as it takes place within* PP. Even within this parable, which is still clearly a parable (which the dreamer and *Spes* somehow inhabit), the thread of interpretation stretches out to the next passus before the reader even knows that particular thread exists. The parable ends in allegorical interpretation which is interrupted somewhat by the dreamer conversing with the Samaritan. This conversation turns into a sermon, given on the nature of the Trinity by the Samaritan himself, which ends as the man, once a parable, now a historical (?) figure "lyard he prikede, / And wente awey as wynd" (B.17.352-3) and the dreamer wakes. The *Piers*-poet has the luxury of fiction at his disposal, and the Samaritan preaches his own sermon, expounding on the text of himself. The *corpus* is laid bare as it is clothed by the *textus*, and herein lies the contradiction of allegory (or allegorizing): what is woven unravels itself and weaves anew. The narrative lies fallow "to a Lenten" (B.18.5) as the dreamer tells us, "Reste me there and rutte faste til *ramis palmarum*" [Rest me there and snore fast until the palm branch] (B.18.6), depriving himself of food, action, and dream as he deprives the reader of plot, exhausted by allegory.

CHAPTER 4: THE LAST MEDIEVAL SCRIBE: JOHN COLYNS AND THE DEATH OF MIXED-MANUSCRIPTS

Skelton as conservative provocateur

Nearly a century after the earliest extant manuscripts of *Piers Plowman* were copied, the controversial poet John Skelton was born in northern England.[1] By most modern accounts, he was famous as a poet, writer, and academic early in his life, creating works largely famous for their erudition and for engaging in fiercely in academic-political debates.[2] After he enters royal service in the years following his academic qualification, Skelton's writing record becomes more politically tinged, from poems celebrating his pupil, the young Henry VIII. Apparently never one to make friends widely, Skelton lets critiques fly for most of his career and remains himself invisible and inculpable: a dead poet, personified Dread, or the thin allegory of a parrot.[3]

Throughout his extant writing, Skelton is constantly cited in disagreements, as an inciting party in personal disagreements, a 'virtuous voice of reason' amid a cacophonous and corrupt court, or a non-agentic mouthpiece for criticisms that are merely 'in the air,' "pretends to be repeating what he has heard, 'shredis of sentence', around the court."[4] He builds up a fog of oppression while making himself out to be the lone voice of reason amidst the mists of treason.[5] His most obvious instance of this is 'Speke, Parot,' remarkable for its subtly (or

[1] "Skelton, John (c. 1460–1529), Poet | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography," accessed July 1, 2022, https://www-oxforddnb-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25661;jsessionid=E226C61812C0BAE70A61569BA3C68C4E.

[2] V. J. Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Four Courts Press, 2014).

[3] Cf. "Killing Authors: Skelton's Dreadful *Bouge of Court*," in *Form and Reform: Reading the Fifteenth Century,* edited by Kathleen Tonry and Shannon Gayk (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2011), (287), regarding 'Speke,' V. J. Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Four Courts Press, 2014).

[4] V. J. Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Four Courts Press, 2014).

[5] Some critics, like David R. Carlson in "Skelton, Garnesche, and Henry VIII: Revels and Erudition at Court," find this engagement in flying to be a "considerable" difficulty forced on the court poet by his erstwhile pupil. Skelton's engagement in flyting beyond such public situations like those gathered in *Agenst Garnesche* suggests that Skelton either developed a personal taste for the practice or was not as coerced as Carlson suggests. Furthermore, as J.A. Burrow in "Satires and Invectives" writes, "Garnesch[e …] evidently challenged Skelton first by calling him – among other things no doubt – a 'knave' (I, 7); and Skelton response with volleys of abuse" (89). Skelton had no issue starting scraps on his own, and it is unlikely that his critical pen was forced in any way.

incomprehensibility), in which he levies disguised but "often highly personal" attacks against Cardinal Thomas Woolsey, who is on the ascendency in Henry's court. Skelton apparently feared Woolsey's motives and took it upon himself to patriotically lance this episcopal boil. Scattergood remarks, "it is impossible to tell whether Wolsey was aware of these poems or not… but they may well have circulated in manuscript"[6] and indeed they did – in Harley 2252, the early modern mixed-manuscript a mercer by the name of John Colyns created a mixed-manuscript over a period of some time and with great collaborative effort. [7] Despite Skelton's strong anti-Wolsey attitudes in the poems, it is likely that Skelton not only had no one major to fear but that by the time his poems are distributed even in Harley 2252, the earliest extant example, "Skelton was not particularly out of anyone's favor at the time" (121).[8] Colyns's *bok*, as it is called, contains the earliest instances of these anti-Wolsey satires, copied probably only a few years after their composition and forming the earliest circulation of these allegorical diatribes. The poems are possibly seditious in that they strongly critique a close advisor of the king (who himself never receives Skelton's censure anonymously or otherwise) by suggesting that the bishop himself is treasonous, or at least, not acting with the best interests of England in mind. Skelton, ever the political, social, and educational conservative, finds again nothing but oppression around himself, the price for his singular clear-headedness.[9]

[6] "Skelton, John (c. 1460–1529), Poet | Oxford Dictionary of National Biography," accessed July 1, 2022, https://www-oxforddnb-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-25661;jsessionid=E226C61812C0BAE70A61569BA3C68C4E.

[7] Carol Meale notes the degree of collaboration thus, "Yet he was working closely with another scribe (E), who wrote in an elegant, and at times extravagant, early Tudor secretary hand (PLATE 4). The two worked together with an extraordinary degree of collaboration" Carol M. Meale, "Skelton's English Works in Manuscripts and Print," in *A Critical Companion to John Skelton*, ed. Sebastian Sobecki and John Scattergood, 1st ed. (Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2018), 163–79, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787443273.013.

[8] John Carlson, "The Latin Writings of John Skelton"

[9] Compare his positions in anti-court satire and grammarians' war.

It is difficult to ascertain if John Skelton's paranoia is well-founded or if his oppressed positionality is one of his own creation, but the fact that he survives until he dies presumably of natural causes and that Woolsey, his projected opponent, commissions work from him not long after Skelton circulates his critiques indicate that his paranoia is projected rather than practical. Although he advances positions which are ostensible seditious and dangerous, he does so from a position near the seat of power. In this chapter, I outline the ways in which Colyns's book was fashioned as a sort of protective collection for Skelton's new compositions, nestling them amidst traditional romance compositions. While the mixed-manuscript that contained these poems, Harley 2252, is often called a commonplace book, a commonplace book aligns more closely with the documentary impulse than with the fictive or inventive impulse of a mixed-manuscript, because it provides a framework not for reading complete texts against and with each other but as a series of citations to be called upon in fresh verbal compositions.

It is best to think of Harley 2252, the primary subject of this chapter, not as a commonplace book but as an early modern example of a mixed-manuscript like Vernon. [10] As

[10] Michael Johnson's description of the codex:

> Colyns's MS contains eighty-four distinct items covering 167 folios, entirely in paper.18 It measures 278 mm x 190 mm. The gatherings of this MS, in its present binding, are at times irregular. It is collated as: 116 (ff. 1-16), 216 (ff. 17-32), 35 (singletons; ff. 33-37), 416 (ff. 38-53), 516 (ff. 54-69), 616 (ff. 70-85), 716 (ff. 86-101), 816 (wanting 2; ff. 102-16), 912 (ff. 117-28), 106 (6 cancelled; ff. 129-33), 1116 (ff. 133*-148), 128 (ff. 149-56), 136(ff. 157-62), 144 (ff. 163-66).
>
> Colyns's hand is consistent with early Tudor book hands (which often included an amalgamation of Secretary and more archaic Anglicana letter forms). He typically uses the long form of –s medially and the short form terminally; he alternates irregularly between both forms initially. His long –s often contains thick downstrokes, as is consistent with less carefully-executed Secretary forms. His long, angular descenders and ascenders are also consistent with surviving texts from the early sixteenth century. His formation of the letter –g, with its open top (like a modern –y) also concurs with the more recent varieties of Tudor hand, as well as his formation of the letter –w (which is clearly distinguishable from the Anglicana form of the letter). But Colyns also maintains some forms of Anglicana letters: for example, he alternates between the single-lobed –a typical of the Secretary hand and the double-chambered –a which survived from Anglicana script. The most distinguishing feature of his hand is the similarity in the way he sometimes forms his –t and –c. He often prefers the standard Secretary forms of both letters, but often enough Colyns forms them in an esoteric fashion by creating a long descender connected to a continuous line transecting the ductus of the letter from left to right. They are often indistinguishable, and the reader must use context to determine which letter is intended (36).

ASG Edwards argues in *Skelton: The Critical Heritage*, "It seems that such works [like Colin Cloute] were felt to be too volatile in subject matter and treatment for a publishers to risk circulating them in print, at least while author and subject were still alive."[11] Colyns's *Boke* partakes of the older tradition because keeping the work out of the recorded and public circulation of the printing houses reduces liability and the possibility of discovery.[12] The medieval mixed-manuscript, which is valuable largely for its nodal mode of composition and high rate of connectivity becomes, as do many previous generations of technology, a mode of secure transfer of politically volatile poetry by avant-garde poets. By participating in a mode of circulation behind the technological cutting edge, Colyns and Skelton protect themselves from the visible, risky, and centralized publishing houses.[13] The channels of distribution for medieval manuscripts, despite their potential for wide-ranging, open dissemination, have highly focused targeting apparatuses. Because the network of dissemination is person-to-person and requires extremely high effort to reproduce the texts in question, the lines of transmission can be carefully controlled (if necessary), and the original users can trace the provenance with precision. There is, despite a long history of scholars sneering at scribal errors, significantly *less* possibility for information pollution in this transmission model. The chains of transmission are much stronger and more carefully forged than in print-heavy contexts – to return to the model I outlined in my introduction, historical companionship preserves and enmeshes the texts in a traditional order, context, and transmission pattern which ceases in the age of print.

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[11] A. S. G. Edwards, ed., *John Skelton: The Critical Heritage*, Reprinted, The Critical Heritage Series (London: Routledge, 1981).

[12] Security requires limiting technological potential to avoid network involvement: e.g. an air-gapped PC which avoids surveillance, theft, or discovery by never connecting it to the internet or a network of any kind. The computing power remains intact but the algorithm, data, or business plan on the machine becomes significantly harder to discover. These are used primarily to preserve state or business secrets or in cases of high political or financial sensitivity.

[13] Skelton's canonization in print has strong parallels to Sidney's, as outlined in Woudhuysen, H. R. 1996. *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558-1640*. Clarendon Press.

The effort exerted in the transmission and preservation of the manuscript portions precludes 'randomness' or 'convenience' as primary selection criteria. Too used to the convenience of word-processing and its undirected and infinite reproductive capabilities, contemporary critics too easily forget the days of focused attention and manual labor required to recopy even a few folia.[14] Eef Overgaauw suggests in "Fast or slow, professional or monastic. The writing speed of some late-medieval scribes" that professional scribes averaged 2-4 folia per day, which relatively slow pace was attributable to the constant interruptions of the long project of copying and the weariness induced by sustained manual labor.[15] Professional scribes and compilers produced these pieces with untold personal exertion over years; amateurs likely took longer both to complete works and to finish the compilations.[16] These facts of production taken together suggest a picture far different than the notion of careless or haphazard construction. Rather, these manuscripts are directed, internally complex and, like academic productions of today, on their copyists' minds for years at a time. Connecting adjacent texts is therefore not some fantasy of readership nor a supposition from incidence, but a demonstrable likelihood in many cases and, in cases where denying this supposition not demonstrable, I suggest that modern readers should assume that the observable connections and structures were also observable to medieval compilers.

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[14] Eef Overgaauw, "Fast or Slow, Professional or Monastic. The Writing Speed of Some Late-Medieval Scribes," *Scriptorium* 49, no. 2 (1995): 211–27, https://doi.org/10.3406/scrip.1995.1726.

[15] Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, *The Production of Books in England 1350–1500*, "Writing the words", p. 35. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, *The Production of Books in England 1350-1500* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[16] Beyond mere effort, many scribes effectively interpreted the works they copied -- Stephen Shepherd and Courtney Harshbarger are convinced that the illustrator-scribe of MS Douce 104 was "an intelligent, literate, witty, but also profound artist, someone who admires the intellectual and emotional provocations of Langland's work and who takes delight in linking them rather precisely, sometimes through ingenious minutiae, to other literature and lore." Shepherd, Stephen H. A. and Courtney Harshbarger. "TEXT-IMAGE ALIGNMENT IN MS DOUCE 104 (PIERS PLOWMAN): 'ARTICULATION', PRE-DRAWING, AND PROXIMAL ALLUSION." Medium Aevum 89, no. 2 (2020): 267-300. https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.cornell.edu/scholarly-journals/text-image-alignment-ms-douce-104-piers-plowman/docview/2516290629/se-2?accountid=10267, p. 267.

Not the Harley you know

The final product of the process of a mixed-manuscript production – whatever remains after the additions and re-arrangements stop – is a product of affection; the tastes, fears, and philosophical interests of a single collector/author resonate among the pages. That the collections depend somewhat on happenstance, on discovery, must be taken for granted; the construction of a mixed-manuscript as a transtemporal (i.e. lifelong) confluence of an individual's taste, and the influence the partially-constructed book has on the continuation of its construction. The case study is the little-studied Harley 2252, known as John Colyns's *Boke*. The personal mixed-manuscript becomes, in Colyns's case, a place for focusing an ostensibly traditional hermeneutic of suspicion: that is to say, in the romances revolving around treason, of which the Stanzaic *Morte* is one, the context of a mixed manuscript provides the focus of that suspicion.

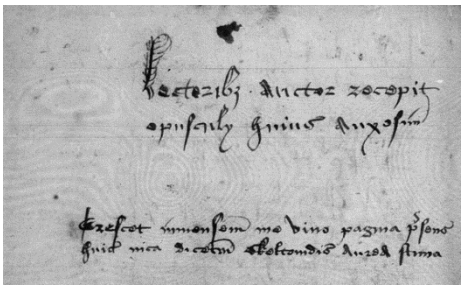

Figure 2

Somewhere between these lies "Speke, Parrot" -- a poem the famous difficulty of which has begged for interpretation.[17] Its appearance as an animal fable bricolage asks the reader to be on the alert for what most scholars now take to be an unabashedly anti-Wolsey satire which protects itself only through its own veil of allegorical obscurity. The requirement that the reader to perform interpretation in order to render sense of apparently disparate portions of the poem puts the burden of proof on the reader, leaving the poet and the collector relatively unscathed.

[17] *Lectoribus auctor recipit opusculi huius auxesim.*"Though Skelton would have the defense that most of this poem could be read as a generalized critique, as exemplified by the ambiguous pronoun usage, this particular passage could not: it is too obviously referring to Wolsey alone." Johnson, Michael Robert. "The Sociology Of Middle English Romance: Three Late Medieval Compilers," Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2007, (68).

There is more to the poem's context than this protective measure, which I will address momentarily. Between the poem, "Thowgh I be bonde, yette am I Free" and the manuscript version of 'Speke', there is an intriguing set of Latin lines (Figure 1). Reverend Dyce transcribed the lines in 1843 as:

> "Lectoribus auctor rec[i]pit
> opusculy huis auxesim
> Crescet [in] immensem me viuo pagina presens
> h[in]c [me]a dicet[ur] Skeltonidis aurea [fa]ma.

No critic I have found who writes on this manuscript or poem has suggested a different reading.

These lines have long been ascribed to Skelton – as recently as Derek Attridge's *The Experience of Poetry*, in which he writes,

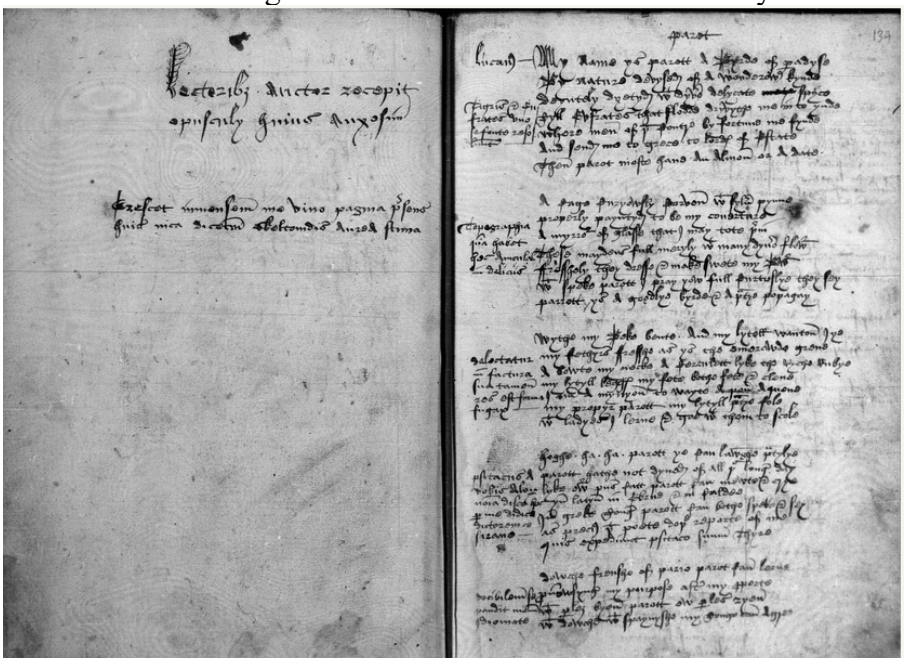

Figure 3

> What is clear from Skelton's verse more generally is that he expected the readers of his poetry to be actively engaged with it and recognized their crucial role in circulating and promoting it.

Speke Parott's Latin epigraph implies a conception of reading as a creative act, expanding the poem from its author's original intentions and perhaps copying it out to further extend its reach:

> *Lectoribus auctor recipit opusculy huius auxesim Crescet in immensem me vivo pagina presens; Hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis aurea fama* [The author received augmentation of his little work from his readers. This book will grow immensely while I am alive; thence the golden fame of Skelton will be proclaimed mine.]

This Latin is attributed to Skelton in large part because half the lines appear again at the end of the poem – it appears first on the verso of 133, and 'Speke' begins, with its title simply 'parot' on 134r.[18] Neither of the early printed editions (T/Dab's of c. 1545 or Marsh's of 1568) have this Latin phrase, but in Reverend Alexander Dyce's collocation of 1843, we find the root of these decisions. Dyce presents "The Poetical Works of John Skelton", in which 'parot' appears as one "fusion of the two versions," that is, the printed and the manuscript. This fusion is deceptive, however, since "in their original form, there is relatively little overlap between them."[19] There are, thus, at least three versions of the poem: A (c. 1521, Harley 2252), B (c. 1545, printed in Tab), and C (1843, printed by Dyce). Including what is referred to as the "preliminary Latin epigraph" as part of the poem is a habit that starts with Dyce (Fig. 3) and is consistently repeated in subsequent editions until it is invisibly included as a part of the poem itself.

I propose that this section of the manuscript is instead the words of John Colyns. Nothing about the layout suggests that Colyns intended the Latin to be considered Skelton's – the lines take up their own page, which is an unusual use of space in this manuscript. There is no page with fewer words on the manuscript, and the other instances of sparsely lettered pages are continuations of longer poems later in the manuscript (fols. 154v, 157v, 161r, and 167r). 85v was once blank but has been defaced by the rubber-stamped MVSEVM BRITAN NICUM now littered across most of the pages. The initial folia are largely crabbed, cramped, and dark, but most of the manuscript has been well planned and executed although irregularly ruled, producing a varying number of lines. The lines in question are quite unusual in the schema of the

[18] John Carlson makes no mention of these lines in "The Latin Writings of John Skelton," and further comments, "There is no evidence that Skelton was ever involved in anything like editorial work on his own writings" (36).
[19] Except for Jane Griffiths (who still attributes the Latin to Skelton), few critics differentiate between the manuscript version and the print version, much less have the opportunity to determine how 'authorial' or 'scribal' words on a manuscript page are. Jane Griffiths, "Having The Last Word," The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, September 10, 2009, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199205882.013.0005, p. 74.

manuscript, even as a note. The note, then, is likely Colyn's remarks on his own book, a more expansive note than that which follows *Morte*: [Thys boke belongythe to Iohn Colyn, mercer of London, dwelling in the parysshe of Our Lady of Wolchyrche Hawe, anexid the Stockys in þe Pultre, yn Anno Domini 1517]. Furthermore, amending the lines thus, as Dyce did, "Lectoribus auctor rec[i]pit / opusculy huis auxesim" changes the verb *recipere* from perfect to present tense. Present tense, the book "receives increase" implies a reading primarily of fame – *received* increase is complete, perfect. The only complete increase is physical – the increase of the environment in which the poem exists. This increase of the manuscript is alchemical, increasing fame, turning it from golden (payment) to redoubling the reputation. The increase received from readers is perfect, not present tense, a static, material *auxesim*.

Changing the Latin from editorial to authorial has resounding effects. Attridge, quoted above, interprets 'Parot' as if the Latin is authorial. Likewise, Seth Lerer in *Chaucer and His Readers* attributes the lines directly to Skelton, saying that he "distinguishes the role of author and reader along these lines, reserving for himself the power to emend and augment" (201). After quoting the Latin as amended by Dyce, he continues –

> It is a mistake, I believe, to read these lines as a claim to empower an emending reader. The idea here is that the little book (*opusculus*) does not grow in size through readers but rather grows in reputation or status […] The *lector* praises but the author augments, and I think that Skelton must have been alive to the received, medieval etymology of *auctor* as deriving from *augeo*, increase or make greater (202)

Lerer continues to attribute the Latin directly to Skelton: "Skelton's word," "Skelton relies", etc. This attribution does not lead to poor readings of the text or grave errors, but it does serve as an example of the eventual invisibility of Victorian editorial choices. Indeed, Lerer's argument relies on 'augere' as an etymology for 'author' for the real sense of increase, but this cuts across the simpler and more likely interpretation of this passage – Colyns, in his own hand claims that

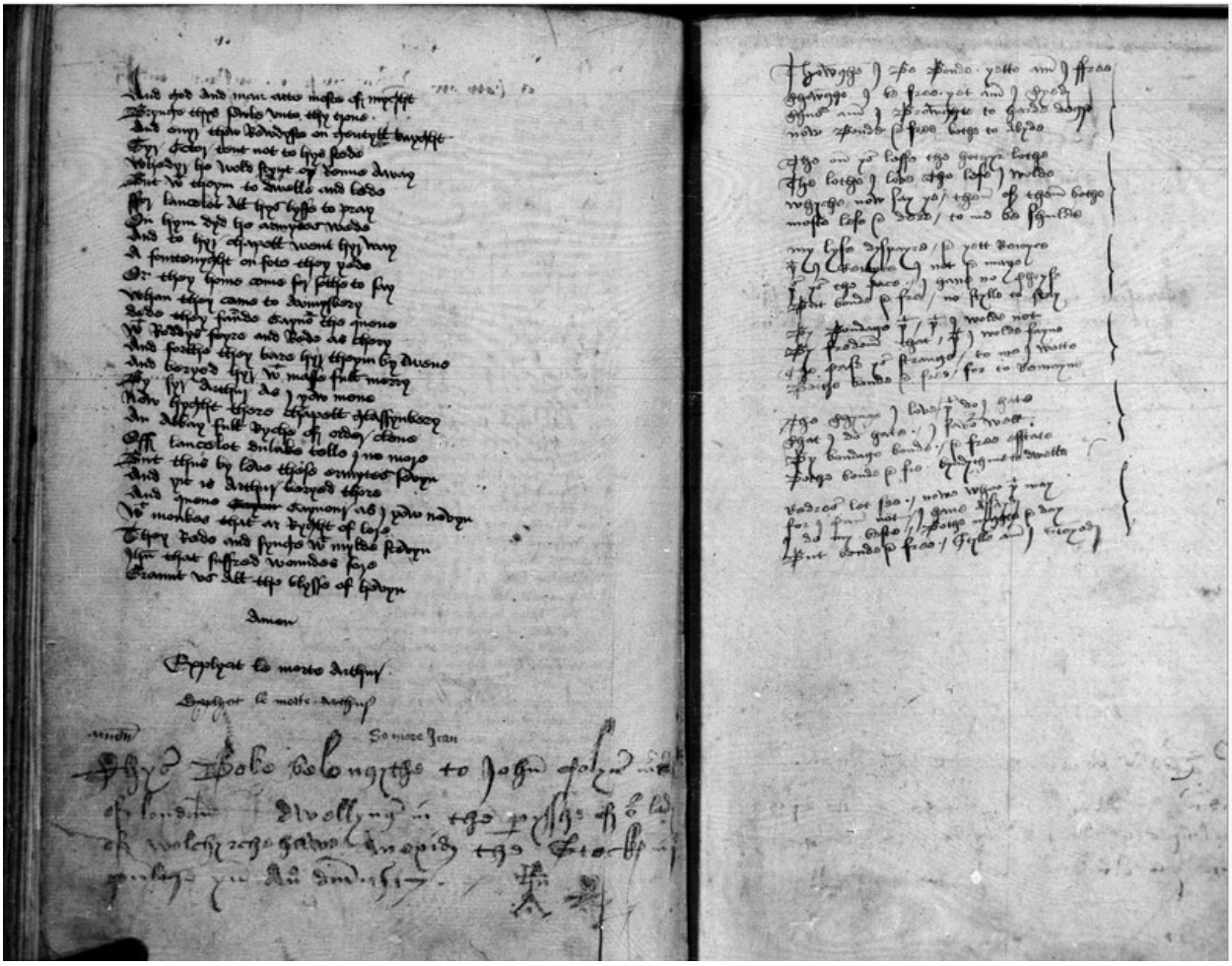

Figure 4

fame is attributable to the reader, and those who increase the poem's fame by giving it famous companions should receive the credit for its increase, not the bare genius of the author. Colyns is indeed the last medieval compiler in a sense; he is confident that his collection of this controversial poet will increase his fame and the poet's both. That, perhaps, is true for a short period of time, but only two decades or so later, Tab's printed edition of Skelton's poetry comes out, crushing the manuscript's impact with print, stripping away the poem's potential textual companions, and replacing the mixed-manuscript with a printed anthology in a single stroke. Skelton is also the earliest author to have a printed lyric anthology – Rastell's edition from the 1520s preceded even printed Chaucerian collections (Boffey, p. 30). The shift from mixed

material to anthology with the advent of print is swift and nearly universal. 1520 marks the birth of the anthology.

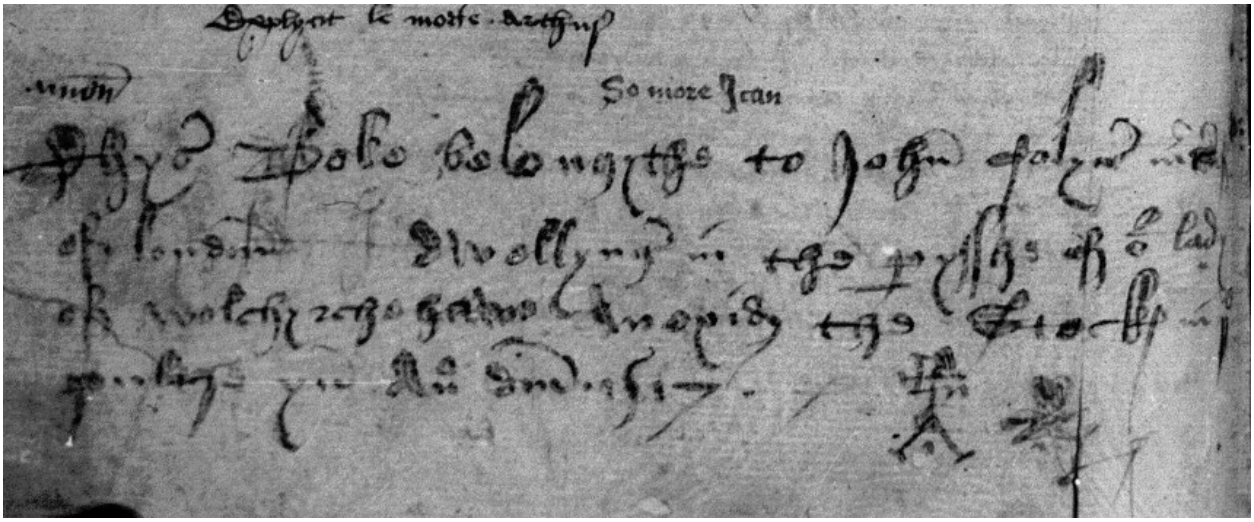

Figure 5

Rather than pointing to a purely reputational expansion, Colyns writes verses about the material creation he has made: "The author received increase of this little work from readers more and more / the present page grows great as I live, hence, Skelton's golden fame will be called mine." Author here, as Lerer points out, derives from *augere*, and refers to Colyns as the compiler just as easily as it refers to Skelton the poet.[20] Indeed, as the title page of Tab's printing, *Here after foloweth certeyn bokes, compiled by mayster Skelton, Poet Laureat whose names here after shall appere. Speke parrot* […] has it, Skelton's authorship is a work of augmentation and compilation, perhaps an assessment given to compositions which, like Skelton's 'Parot' and *Piers Plowman* before him, stitch source materials together with fresh inventions to make bold bricolage.

[20] Alistair Minnis says that "*auctor* was regarded as someone whose writings had considerable *auctoritas* and who bore the responsibility for what he had written" and who "organized and structured various *auctoritates* (i.e. excerpts culled from authoritative works" (387).

Colyns does not consider his creative work an act of service, nor does he seem to feel indebted to his author here. In fact, if anyone owes a debt, it is Skelton who owes Colyns. The readers of the poem add to it – I think, in this sense, quite literally add pages around the works, expanding the *boke*, broadly writ, turning the *opusculy* into an opus, but not an *opus solum Skeltonidis*: the fame of the author is consumed or re-written by the author of the book. Colyns overestimates his staying power, but correctly assesses the power of the phrase *pagina presens*. His book does indeed grow immensely while he is alive, and he correctly identifies that his fame rises with Skelton. His claim "mea dicitur" identifies the power of a compiler as what would become the power of early printers. Collectors like John Shirley do, in a sense, *make* some medieval authors in conjunction with early printers by attaching a name to 'collected works'. This "author collection" as Susanna Fein calls it in her edition of Bod. MS Douce 302 is the work of "a named writer whose works would merit an anthology" and "came into being in England sometime during the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century."[21] The Skeltonic section of Harley 2252 marks a shift from Colyns's marks of ownership (the inscription below *Morte*) to a mark of active creation. Colyns asserts that he is responsible for Skelton's fame and that, vampirically, he will make it his; he might not have been wrong about the first.

The author receives his book's increase from his readers – the process of reading is additive as is the collocation of writing.[22] The two processes are imbricated, and they grow

[21] "John the Blind Audelay, Poems and Carols (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 302): Introduction | Robbins Library Digital Projects," accessed March 8, 2022, https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/poems-and-carols-introduction.

[22] Each of the poems listed, "Speke parrot The deth of the noble prince Kyng Edwarde the fourth. A treatyse of the Scottes. Ware the hawke The tunnyng of Elynour Rummynge" is a 'boke', which seems to have retained the same sense (or revived it again) from Chaucer's usage in *House of Fame* III,

> O god of science and of light,
> Apollo, through thy grete might,
> This litel laste book thou gye!
> Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,
> Here art poetical be shewed; (1091-5)

together on the page before the reader who is returning the increase like harvested grain to the author. Colyns, by writing *recepit*, suggesting that the book *has already* received its increase means that Skelton's authorial fame has been increased by Colyns's compilation and indeed will

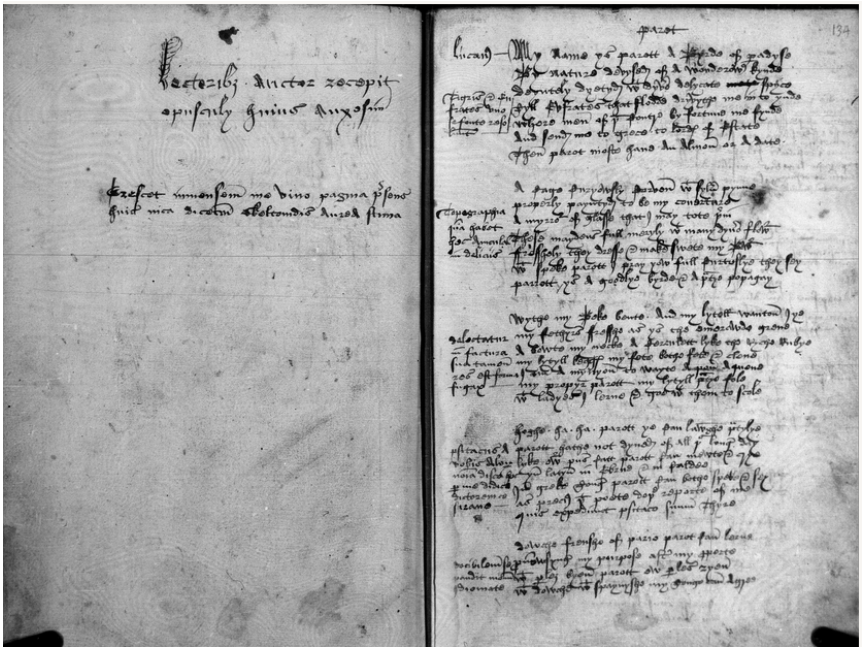

Figure 6

continue to grow in fame (as it did in fact), transferring Skelton's fame to Colyns, the reader and augmenter of the work. Though the epigraph's reference to "Skelton's fame" might initially appear to be an authorial third-person statement, its conclusion, to the fame "mine," implies that Skelton is not 'me,' and thus that it is a transfer from one person to another. Furthermore, the *mea* is in Colyns's handwriting and completely unattached from "Parrot",

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Or in *Troilus and Creseyde*,

> Go, litel book, go litel myn tragedie,
> Ther god thy maker yet, er that he dye,
> So sende might to make in som comedie!
> But litel book, no making thou nenvye,
> But subgit be to alle poesye; 1790
> […]
> And for ther is so greet diversitee
> In English and in wryting of our tonge,
> So preye I god that noon miswryte thee, 1795
> Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.
> And red wher-so thou be, or elles songe,
> That thou be understonde I god beseche!
> But yet to purpos of my rather speche. —

A medieval book is then, as Thomas C. Sawyer in *How to Read a Medieval Book* puts it,

> a conceptual object, rather than a physical object, to an arrangement of words that can be reproduced endlessly in a proliferation of consumable media, rather than an arrangement of ink and parchment that can only ever be in one place at one time. We nevertheless understand Chaucer to have sent some *thing*: to send the conceptual kind of object, some physical object was necessary as its medium (3)

although these lines are often edited as an epigraph for the following poem Colyns is actually marking the importance of his inclusion of a Skeltonic mini-anthology into his mixed-manuscript alongside texts like chronicles and *Morte*. By expanding the poems' contact and providing textual companions for Skelton's work, Colyns legitimizes, lays claim to potential future fame, and provides the material environment for the mutual co-activation of the poems he includes.

A modified version of the lines return on f140r, after the poem has finished with a bracketed "dixit quod parrot" (fig. 6),modifying the second half of the lines from above (fig. 8), this time appending "quod Skelton Lawryate" (fig. 7) to the statement "*Crescet in immensem me vivo psitacus iste hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis inclita fama*" (fig. 8) or, "that parrot grows great while I live, hence Skelton's illustrious fame will be called mine". Colyn's note, again appended apparently *after* the poem has ended (fig. 8) once again lays claim to the growing fame of the 'parrot,' no longer the 'present page.' Colyns doubles down on his appropriation of Skelton's fame – now the 'parrot,' aka the poetical voice of Skelton grows in fame during *me vivo*, ostensibly while Colyns lives. The 'aurea,' golden, fame from before the poem has become 'inclita' – itself famous. The famous fame of Skelton will be *mea*, Colyns's. Perhaps this poem had already gained notoriety, or Colyns had a collector's instinct for what pieces make it big. Regardless, Colyns is insistent on setting this poem apart in his mixed-manuscript with comments about appropriating Skelton's fame. Here, the bookmaker has the final word; he has supplemented the

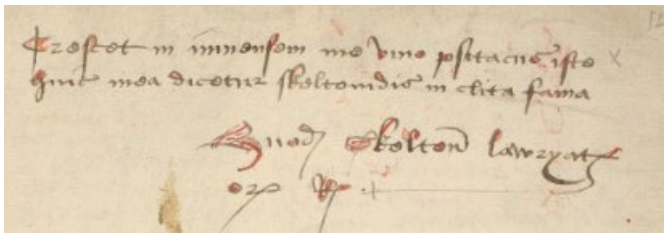

Figure 8

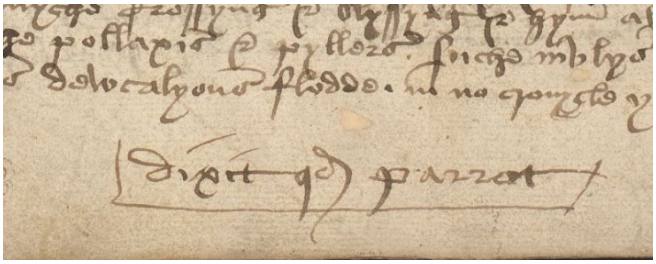

Figure 7

fame of Skelton (at least by his own account), Skelton's fame has increased, and John Colyns has claim to it because of his augmentation of the poem, setting it like a textual gem in the ring of his mixed-manuscript.

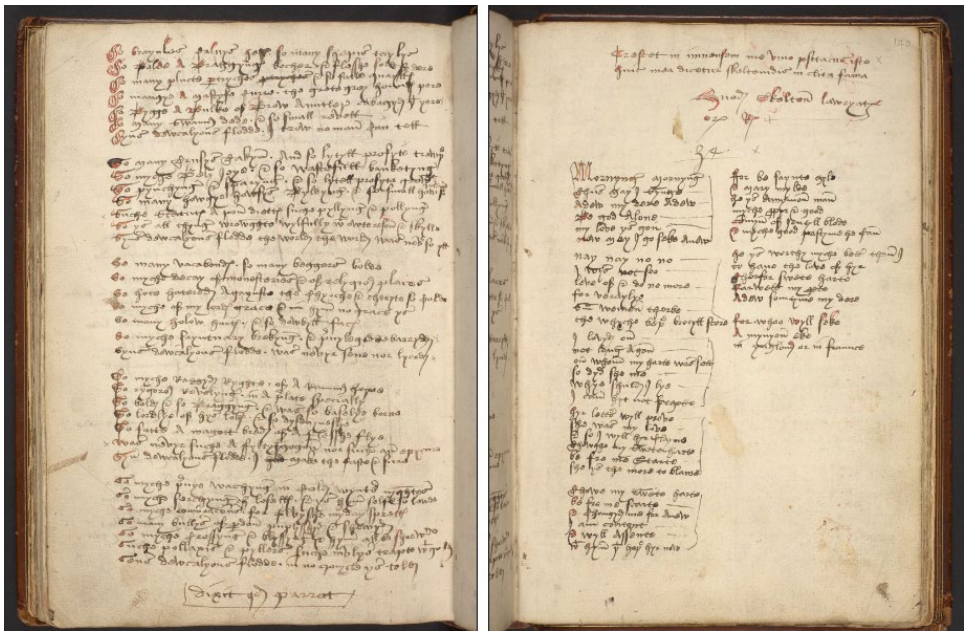

Figure 9

Making a *boke* engenders a material environment for concepts – this can be a few dozen lines long or a few dozen separate works. Skelton might be the auctor, but it's *opusculy huius* and *me vivo* and *pagina presens.* Each of these phrases draws attention to the work immediately before the reader and links it to the life of John Colyns, the most sensible *me*. There's something tragic and ironic about the promised *crescet* of the *pagina presens*, since the announcement of its increase is the only thing it only contains. Unlike the earlier pages of the manuscript which are stuffed to bursting with prognostications, this page contains only a bare promise. Unless that's what it is intended to do – serve as a marker of the network forming around it. Like Skelton's Parot who is revealed by the narrator as allegorical, protected by the 'distributive mix' of art in the printed editions – what I argue is a response to the poem's inclusion, breathing in, and networking with the pieces in Colyns's boke.

> But of that suppociyon that callyd is arte,
> *Confuse distributive,* as Parrot hath devysed,

Let every man after his merit take his parte,
For in this processe Parrot nothing had surmysed,
No matter pretendyd, nor nothyng enterprysed,
But that *metaphora, allegoria* with all,
Shall be his pretectyon, his pavys, and his wall (219-25)

As with a poem, interpretation of a larger *boke* takes after the 'merit' of the reader – generosity begets generosity, and tight-fisted ideologues reap only what their blinders permit. Skelton is, however, writing politically risky poetry; this line invites public interpretation only along publicly approved lines. If Skelton's readers accused him of treason, the Parot would suggest that the same, in fact was true of them. It's a form of defence adopted so universally by children as to be nearly instinctual – "if you call me stupid, you are." In an environment of pervasive paranoia, however, this strategy -- thinly allegorized – in addition to the denial of agency – "in this processe Parrot nothing had surmised / No matter pretendyd, nor nothyng enterprysed". The Parrot – already an animal only capable of mindless repetition – in the process of devising the distributive mix, nothing clear or obvious has been supposed, surmised, or attempted. [23] The Parot will only attempt obscure, mixed distributions comprised of allegory, which serves as the bird's "pavis" – a word strongly associated with romance. The supposition of this chapter – that romance serves as a conservative covering for sedition – is directly echoed in the poem itself. There are structural echoes between the two works, certainly, and Skelton's later revisions reflect its association with and protection by *Morte*.

Skelton's response to its inclusion in manuscript networks is not always positive in later renditions of the poem. He writes, "Whether *ita* before *non* or *non* before *ita* / Nether wise nor

[23] The OED lists *a*1529 as its first use, from this poem: "J. Skelton *Speke Parrot* in *Certayne Bks.* (?1545) sig. A.ii My name is Parrot, a byrd of paradyse." Skelton uses the word 'parrot' as the *proper name* of the bird, not as its species identifier. Previously, forms of *popinjay* were used to refer to this animal. In a stroke of irony, Skelton's sinking a proper name to illiteracy via avian irrationality is so effective that it replaces the very identifier of the species in English.

wel lernid, but like *hermaphrodita*: / Set *Sophia* asyde, for every Jack Raker / And every mad medler must now be a maker" (191-5).[24] A maker is not, as is commonly supposed, merely a poet. Rather, a *makere* or, for the Scots, a *makar*, is a term which refers to a creator of a *boke*, with all its conceptual expansive possibilities – either the maker of a poem (like Chaucer) or a collection (like Colyns). For Skelton in 'Speke, Parot', as in *Piers Plowman*, the status of maker encompasses both the collection and creation aspects – the collections they create are further enmeshed via connective writing, and the inclusion of macaronic lines and quotations draw attention to the compilatory effort required for in the creation of what we might now call 'documentary poetry'.[25]

Likewise, Skelton worries that 'medlers' have begun to fashion themselves as 'makers,' but are 'neither wise nor wel-lernid,', they dare to dabble. Perhaps this is because Skelton, listed

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[24] William Dunbar, *Lament for the Makers* (Bartleby, 2004).

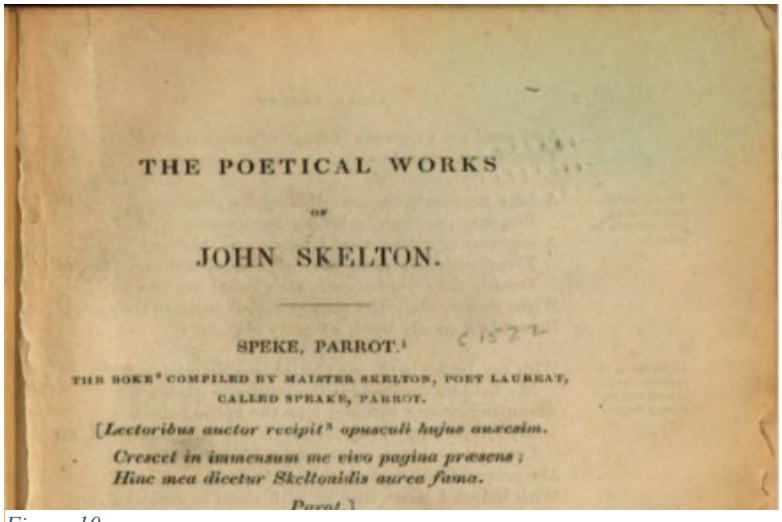
[25] The use of 'hermaphrodita' as a slur for incompetence because it is neither one thing or another finds its origin, likely, in the inflammatory Meter 1 of Alain de Lile's *De planctu natura*:

> Activi generis sexus, se turpiter horret
> Sic in passivum degenerare genus.
> Femina vir factus, sexus denigrat honorem,
> Ars magicae Veneris *hermaphroditat eum.*
> Praedicat et subjicit, fit duplex terminus idem,
> Grammaticae leges ampliat ille nimis.
> Se negat esse virum, naturae factus in arte
> Barbarus. Ars illi non placet, imo, tropus.
> Non tamen ista tropus poterit translatio dici;
> In vitium melius ista figura cadit. (I.15-25)
> [The active sex is horrified that it thus falls disgracefully into the passive role. Man become woman demeans the dignity of his sex; the art of a Venus turned sorcerer renders him hermaphrodite. He is both predicate and subject; a single term assumes a double role, and extends the rules of grammar too far. He denies that he is a man, for he has become a barbarian in the grammar of Nature. The art itself does not satisfy him, only troping. But a translation of this kind cannot be called a trope; this figure is better defined as a vice.] Alan of Alan of Lille and Alanus (de Insulis), trans. Winthrop Wetherbee *Literary Works* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

We see a similar rhetorical concern buried in the term 'hermaphrodita'. Alain's complaint is not merely moral – it is also academic, or possibly mostly academic. His concerns over what Alain perceives to be rampant sodomy is expressed in grammatical terms, which leads Michael Johnson to suggest, : In effect, Alan of Lille's *De planctu Naturae,* more than any other literary work of its time, construes sodomy as inseparable from exegetical discourse. In it, an exegetical problem is presented through an example of pagan representation of same-sex desire while same-sex desire is presented as a dysfunction in allegorical meaning" (172). Though his base assumption is that intercourse between members of the same sex is dysfunctional, the double tone of Alain's verse – "he augments the laws of grammar too far" suggests that the grammatical and rhetorical ails are nearly as concerning as the sexual.

as *Skelton laureate* at the end of 'Speke,' is part of a new class of professional makers, a status acknowledged by Oxford sometime before 1493, Cambridge in 1493, and King Henry VII by at least 1504, a status that remained attached to his name until his death. Like Chaucer before him, Skelton has his maker status publicly acknowledged. While Colyns distributed Skelton's work as compilers had done for centuries, he is not officially acknowledged as a maker, a poet laureate. This attitude anticipates the accusations of 'amateurish' and 'chaos' levied at *Piers Plowman* and finds echoes in Skelton's description of the parrot's art as "*Confuse distributive*" and, much later, in Pearsall et al.'s characterization of mixed-manuscripts as 'primarily miscellaneous'.

Yet it is as a compiler and poet laureate both that Skelton is remembered. Although the official office of Poet Laureate was not created until John Dryden's time, this is most often how Skelton is referred to.[26] Indeed, in Tab's 1545 *Certayne Bokes*, both of Skelton's role are recognized: "Here after foloweth certayne bokes, co[m]pyled by mayster Skelton, Poet Laureat whose names here after shall appere. Speke parrot The deth of the noble prince Kyng Edwarde the fourth. A treatyse of the Scottes. Ware the hawke The tunnyng of Elynour Rummynge".[27]


THE POETICAL WORKS
OF
JOHN SKELTON.

SPEKE, PARROT.

THIS BOKE COMPILED BY MAISTER SKELTON, POET LAUREAT, CALLED SPEAKE, PARROT.

[Lectoribus auctor recipit opusculi hujus auxesim.
Crescet in immensum me vivo pagina præsens;
Hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis aurea fama.

Figure 10

Unlike Chaucer's claim to *compilator originaliae*, Skelton is claiming to be a compiler in a more proper sense and a sense closer to the Piers-poet: he gathers small pieces (though their authorial weight is dubious at best) of text in

[26] Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "list of poets laureate of Britain." Encyclopedia Britannica, Invalid Date. https://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-poets-laureate-of-Britain-1789231.
[27] Sebastian Sobecki and John Scattergood, eds., *A Critical Companion to John Skelton:*, 1st ed. (Boydell and Brewer Limited, 2018), https://doi.org/10.1017/9781787443273.

several languages and, as a parrot, claims no responsibility for what they say or how they are arranged. Skelton doubles down on the stakes both of Chaucer and the *Piers*-poet – on the first by eschewing responsibility and the second by writing with, for, and against paranoia of authorial responsibility. If he only parrots, why is he so worried about the stakes?

His resistance to wanton modification, even on the mundane level of Latin particle order, matters significantly more when the author's name and reputation is attached to a piece in his lifetime. Chaucer solves this problem by conversely undercutting his own name – assigning his name to notoriously bad doggerel – or surrendering his agency to divine inspiration (as in *House of Fame*'s eagle). The famous 'Adam Scryvain,' (certainly not a composition of Chaucer's) presents a posthumous Chaucerian nightmare on the grounds of meddling with words but is actually a result of the new nightmare of named authorship – false attribution.[28] So it is in the printed version, the later version of 'Speke' that includes the above lines about meddling maker-wannabes and the protections afforded by allegory. In widely disseminated copies in which Skelton is explicitly named and which are not protected by a manuscript network and coterie readership, he, now in Wolsey's favor and service, eschews the protection afforded by a mixed-manuscript. He instead begins to protect via political associations and strict authorization, controlling and compiling himself while, like Chaucer, undercutting his own authoritative voice by claiming non-agentic parrot-hood.

[28] The attribution to Chaucer – already on thin ice with a questionable chain of attribution stretching merely from the assertion of John Shirley and so-called confirmation in print by John Stow – is also unlikely on metrical grounds: "Metrical evidence tells against Chaucerian authorship of Adam Scriveyn." Weiskott, Eric. *Meter and Modernity in English Verse, 1350-1650*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cornell/detail.action?docID=6401865.

Whether the first two versions of 'Speke' are 'authorized' is impossible to know – certainly the manuscript version is earliest and copied during Skelton's lifetime, but Griffiths writes that the presence of 'additions' in the MS version,

> suggest that the printed edition of *Speak Parrot* witnesses an earlier version of the poem than Harley 2252. However, since the dating of individual envoys indicates that they were composed over a period of time (H. Edwards and Nelson 1938), it is possible that the poem may have circulated in various intermediary stages. The discrepancy between the kinds of addition to Harley 2252 confirms this, suggesting that the manuscript reflects not just one but several discrete stages of revision (75-6).

The presence of additional material does not, however, indicate a later edition; in fact, there is very good reason to suppose that the opposite is true.

Parroting paranoia

Once the allegorical mode of reading is invoked, however, it becomes nearly impossible to suppress. The romance before us therefore, that is, the *Stanzaic Morte*, becomes allegorically entangled with the mode evoked by 'Speke, Parrot' and the more explicit examples of political lyric satire contained in Harley 2252. And, as Johnston notes, "whereas the Alliterative *Morte Arthure* tells of Arthur's extensive continental conquests; and whereas *Sir Gawain* and *The Awntyrs* both contain hints of Arthur's downfall, the Stanzaic *Morte* is the only Middle English text to be composed solely about political destruction. Unlike the texts of the diachronic tradition, this narrative does not offer its reader the consolation of an historical process" (101). The narrative of treason offered by the *Morte* is not one which settles or reminds its readers of the deep stability of the mythic kingship. Instead, it paints a picture of treason existing at every corner, in the king's bed, and a political world in which the provocation of a snake can bring about political apocalypse. Thus, a text written in a traditional genre and in the reign probably of Henry VII comes, like the prognostications, cyclically relevant via allegorical interpretation. The

romance thus becomes politically live – the genre ignited into sharp political commentary by its proximity to the more politically volatile 'Speak, Parrot' and 'Colyn Clout'.[29]

In *Morte*, after Lancelot fights Mordred and Agravain, for instance, he finds Bors and his knights awake and armed:

> Launcelot to his chamber yode,
> To Bors and his other knightes;
> Bors, armed, before him stood;
> To bedde yet he was not dight.
> The knightes for fere was nighe wode,
> So were they dreched all that night
> But blithe wexed they in their mood
> When they their master saw with sight.
> "Sir," said Bors, the hardy knight,
> "After you have we thought full long;
> To bedde durst I me not dight,
> For drede ye had some aunter strong;

[29] Skelton's early career finds him associated with Arthurian legends. Compare Bale, cited here at length in Scattergood's edition of Skelton's complete works:

> *Of pageants that were played in Joyous Garde*] Bale, in his enumeration of Skelton's writings, alluding to this line (as is evident from his arrangement of the pieces), gives "*Theatrales ludos*." ("Theatrical plays") *Script. Illust. Bryt*. p. 652. ed. 1557: and Mr. J. P. Collier states that "one of Skelton's earlier works had been a series of pageants, 'played in Joyous Garde,' or Arthur's Castle." *Hist. of Eng. Dram Poet*. ii. 142. But, assuredly, in the present line, *pageants* means nothing of a dramatic nature. The expression to "play a pageant" has occurred several times already in our author's poems; "I have played my pageant" (my part on the stage of life), see note 19 to *The Death of King Edward IV*; "Such polling pageants ye play "(such thievish pranks), see note 54 to *Poems Against Garnesche;* and though it may be doubted whether the *pageants that were played* in *Joyous Garde*, i.e. in the Castle of Sir Launcelot, according to the romances—are to be understood as connected with feats of arms, I cite the following passage in further illustration of the expression;
> "The first that was ready to Joust was sir Palomydes and sir Kaynus le Strange a knight of the table round. And so they two encountered together, but sir Palomydes smote sir Kaynus so hard that he smote him quite over his horse's croupe (crupper), and forthwithal sir Palomydes smote down another knight and brake then his spear & pulled out his sword and did wonderly well. And then the noise began greatly upon sir Palomydes. Lo said King Arthur yonder Palomydes beginneth t*o play his pageant*. So God me help said Arthur he is a passing good knight. And right as they stood talking thus, in came sir Tristram as thunder, and he encountered with sir Kay the Seneschal, and there he smote him down quite from his horse, and with that same spear sir Tristram smote down three knights mo, and then he pulled out his sword and did marvellously. Then the noise and cry changed from sir Palomydes and turned to sir Tristram and all the people cried O Tristram, O Tristram. And then was sir Palomydes clean forgotten. How now said Launcelot unto Arthur, yonder rideth a knight *that playeth his pageants*." *Morte d' Arthur*, B. x. cap. lxxix. vol. ii. 140. ed. Southey.

Our knightes have be drenched tonight
That some naked out of bedde sprong,
For-thy we were full sore affright,
Lest some tresoun were us among" (1872-9)
[Lancelot walked to his chamber
To Bors and his other knights
Bors, armed, stood before him
And was not yet ready for bed.
The knights were nearly crazy with fear
So they were drenched all that night
But they grew happy in their mood
When they saw their master with sight
"Sir" said Bors, the hearty knight
"after you we have thought very long
I dare not prepare myself for bed
For fear you had some strong adventure;
Our knights have been drenched tonight
So that some sprang out of bed naked
Because we were so afraid
That there was treason among us]

The concern here is not that Lancelot would not return, not that the knights would be attacked by revenging Mordred's minions but that treason would manifest itself amidst their ranks and that they might betray their returning Lord or each other. And, in fact, Lancelot accepts this mode of thinking when he replies, "And swithe awaken up all my knightes / and look which wille with us hold, / Look they be armed and ready dight / For it is sooth that thou me told" (1886). Treason is fundamental to the concern of this court, and the fear requires literally constant vigilance lest it merely manifest. Colyns places this poem at the center of his compilation, abutting Skelton's poems of paranoia, retro-reading this 'tresoun' as something which can erupt in a court in the middle of the night, everyone unaware.

The second example is the moment of the peace treaty near the end of the poem:

Arthur in his herte hath cast,
And to his lords gan he say:
'To yonder traitour have I no trust,
But that he will us falsely betray;
Yif we may not our forwards faste,

And ye see any wepen drayn,
Presseth forth as princes preste,
That he and all his host be slain.
Mordred, that was keen and thro,
His freely folk he said torforn:
‘I wot that Arthur is full wo
That he hath thus his lands lorn;
With fourteen knightes and no mo
Shall we meet at yonder thorn
Yif any tresoun between us go,
That brode banners forth be borne.
Arthur with knightes fully fourteen
To that thorn on foot they founde
…
But as they accorded shouled have been
An adder glode forth upon the ground;
He stang a knight, that men might sen
That he was seke and full unsound.

Out he brayed with sworde bright
To kill the adder had he thought.
When Arthur party saw that sight,
Freely they togeder sought;
There was no thing withstand them might;
They wend that tresoun had been wrought;
That day died many a doughty knight,
And many a bold man was brought to nought (3351)
[Arthur has cast in his heart
And began to say to his lords
‘I have no trust of yonder traitor
Unless he will betray us falsely
If we may not ensure our destruction
And if you see any weapon drawn
Press forth as a prince’s loan
So that he and all his host are slain.
Mordred, who was bold and fearless
He said freely to his following folk:
“I know that Arthur is very upset
That he has thus lost his lands
With fourteen knights and no more
To that thorn-tree they found on foot
…
But as they should been accorded
An adder glided forth on the ground
He stung a knight that men might see
That he was sick and totally unsound.

He yelled out with a bright sword
Intending to kill the adder.
When Arthur's party saw that sight
They stood together freely
There was no thing that might withstand them
They believed that treason had been done
That day many a brave knight died
And many a brave man was brought to nothing]

Paranoia grows up on both sides of the conflict, and members of each have been instructed to look out for treason, for betrayal of the order of the accord. Not only that, but the reader is almost asked to question the verity of the adder too – they meet at a thorn tree, Arthur and his knights go 'to that thorn on foot' and grammar of the adder's bite falls over itself to prove that the bite was real – 'that men might sen / That he was seke'. It's as if this knight is the narrator of the *Morte* and has told this whole story to say that he definitely was bitten by a snake and that's why there was a catastrophic political collapse.

What is without question, unfortunately, is that Arthur sees the sword and so sees the sign of treason. Arthur chooses the most efficient sign for treason and thus the most disastrous, which enables a swift response also causes the downfall of the kingdom – efficiency of interpretation and swiftness of action, especially when it comes to treason, is not always best but is always deadly. This warning, encased *in perpetua* in the familiarity and pleasure of romance, can thus be activated by the ballades about it – a poem against Wolsey or for Anne Bolyne is rendered allegorically or through a character-speaker lest you interpret too quickly, lest you see the flash of the sword in the verse and begin to draw your own. Mordred's symbol is too obscure, too difficult to manage – what Mordred means by bearing forth broad banners as the symbol for treachery is somewhat unclear. Do his fourteen accompanying knights have the banners? Does he have to tell someone else to tell someone else to bring out the banners? Nevertheless, we have a tale of two interpretive schemas – on the one hand, one which is too efficient will get people

killed fast and speaks to a collapse of violence and symbolism. If my drawn sword is a symbol of treachery, the process of violence has begun before interpretation is complete. On the other hand, if my indication is too inefficient, the greatest battles will have begun and ended before interpretation is complete enough for action.

This mode of reading is activated by 'Speke, Parrot' not only because the poem has a reputation for difficulty of interpretation but also because the grammatical nature of the poem. It is concerned with, among other things, translation and grammar itself – the parrot is given the gift of all language in his nest by philology. He says his purpose is 'solace, pleasure, desport, and play'

> 'Parrot, Parrot, Parrot, praty popigay!'
> With my beke I can pyke my lyttel praty too;
> My delyght is solas, pleasure, dysporte and pley;
> Lyke a wanton, whan I wyll, I rele to and froo;
> Parot can say, '*Caesar, ave,*' also;
> But Parrot hath no favour to Esebon:
> Above all other byrdis, set Parrot alone.
> [Parrot, parrot, parrot, prating popinjay
> With my beak I can pick my little clever too
> My delight is solace, pleasure, disport and play
> Like a wanton when I will, I roll to and fro
> Parrot can say *Hail Caesar* also
> But Parrot has no favor with Heshbon
> Above all other birds only put Parrot]

The importance of the parrot's liberty in discourse is, he says, to play and to have pleasure. But this lighthearted desire skips by questions of loyalty – the parrot can say 'hail, Caesar' but has no allegiances.[30] The enthusiasm for casual grammatical relationships comes up again later:

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[30] Colyns takes this line from Isadore's *Etymologia*: "The parrot (*psittacus*) comes fromthe shores of India. It is green in color, with a scarlet collar and a large tongue, wider than that of other birds. Hence it pronounces articulate words so that if you did not see the bird you would think a human was speaking. It makes a greeting naturally, saying "*Have!*" (i.e. *Ave*, a Latin greeting) or "χαίρε!" (i.e. a Greek greeting). Other words it learns by being taught. Hence it is spoken of (Martial, *Epigrams* 14.73): I, a parrot, would learn from you the names of others, but on my own I have learned to say this:

> "Hail (*Have*), Caesar!""

The Etymologies, XII.vii.24, ed. Stephen A Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Bergof

Let Parrot, I pray you, have lyberte to prate,
For *aurea lingua Graeca* ought to be magnyfyed,
As *lingua Latina*, in scole matter occupyed;
But our Grekis theyr Greke so well have applyed,
That they cannot say in Greke, rydynge by the way,
How, hosteler, fetche my hors a botell of hay!

Neyther frame a silogisme in *phrisesomorum*,
Formaliter et Graece, cum medio termino;
Our Grekys ye walow in the washbol *Argolicorum*;
For though ye can tell in Greke what is *phormio*
Yet ye seke out your Greke in *Capricornio;*
For they scrape out good scrypture, and set in gall,
Ye go about to amende, and ye mare all.

Some argue *secundum quid ad simpliciter*,
And yet he wolde be rekenyd *pro Areopagita;*
And some make distinctions *multipliciter*,
Whether *ita* were before *non*, or *non* before *ita*,
Nether wise nor wel lernid, but like *hermaphrodita*:
Set *Sophia* asyde, for every Jack Raker
And every mad medler must now be a maker.

[Let Parrot, I pray you, have liberty to babble
For *golden Greek tongue* ought to be magnified
As *Latin tongue* occupied in school matter
But our Greeks have applied their Greek so well
That they cannot say "riding by the way" in Greek
How, hostler, fetch my horse a bottle of hay!

Neither frame a syllogism in *phrisesomorum*[31]
Formally and in the Greek manner with a middle term
Our Greek you wail in the washbowl *of the Greeks*
For though you can tell what *phormio* is in Greek[32]
But you seek out your Greek in *Capricornio*
For they scrape out good scripture and set in gall
You go to amend and you mar all

Some argue *secundum quid ad simpliciter*[33]
And yet he would be reckoned *as a jurist*[34]
And some make *multiple* distinctions
Whether *thus* was before *not* or *not* before *thus*

[31] A form of syllogism:
[32] Apparently a reference to Terence's *Phormio, the helpful parasite*.
[33] i.e. arguing from a qualified claim to a general one.
[34] Or, 'for Dionysius' which does not seem to follow.

Neither wise nor well learned but like *hermaphrodites*
Set *wisdom* aside for every Jack Raker
And every mad medler must now be a maker]

Skelton substitutes *Sophia* in this reference to *Piers Plowman*'s B.12.16, in which Ymaginatyf castigates the narrator for focusing on writing rather than his spiritual life:

Amende thee while thou myȝt; thou hast been warned ofte
With poustees of pestilences, with pouerte and with angres
And with thise bitter baleises God beteth his deere children;
Quem diligo castigo.
And Dauid in the Sauter seith, of swiche that loueth Iesus
Virga tua et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata suunt:
Althouȝ thou strike me with thi staf, with sikke or with yerde
It is but muthe as for me to amende my soul.'
And thow medlest thee with makynges--and myghtest go seye thi Sauter,
And bidde for hem that yyveth thee breed; for ther are bokes ynowe
To telle men what Dowel is, Dobet and Dobest bothe,
And prechours to preve what it is, of many a peire freres.' (B.12.7-19)

Ymaginatyf suggests a return to the Psalter, to return to worship and concentration on spiritual things rather than the literary-philosophical project of *Piers Plowman*, the book he's writing about Dowel, Dobetter, and Dobest. There are enough preachers, Ymaginatif cries, to figure out problems of relative morality, and they don't need your help. Stop meddling with poeticizing, *Piers*-poet, and get back to praying. Skelton, the parrot, expands Ymaginatyf's position to castigate the uselessness of the academic establishment, arguing that experts educated in Greek are so erudite as to be useless. They argue about grammatical positions, syllogistic forms, scraping out good writing so that they can 'amend' writing that was good to begin with, only marring it in the process. The real makers, the good makers, are writers who those who favor wisdom over education, 'good writing' over erudition, an anti-education position of sorts that condemns established academics as so focused on distinction that they miss wisdom.

The narrator warns against over-interpretation, overly complexifying simple matters, missing the sentence for the *sententia*, to beware of interpretation without a frame of reference,

to get caught up in academic fights which miss the argument for the form of the argument. So, within the poem we have political satire to the king about a troublesome advisor, a reminder that loyalty can be spoken without being meant, and an injunction against overenthusiastic, myopic, or nit-picky arguments lest one replace the truth with a bad edit. Furthermore, the allegorical character chosen by Skelton – a parrot – is as far as I know unique for grammarians and introduces the word into the English language in reference to the bird. The parrot is capable of *vox litterata* – i.e. the bare utterance of an animal noise, but one which is formed into words which are intelligible by human listeners. In other words, the impulse (as someone like Kilwardby might suggest) for a meow and a parrot's saying "I hate your guts, Steve" might be identical as far as the animal is concerned – bare expression of the animal's fear or pain or hunger or other appetitive impulse.[35] But for the human hearer, the *vox litterata* is capable of being interpreted – despite the lack of intentionality on the part of the parrot, the parrot's *vox* can be ascribed tone, sense, form, letters – all the parts of human utterance.[36]

Elizabeth Eva Leach remarks that parrots (popinjays) and nightingales are often interchangeable in the Middle Ages (268) and that one or the other serves, as in Alan de Lille, to "min[t] the coin of human speech on the anvil of its throat" and "serves Augustine as a figure of the naturally talented but bestially irrational singer" (268). Sarah Kay, in *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry*, distinguishes between the two birds thus:

[35] Kilwardby was, on the other hand, strongly invested in human responsibility for authorship of sacred texts: "Kilwardby was concerned at once to give the human *auctores* of the Bible their due, and to describe the human literary activity of the Lombard" Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 97.

[36] Making meaning from *litterata* has an analog in the reading of mixed-manuscripts – the intentionality of groupings is often impossible to ascertain, but pairings always *seem* to mean. The parrot should be understood as having intentionality in the way that Derrida's cat in "The Animal That Therefore I am" has – it 'just sees,' as the a parrot 'just speaks.' Skelton's trick is to rely on the 'just speaks' for his poetic composition. Any meaning-making one does is, he implies, is just what the reader brings in. Like a cat or a libertarian, he has no responsibility.

> medieval parrots have the capacity to sing as well as talk, whereas nightingales can only sing, they cannot speak. Th us parrots embody the fundamental human capacity for mimesis. Although nightingales' mastery of song is natural, parrots have the advantage of being able to learn. Moreover, while they may learn to repeat what they have heard, parrots may also know what they are saying […] According to bestiaries, though some parrots are foolish and representative of sin, others are so wise and noble that they exemplify to human readers the qualities of a spiritual life. In both Occitan *novas* featuring parrots, the bird is considerably more resourceful and in some ways more human than the other protagonists. An exotic bird, the parrot is also an apt representation of the otherness of Occitan to the Catalan and Italian contexts of most of the works I examine. Their words may have an uncanny relation to the desires they seem to voice (22-3).

Parrots are thus *almost* human, purveyors of uncanny speech. Like *Piers Plowman*'s Meed, they are not quite responsible for what they say, but they are such gifted speakers and singers that they *might* be rational. They serve, for medieval philosophers of the mind, a purpose like primates do for modern scientists – a bestial analogue so close to human as to provoke wonder. The parrot's speech *sounds* literate but is illiterate – as Isadore remarks, "Hence it pronounces articulate words so that if you did not see the bird you would think a human was speaking." Kay identifies what she calls the "parrot's way," which is, "at its core is a practice of quotation, by which I mean not only verbatim repetition, but a repetition that calls into play a supposed act of recognition of a supposed act of knowledge, which, by supposing anchorage in anterior subjects, enables subjective renewal and hence, potentially, subjective change" (21). Skelton relies on the 'supposed act of knowledge' to be able to at once make dangerous comments and not to be responsible for their contents, pleading ignorance or conspiracy if confronted. Skelton shows us the bird, and so we know, for his protection, that any dangerous, upsetting, or seditious words just *sound* that way – there's no substance to them, he would have us believe. This poem at least, not insignificantly following directly after the Stanzaic *Morte*, skates between responsibility and irresponsibility, interpretation and obscurity, human and parotic – the poem, as I alluded to

earlier, is putting the duty of properly contextualized interpretation and the culpability for paranoid or political interpretation entirely on the reader.

The poem is protected by the collection's manifold nature and the 'noise' generated by disparate gatherings. In this case, the poem is doubly protected because it is narrated by a parrot, a creature who can repeat narrative but who is not grammatically responsible for its content and even less so for the ways in which someone might interpret it. The collection furthermore asks that the romance *be* reimagined in politically relevant ways. Thus, allegory and a hermeneutic of suspicion do go together, although not in the way Jameson might have imagined – allegory serves to protect as much as to prompt suspicion, to focus as much as obscure. By collecting these texts together with no prompts as to their relationship other than the relative professionalism of the components of the compositions themselves, Colyns provides Skeltonic lyrics to be taken as keys to the romances – by placing or replacing the commercially produced romances in a mixed-manuscript context, the compiler is able to prompt synchronic, focused political readings as well as cyclical readings sparked by the Christmas day prognostications which speak to the constant vulnerability of the kingdom to treason or undermining advisors. But this warning of vulnerability comes too with a warning against swords drawn too swiftly: in times of unrest, in times of doubt, in times of paranoia, may your symbols not be too simple, but let them not be obscure.

Within the categories both of lyric and of prophesy participate prognostications.[37] These much-overlooked but not uncommon items in miscellanies of the 15th and 16th centuries are

[37] Johnson notes: "The last four quires of the MS are dominated by texts of prognostication, which point towards a desire to rationalize future events. Items 56, 60, 61, 67, and 68 all deal with forecasting based on the days on which certain events occur. For example, Item 60 begins, "Yf crystmas day on the monday be / A trobol*ys* wynt*er* ye shall see / Medlyd w*ith* wat*er*s stronge. / Were shal be good w*ith*-owte fabyll / The somer it sha*l* be Resonabyll / & stormys odyr whylys Amo*n*ge" (f. 153v). These type of texts seem to be rather standard fare in Middle English compendiums, as Frost records seventeen extant English MSS which record "Volkssprachliche Prosafassungen von Neujahrs- Bauernpraktiken" and twenty-six early printed almanacs which contain information similar to Item 56

frequently considered 'non-literary' or 'practical' verse.[38] Practical for what purpose? Unlike the items in 2252 on the properties of wine and woman (subjects of the present), these lyrics are concerned with the recursive future, a future which is at once unknowable yet predictable and cyclical. These lyrics therefore stand in stark contrast with the chronicle which proceeds them: a chronicle is concerned solely with the events of the past, whether near or distant. A chronicle is linear and non-repetitive, recorded in large part by people who experienced the events they put to paper. A prognostication is far less practical: it 'records' the inevitable, the return of the cosmic good and bad which are controlled by the passage of time (indeed, they are somewhat too fatalistic for Providence), by the slow march of the days of the weeks.

In the way that permanent absence is required for the fictional persona of the lyric, that same absence appears in the prognostications.[39] Like the lyrics of its Harleian shelf-sister et al., the condition of absence is permanent: the poems address the present reader's condition in the future, which is a necessarily apostrophic address. The poems are furthermore written in first person, a first person which must be fictionally constructed unless the readers of these prognostications thought of the author as a modern prophet. [40] Furthermore, Colyns's collection has the ordinary seven days of the week, which appear in some form in nine other manuscripts, but that collection is preceded by another Monday prognostication in what appears to be a verse

(284-87); seven early printed almanacs containing information similar to Item 60 (297); nine MSS containing information similar to Item 61 (298-99); five MSS and thirteen printed editions containing information similar to Item 67 (310-311); and two MSS containing information similar to Item 68 (313)" (52-3).

[38] Robbins identifies prognostications as "Practical Verse" in his *Secular Lyrics of the XIV and XV Centuries*.

[39] Culler writes in *Theory of the Lyric* that the understanding of 'lyric' which is widely accepted in academic circles today "…has been replaced by a variant which treats the lyric not as mimesis of the experience of the poet but as a representation of the action of a fictional speaker: in this account, the lyric is spoken by a persona, whose situation and motivation one needs to reconstruct (2). He warns, however, that this understanding of the lyric is myopic: "This model gives students a clear task, but it is extraordinarily limited and limiting. It leads to neglect of the most salient features of many lyrics, which are not to be found in ordinary speech acts— from rhythm and sound patterning to intertextual relations" (3).

[40] Ibid.

form resembling a bob-and-wheel format: sets of two and four lines are gathered under the influence of a line which floats in the right-hand margin.

While these prognostications have largely been treated as old carols, folk wisdom, roots of the almanac, considering them lyrical fatidicency yields more fruitful inquiry, especially in conjunction with the chronicles contained in this mixed-manuscript and others: one of the themes of this mixed-manuscript (although perhaps not explicit in Colyns's mind) is the dual nature of time: time is, in a way, cyclical. Famines come and go, as do generations, wars, storms, and children, but the specific instances of those constantly repeating genera of events have specific and linearly occurring species of events. This is to say, children always disappoint their parents and made them proud, and prognostications are written in such a way to encourage confirmation bias, to explain for every year all the events which are least explainable in life. The prognostications make the personally tragic predictable and – in this way – dull its edge; these poems couch the specific blessings and hardships of the human life in a cosmic scheme so that the readers, ostensibly, are grateful for (for instance) the good harvest when it comes and are able to explain the death of a sickly child.[41]

These prognostications are lyrics of fortune, but unlike the later "In a ffresshe morning amonge the flowrys," it does not warn against the deadly double edge of power. Instead, these serve as the cosmic context for the vitriolic anti-Wolsey poetry which follows "In a ffresshe morning amonge the flowrys," for the chronicle which precedes it, for the registers and declamations and ordinances. This is perhaps to ascribe too much importance to a series of

[41] It is of course possible that Colyns consciously included the lyric in the book merely because he liked it. Culler reminds us, "We listen to songs without assuming that we should develop interpretations: we take them to illuminate the world, and we sing them to others or to ourselves, point out what we like about them, compare them to other songs by the same and different artists, and generally develop considerable connoisseurship about songs without engaging in interpretation" (5).

poorly copied and badly dirtied common little poems near the end of a large volume, but these lyrics and those that follow, as poems of fortune, serve as the Ecclesiastes of this largely secular compendium, poems of joy and despair which, as "O mortall man…" does in its closing, urges reflection on good and ill, and on seasons of happenstance or providence: [42]

> therfor Beware & presume not to long
> refrayne & do ponnce whyle thow haste space
> For yff þen be ponysshede thow haste no wronge
> bye rulyde by prudens & call for grace
> & folow good conncesell in ever place
> & ever in clyne & obbey to reason
> then shalte þen do all thynge in convenent season
> consydyr þi yowth & consyder thyne age
> consydyr þi poverte & consydyr þi rychys also
> consydyr thyne awteryte & thynke all shall swage
> consydyr substauncially · whate þen shalte tryuste to
> consydyr the worlde · ys all full of care
> & consyder þat dethe · wyll no man spare -----
> [therefore beware and presume not long
> Refrain & do penance while you have space
> For if then the punished you have no wrong
> Ruled by prudence and call for grace
> And follow good counsel in every place
> And ever incline and obey to reason
> And shall then and obey reason
> Then shall do all things in the right season
> Consider your youth and consider your age
> Consider thy poverty and consider your riches also
> Consider you authority and think all shall assuage
> Consider substantially what you shall trust
> Consider that the world is full of concerns
> And consider that death will spare no man]

which is a version of, or an adaption of the attitude of the speaker in Ecclesiastes 1:9-11:

> 9 quid est quod fuit ipsum quod futurum est quid est quod factum est ipsum quod fiendum est 10 nihil sub sole novum nec valet quisquam dicere ecce hoc recens est iam enim praecessit in saeculis quae fuerunt ante nos 11 non est priorum memoria sed nec eorum quidem quae postea futura sunt erit recordatio apud eos qui futuri sunt in novissimo.

[42] Thanks to Blanca Santonja for suggesting this line of thought.

> 9 What is it that hath been? the same thing that shall be. What is it that hath been done? the same that shall be done. 10 Nothing under the sun is new, neither is any man able to say: Behold this is new: for it hath already gone before in the ages that were before us. 11 There is no remembrance of former things: nor indeed of those things which hereafter are to come, shall there be any remembrance with them that shall be in the latter end.

What appears to be desperately hopeless poetry is actually a form of comfort which comes after sums and calculations, after the fantasy of romance, practical only in its contempt for special. Political commentary abuts and is intertwined with *momento mori* literature, a reminder that political and economic upheaval, famine and plague, all end, in a way, in death. This is a *boke* for all seasons which contains, as Johnson puts it, "…[a] poem [which] begins in typically sycophantic form ('God save kyng herry, ow*ur* nobyll kyng, / And all þ*at* byn to hym lovyng' [f. 156r])" (61) which continues in borderline loyalty as it critiques Cardinal Wolsey, a poem which follows immediately after another which is not unsympathetic to Anne Boleyn and which was certainly composed almost immediately after her death.[43]

Sparrows, elsewhere

Although it is not included in John Colyns' Boke, Skelton's "mock elegy," 'Philip Sparrow' provides an apt unification of the elements examined in this chapter, though it was likely composed at least 15 years before 'Speke, Parot.'[44] The poem is a swinging

[43] Meale writes: "[Anne Boleyn] was tried and executed in May 1536, so the poem was presumably composed not long after this. Evidence of lay-out suggests that it was an interpolation between a prose item, of which only the concluding lines remain at the top of f.155r, and one of the many poems on Cardinal Wolsey in the MS, which begins on f.156r" (96), and later: "The last addition to the group was the poem on Ann Boleyn on f.155. Colyns evidently took care in ensuring that he fitted this into the space available to him; it begins directly underneath the ending of the previous piece and is copied in double columns on f.155r, although it finishes in single column on f.155v…." It is therefore clear that Colyns made some effort to fit material of a similar thematic nature into the same section of his 'boke'…. What seems to have happened, then, is that when he started work he already had a certain amount of material on several topics which especially interested him, and he copied these at intervals throughout the manuscript. Beyond this, however, the form of the volume as it now stands was dictated by the pragmatic considerations of what was available to him to copy at any given time, and hence a blurring of distinctions gradually developed between the subject groupings and the other, more miscellaneous, texts which he acquired piecemeal" (98).

[44] V. J. Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Four Courts Press, 2014).

conglomeration of mythological, Biblical, and poetic references itself, also called, in Marshe's collection "THE BOOK OF PHILIP SPARROW COMPILED BY MASTER SKELTON, POET LAUREATE." It begins with the antiphonal '*placebo*,' as if the poem itself is a funeral mass for this pet bird. As if mocking the pardon in *Piers Plowman*, the first stanza ends, "And with the corner of a Creed / The more shall be your meed" (14-5). A corner is a quotation, the '*pater noster qui*' hanging a few lines above, but there's a teasing reference here to the tearing of the pardon – with a corner of the Athanasian Creed, your reward can be great. The reference is teasing because *Piers Plowman* might be the most dangerous reference Skelton could make. By 1409, ownership of *Piers* and other texts was illegal. In full justification of Conscience's anxiety about the composition of a guided mixed-manuscript like *Piers* or "of any similar texts became, in principle, directly illegal: given their use of biblical quotation and their extensive treatment of an array of theological subjects, none of these works could have been written after the publication of the Constitutions without contravening several of the articles therein" (Watson 830).[45] All compositions like this did not cease, but the anxiety of the responsibility entailed in such guidance becomes legally encoded in its censorship.

What is not illegal is compilation (unless those compilations contain illegal pieces) – the suggestive power of gathering texts under one tegument remains powerful and returns in

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Philip Sparrow operates as an indexical poem by including each work that Skelton encountered. Chaucer makes an appearance, "Chanticleer, our cock" (495) as does the influence of the Persian astronomer Abu Masar. Importantly to our purposes here, Skelton reiterates his ability to tell an Arthurian story:

> And tell can a great piece 630
> […]
> Of Arthur's Round Table,
> With his knights commendable,
> And Dame Gaynour, his queen,
> Was somewhat wanton, I ween;
> How Sir Lancelot de Lake
> Many a spear brake
> For his lady's sake;

[45] Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409

popularity when censorship is on the rise. Colyns participates in a tradition that includes Robert Thornton and a number of 15th-century mixed-manuscripts. When ownership of a work is dangerous and production of quotation-laced works are illegal, when what constitutes a legal and legitimate religious position changes from year to year, found art and compilation provide means for the production of art while preserving the full agency of the artist from culpability. Skelton makes this point in "Ware the Hawk," yet another bird-poem called a 'compiled book':

> Thus within the walls
> Of holy Church to deal,
> Thus to ring a peal
> With his hawk's bells?
> Doubtless such losels
> Make the church to be
> In small authority:
> A curate in special
> To snapper and to fall [stumble]
> Into this open crime;
> To look on this were time.
> But whoso that looks
> In the official booke,
> There he may see and read
> That this is matter indeed.
> Howbeit, maiden Meed
> Made them to be agreed,
> And so the Scribe was fee'd,
> And the Pharisee
> Then durst nothing say,
> But let the matter slip,
> And made truth to trip;
> And of the spiritual law
> They made but a gewgaw,
> And took it out in drink,
> And thus the cause doth shrink:
> The Church is thus abused,
> Reproached and polluted:
> Correction hath no place,
> And all for lack of grace.

The eponymous hawk, a semi-personification of 'defensiveness' or 'watchfulness' is wary of making the church 'in small authority,' and aware that committing a crime requires no more

effort than tripping and falling. In the ‘official book,’ a personified Meed derived from *Piers* or adjacent compositions pays for interpretive accord, “made them to be agreed” and pays the scribes for their work. The issue disappears and the truth, like the cleric before, trips. ‘Spiritual law,’ either canon law or scripture becomes decorative. Correction is disallowed, and grace is nowhere to be found.

CODA: DON'T TELL ANYONE WHO I AM

As I have written this project, and re-written it, I realize that there is a major theme lurking behind all the chapters, one which is probably more important than the arguments as they stand now. Anonymity is a key compositional tool of the Middle Ages, especially for compilers and authors of experimental works. The author of *Piers Plowman* took great pains to remain anonymous in a time when his peers quite easily broadcast their names and received the immortal fame associated with reputation. Named authorship can link one piece with an apparently unrelated piece to create a system, but the *Piers*-poet seems to have made only one work, or only one identifiable as itself. Anonymity strips away the network of the individual – she wrote *that* and *that* and *that*, but it encourages a network of the relational – *this* reminds me of *that* – I wonder if the same person wrote both? There are no hard gains to be had in the doings of humankind – a gain in something means a loss in another. There is only so much attention to be had individually and collectively.[1]

The theme running under this project like a subterranean river is that of anonymity – it is key for the *Piers*-author's work to mean in the way it does. The poem needs to be free to inter-associate, to speak from and to its era without overtly strong ties to a person. One of the strengths of mixed-manuscript or of anonymous collections is when little or no identity can be pinned to those who made the books – the work then sits highly structured and open for wandering, like deer paths or ancient ruins. You begin to see: 'ah, yes, this must have been a kitchen' 'oh, this leads to water' without assumptions beyond that the thing was done on purpose. I imagined a ruined statue, overgrown when I first thought of 'residue of experience' – something that took

[1] "The poor will always be with you" is just another way to say – here's a thing you shouldn't forget and might.

time, attention, effort, but has no name and little to identify it with. It opens the adult mind with a curiosity often hampered when identity is involved; anonymity is a powerful compositional tool, and it is the anti-frame of many medieval artistic productions. Philosophy and theology are the realm of the named, the realm of the attribution. Science, too. But literature, when it is anonymous, it is an animal uncaged – dangerous, yes, but beautiful in new ways.

When I think about where this project must go, if it will go, I think: is it good to exhume the body of *Piers Plowman*'s author? He disguises himself in the poem (out of shame), and only the barest hints reveal a pseudonym, not even a real name. Joe Author. Long Will. Then I think: Skelton wants anonymity so badly in his parrot and in his dread, and then casts it all off when he is safely ensconced in power and old age. The printer and his anthology strip off the habit of anonymity to reveal the hermit beneath, unholy of works. I think about the power of anonymous collections which contain authority in their collections in the resonance of truth between disparate and in the names of authors they identify carefully and catalog for the ages. Not knowing if a priest/bookseller/noble woman collected some works into a book gives it freedom to possibly be any of them and allows the literature to breathe a little. Human beings most things but simple, and anonymity is the cloak of the complex. A name is the coat hook of the simple. This dissertation about anonymity, attention, thought, accident, artists, and critics. I just didn't know it until now.

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